



# Oman Accreditation Council

## Report of an Audit of Majan College (University College)

**December 2009**

Audit Report Number 003

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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 Accreditation Council (OAC) of Majan College (University College) (referred to as MCUC). It comments on MCUC 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 MCUC activities, and constructive feedback to MCUC to assist with its ongoing improvement efforts.

The quality audit commenced with MCUC undertaking a self study of its mission, vision and systems. The results were summarized in its *Quality Audit Portfolio* (the 'Portfolio'). This document was submitted to the OAC by the due date of 29 September 2008.

The OAC 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 via telephone conference) on 17 November 2008 to consider MCUC's Portfolio. Following this, the Audit Panel Chairperson and Executive Officer undertook a planning visit on behalf of the Panel to MCUC on 23 December 2008 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 MCUC's activities. One submission was received and considered.

The audit visit took place over 22–24 February 2009. During this time, the Panel spoke with approximately 116 people, including governing authorities, staff, students and external stakeholders. They also visited a selection of venues and considered requested additional materials.

No information provided after 24 February 2009 (being the last day of the audit visit) was taken into consideration for the purposes of this audit, other than pre-existing items specifically requested by the Panel in advance.

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

The Panel's audit activities and preparation of this Report were governed by regulations set by the OAC Board. This Report was approved for release by the OAC Board on 21 December 2009.

The OAC was established by Royal Decree No. 74/2001. Among its responsibilities is the external review of higher education providers (HEIs) in the Sultanate of Oman. For further information, visit the OAC website (<http://www.oac.gov.om>). Full details of the quality audit process are available in OAC's *HEI Quality Audit Manual* (available from <http://www.oac.gov.om/institution/audit/>).

## HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

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

The Report is made public because it also may be of interest to students and potential students, their families, employers, Government, other higher education institutions in Oman and abroad, and other audiences. Students, in particular, may find this Report interesting because it provides some independent comment on the learning environment at this institution (particularly sections 2, 5 and 6 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 result; nor does it provide any sort of grade or score. It should also be noted that the precise number of Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations that an institution receives in its Audit Report is not as important as the substance of those conclusions. For example, some Recommendations may focus on critical issues such as assessment of student learning, whereas others may focus on issues such as the maintenance of teaching equipment in classrooms which, while important, is clearly less critical. Therefore, it is neither significant nor appropriate to compare the Audit Reports of different HEIs solely on the numbers of Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations.

The second stage in the institutional accreditation process is Standards Assessment. This stage, which will take place within four years of 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 programmes, separately from the institutional accreditation process. For more information on Oman's System of Quality Assurance in Higher Education please visit [www.oac.gov.om](http://www.oac.gov.om).

This Report contains a number of references to source evidence examined 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*

Majan College (University College) (MCUC) was the first private HEI to be established in the Sultanate of Oman in 1995. It was originally established in association with the Oman Chamber of Commerce under the name of the College of Administrative Sciences. In line with the Ministry of Higher Education requirement, the College has an affiliation agreement with an overseas institution, in this case the University of Bedfordshire (UoB) (formerly the University of Luton), UK, which is the awarding body of MCUC's degrees. The UoB has proved to be a strong partner in the development and growth of MCUC. MCUC also has an agreement with the University of Leeds, UK, which delivers and awards a Masters programme in TESOL at the College.

MCUC is a listed joint stock company on the Muscat Securities Market. It is governed by the Board of Directors (BoD) and a recently-formed Board of Trustees (BoT). As an HEI it comprises three faculties: Faculty of Business Management, Faculty of Information Technology and Faculty of English Language Studies. At the time of the audit, MCUC had around 1700 students enrolled at the original Darsait campus in the central business district of Muscat. The College has been allocated an area of land in another part of the capital area (in Al Ma'abelah) for future development.

MCUC submitted a comprehensive, coherent self-study Portfolio with a set of well-presented supporting documents. The approach to the self-study was thorough, and consistent with it being a genuine exercise by the College to reflect on its strengths and to find areas for improvement. The College used the spirit of the ADRI approach (see Appendix B for an explanation of ADRI) in conducting its self-study and could consider using this approach more explicitly in future reviews in order to provide a clear idea of its approach, deployment, review of results and plans for improvement.

MCUC has clearly articulated its mission and vision. It prides itself on the quality of its teaching and learning and has a clear idea of what defines a graduate of MCUC. The Panel noted that MCUC has developed a suitable set of strategic planning documents. However these do require augmenting with clear operational plans and key performance indicators that show how the strategic intent is being delivered. In this respect MCUC would also benefit from developing trend data to allow it to track, monitor and analyse its performance. Within the College the Panel saw clear signs of effective leadership at the top, cohesiveness within teams, and commitment to MCUC and to its quality culture.

MCUC, supported by its strong relationship with the UoB, has established a number of rigorous and well embedded QA systems at module and programme level. This area could however be strengthened further in places by more systematic engagement with industry and employers. The incorporation of defined graduate attributes into programmes is noteworthy, although the Panel did not see evidence of how these attributes were effectively communicated as part of the student learning experience. Improved rigour in data collection and analysis in areas such as student and graduate placement and support services should further strengthen the existing processes allowing for continuous improvements and follow up action.

MCUC needs to address and develop its research capacity and to engage in advanced research, in line with its designation as a university college. In recognition of this, the College has produced a specific Strategic Plan for research. The Panel recommends that the College develop more explicit key performance indicators, action plans and resources to support this. There needs to be a greater focus on

the research-teaching nexus, especially in supporting the postgraduate student community. In terms of academic support services, MCUC has invested in new library facilities and a professional development centre. The Panel recognised that MCUC is currently upgrading its IT and e-learning facilities but needs to ensure students have adequate information literacy and skills training to take full advantage of this.

The Panel met with industry representatives and external stakeholders who held MCUC in high esteem. MCUC needs to take steps to involve industries and professions in the design and delivery of its curriculum as well as in the orientation of its applied research. MCUC needs to build on its active programme of student placement and employment services and ensure that it understands and is appropriately responsive to the needs of targeted industries and employers.

MCUC recognises shortcomings in its student support services and describes potential action for its undergraduates seeking assistance with training or employment opportunities as well as improving extra-curricular services. The Panel believes there is an underlying need for the College to address the needs of its part-time student population, which constitute a significant part of the total student enrolment, and to improve its approach to monitoring student satisfaction.

In summary, MCUC is a well-established College built on sound foundations, supported by its relationship with UoB. Its focus on quality in its teaching and learning activities is reflected in the positive feedback from students, staff and employers which is laudable. As a university college, MCUC needs to further consider how its strategic intent is delivered and to ensure research capacity with adequate resources is in place.

### ***Summary of Commendations***

A formal commendation recognises an instance of particularly good practice.

1. The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for clearly articulating and communicating its mission and vision, and for encouraging a quality culture throughout the institution. .... 11
2. The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for the commitment of the Board of Directors to the College's educational objectives. .... 12
3. The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for developing an effective relationship with the University of Bedfordshire which has had a positive impact on the development of quality assurance systems and benchmarking of its programmes. .... 13
4. The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for its participative process in developing its Strategic Plans and involvement of the institution as a whole. .... 14
5. The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for the rigour of processes used to develop, validate and monitor the quality of its own coursework programmes. .... 18
6. The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for its systematic approach to tackling plagiarism including the use of appropriate software by staff and students and the inclusion of academic integrity requirements throughout the College. .... 20
7. The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for the strong academic security and invigilation system in place. .... 21
8. The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for having systems in place that support a high level of student retention. .... 21

9. The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for setting up an effective staff induction and mentoring programme and providing a support network for new staff..... 35

### ***Summary of Affirmations***

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

1. The Oman Accreditation Council affirms the need for Majan College (University College) to monitor and review policies for non-academic areas. .... 15
2. The Oman Accreditation Council affirms the intention of Majan College (University College) to streamline Accreditation of Prior Learning procedures and to provide separate induction and monitoring for students in this category. .... 18
3. The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)'s plans to align the learning outcomes of its Foundation Programme with Oman's Academic Standards for General Foundation Programmes..... 19
4. The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College) in its efforts to move towards greater variety and consistency in its approaches to assessment tasks. .... 21
5. The Oman Accreditation Council agrees with Majan College (University College) that staff research is an opportunity for improvement and supports its efforts in activating plans for long term capacity building. .... 23
6. The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College) in its establishment of an alumni association, recognising that the College needs to take full advantage of this initiative..... 27
7. The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)'s plans to upgrade its registry software in order to improve its collection, tracking and analysis of student data. .... 28
8. The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)'s efforts to develop a proactive approach to its career and employment services. .... 32
9. The Oman Accreditation Council affirms that Majan College (University College) needs to increase student participation in activities and supports its plans to enhance this, for example through setting up the student activity group Shabab Majan..... 33
10. The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)'s plans to increase the proportion of staff with PhD awards in order to support its future research aspirations..... 34
11. The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)'s plans to formalise the planning and delivery of staff development opportunities for all staff through the introduction of the Staff Development Committee..... 36
12. The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)'s plans to develop current facilities with a view to increasing social space for students..... 38

### ***Summary of Recommendations***

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

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |    |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1.  | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) review the terms of reference and responsibilities of the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees in order to clarify their roles and lines of reporting in relation to the College management structures. ....                                               | 12 |
| 2.  | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) devote further efforts to clarify and strengthen its committee structure, with particular emphasis on mandate, lines of reporting and lines of communication. ....                                                                                             | 13 |
| 3.  | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that, in cases where a programme is developed off-site and delivered by another HEI, Majan College (University College) need to ensure that adequate quality assurance mechanisms are in place and that there is appropriate local input and contextualisation in curriculum design and delivery. .... | 14 |
| 4.  | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop operational plans with clear objectives, key performance indicators and resources planning to support the implementation of the Strategic Plans. ....                                                                                                  | 15 |
| 5.  | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement a risk management process which is regularly reviewed. ....                                                                                                                                                                              | 15 |
| 6.  | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement health and safety policies and procedures which are regularly monitored and clearly communicated to the College community. ....                                                                                                          | 16 |
| 7.  | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) ensure that its graduate attributes are embedded throughout the curriculum and explicitly communicated to students through module materials provided. ....                                                                                                     | 17 |
| 8.  | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop clear policies and guidelines for postgraduate supervision and support for student research. ....                                                                                                                                                      | 22 |
| 9.  | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College), as part of its Strategic Plan for research, develop specific key performance indicators and targets in line with available resources. ....                                                                                                                    | 23 |
| 10. | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop a clear, consistent strategy to develop the research-teaching nexus which is clearly linked to curriculum development. ....                                                                                                                            | 25 |
| 11. | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement an operational plan for its academic support services which is linked to clearly delineated responsibilities and adequate resources. ....                                                                                                | 28 |
| 12. | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement resource plans to support ongoing information literacy and skills training to support student learning. ....                                                                                                                             | 29 |
| 13. | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) strengthen and broaden its methods for regularly collecting and analysing feedback for both academic and non-academic services and ensuring that action on feedback is provided to the College community. ....                                                 | 31 |
| 14. | The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) provide further support for postgraduate students, for example through the provision of Student Handbooks. ....                                                                                                                                                | 32 |

- 15. The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement a recruitment and selection policy for academic and non-academic staff with supporting procedures which are clearly communicated and regularly reviewed..... 35
- 16. The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement a framework for academic career progression along with a formalised scheme for rewarding excellence, including research output..... 36
- 17. The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement a formal system for handling staff severance along with an appropriate appeals process..... 36
- 18. The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement formal mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating staff training, performance appraisal, workloads and staff satisfaction on a regular basis..... 37

## 1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The overall governance and management of MCUC appears committed, cohesive and mostly sound although clarity in the differentiation of roles between the Board of Directors (BoD) and Board of Trustees (BoT) is required. There are well-written Strategic Plans, in line with the College's mission and vision, but the Panel saw limited evidence of plans to move the strategic direction forward. The Panel is of the view that MCUC should develop operational plans with clear aims where progress against goals is reported regularly and matched against key performance indicators. Clear lines of communication and reporting between committees with regard to the operational plans need to be articulated with an indication of how these lines of communication link to the Academic Board and BoD.

### 1.1 *Mission, Vision and Values*

MCUC's mission statement is:

*"...to enable students to contribute effectively to the society by providing an innovative learning and teaching environment that stresses intellectual discipline, creativity, problem solving and personal responsibility". (Portfolio, p.7)*

The mission, vision and values were developed in 2001-2002 as a result of discussions with academic management and staff and were revised during the current self-study (Portfolio, p.7). During its visit and interviews at MCUC, the Panel was satisfied that there had been a review process that resulted in evidenced change that is representative of MCUC's thrust and direction. The Panel found evidence consistent with MCUC's vision, which refers to "a dynamic environment that fosters knowledge, values and sustainable employment skills", having been developed in line with Oman's Economic Vision (published in *Vision 2020* in 1995 by the Ministry of National Economy) as claimed by the College (Portfolio, p.8).

MCUC has invested time and effort in articulating its mission and vision. It prides itself on its quality of teaching and learning and has a clear idea of what an ideal graduate of MCUC should be. The academic leadership was able to clearly articulate organisational values and explain policy initiatives to the Panel. Within the College, the Panel saw signs of effective leadership at the top, cohesiveness within teams and a commitment to MCUC and to its quality culture.

#### **Commendation 1**

**The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for clearly articulating and communicating its mission and vision, and for encouraging a quality culture throughout the institution.**

As research begins to play a more significant role in MCUC's activities, the College's mission and vision now needs to be revised to reflect this (see section 4.1. below).

### 1.2 *Governance*

The highest decision making body for MCUC is the Board of Directors (BoD). It is also the legal body representing shareholders of the body corporate that owns MCUC. The BoD consists of both shareholders and non-shareholders. In June 2008, a Council of Trustees (later renamed Board of Trustees (BoT)) with representation from outside the body corporate and from the Ministry of Higher Education was established. Reporting to both bodies is the Academic Board which oversees all academic activities. Organisationally, the Dean is the executive head of MCUC, chairs the Academic Board and leads the Academic Management Team. The Panel was

informed by the BoD and the BoT that the Dean is chief executive officer of both the body corporate and the MCUC.

The Panel examined documentation provided by MCUC which included the annual reports of the body corporate, the terms of reference of the BoD, the BoT and the Academic Board as well as available meeting records. Discussions were held with members of the respective Boards. Representatives of the BoD and of the BoT interviewed seemed to have a shared understanding of the educational objectives of the College. The Panel was informed by the BoD and the BoT that the body corporate will not focus on short term profits and will continue to invest in MCUC's future. The Panel is satisfied that the decision-making processes in place ensure that academic decisions are taken at the level of the Academic Board

### **Commendation 2**

**The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for the commitment of the Board of Directors to the College's educational objectives.**

In spite of its efforts, the Panel was unable to verify the exact role of the newly established BoT since there is discrepancy in how its role is defined on paper and how it is defined by members of the BoD and the BoT. The Panel noted that the BoD themselves understood their respective roles in governance and demonstrated a commitment to the educational objectives and long term vision of the College while respecting the independence of the academic decision making processes. The Panel was unable to find evidence of involvement by the BoD or the BoT in the self-study and self-review process. As the BoT begins to play a more active role, MCUC needs to review and re-define the distribution of powers and responsibilities between the BoD and the BoT, especially with regard to the lines of reporting and communication between themselves, the Academic Board and with the Dean.

### **Recommendation 1**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) review the terms of reference and responsibilities of the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees in order to clarify their roles and lines of reporting in relation to the College management structures.**

## **1.3 Management**

MCUC states that "Shared management is a principal feature of MCUC" and "the College organizational structure is intended to be as flat as possible and has been quite effective in terms of decision making and responsiveness" (Portfolio, p.11). The College Dean is the most senior manager and is assisted by the Deputy Dean and the Academic Management Team (AMT).

The Panel noted the cohesiveness of the management team and recent developments in respect of committee structures (see section 1.4 below) although it felt that there was a need for more clarity in the functions of both policy-making and operational committees to ensure a clear understanding of their respective responsibilities. While acknowledging MCUC's observation that "it is practically difficult to involve all levels of staff in the decision-making process" (Portfolio, p.13), from the interviews the Panel recognised the need for wider staff representation and for staff surveys to be carried out on the effectiveness of communication strategies.

MCUC claims that the current management structure has been effective in "terms of planning, initiating action and responding to situations" (Portfolio, p.12); however, the management team needs to decide which key performance indicators will be used to measure effectiveness.

#### 1.4 *Committee Structure*

MCUC states:

*“The primary internal mechanism through which MCUC manages its activities and functions is a comprehensive committee structure” (Portfolio, p.13)*

MCUC has identified a comprehensive yet complex committee structure to which to allocate responsibilities and to encourage staff participation (Portfolio, p.15). The implementation of the latest version of the structure is at an early stage. Processes need to be developed to ensure clear lines of demarcation and communication.

An issue not readily apparent in the current committee structure is the possible overlap of the mandate between the committees and the unit heads in the line management function. The Panel detected a degree of confusion in its discussion with concerned staff members, especially with regard to the participation in the budgeting process and in the exercise of discretion over the application of resources. The Panel concludes that MCUC should articulate clear lines of communication and reporting between committees (such as regular, minuted meetings) that show how reports are forwarded to the Academic Board for consideration and action. MCUC could consider simplifying the committee structure to achieve this and to ensure that all committees have clear terms of reference which are well communicated. The College needs to decide whether the committees have a management or purely advisory role.

#### **Recommendation 2**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) devote further efforts to clarify and strengthen its committee structure, with particular emphasis on mandate, lines of reporting and lines of communication.**

#### 1.5 *Institutional Affiliations for Programmes and Quality Assurance*

MCUC has had an affiliation with the University of Bedfordshire (UoB) (formerly University of Luton) since 1998 and its programmes lead to a UoB award. The College has recently had its status changed from a UoB ‘Associate College’ to a UoB ‘Accredited College’, providing MCUC with greater autonomy and reflecting the positive ongoing relationship between the two institutions.

One of the strengths of MCUC is its partnership with the UoB and the impact of this on the way that the academic programmes are managed. The admission process and streaming of students are rigorous and there are established mechanisms that contribute to ensuring high standards and consistency in academic areas. The Panel recognises the impact of the relationship on the development of quality assurance systems, which includes use of external examiners, robust validation processes and annual programme monitoring.

#### **Commendation 3**

**The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for developing an effective relationship with the University of Bedfordshire which has had a positive impact on the development of quality assurance systems and benchmarking of its programmes.**

In 2007, MCUC started to offer the MA TESOL awarded by University of Leeds (UoL), UK. Here, the academic link between the two institutions is less well-established and the history of collaboration is very short. This part-time Master’s Programme was developed in the UK and is delivered by visiting faculty from UoL. MCUC’s role is limited to providing the facilities and the logistical support (Portfolio, p.16). The participation of MCUC staff in both the quality assurance

and the teaching activities is minimal. The Panel is of the view that MCUC needs to develop, in conjunction with UoL, mechanisms to allow greater involvement of MCUC in the quality assurance of this programme. In addition to QA responsibilities being shared, this could allow for stronger local input in both the contextualization of the curriculum and in the delivery of the TESOL programme itself.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that, in cases where a programme is developed off-site and delivered by another HEI, Majan College (University College) need to ensure that adequate quality assurance mechanisms are in place and that there is appropriate local input and contextualisation in curriculum design and delivery.**

## **1.6 Strategic Plan**

In 2007-2008, five-year Strategic Plans were developed for the six main areas of strategic focus (Business Development, Teaching and Learning, Student Services and Support, Resources and Facilities, Human Resource Management and Research) emphasizing MCUC's key priorities. The Panel supports the process of MCUC in developing its Strategic Plan with the collaborative involvement of the institution as exemplified by the sense of a "Majan Community Spirit". The committee members and the staff the Panel met demonstrated a shared understanding of the Strategic Plan. Some claimed direct participation in the preparation process and most were satisfied that they were given sufficient opportunity to input into the setting of the strategic direction and the development of the Strategic Plans.

### **Commendation 4**

**The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for its participative process in developing its Strategic Plans and involvement of the institution as a whole.**

It was evidenced there was no Strategic Plan between 2005 and 2008. The Panel agrees with MCUC that strategic planning needs to include a continuous evaluation strategy from the outset (Portfolio, p.18) and be ongoing, with progress against key performance indicators and operational targets reported. The Panel reviewed a staged development plan but an overall resource strategy with planned provisions corresponding to the targets or the milestones appeared to be lacking. Indications of possible financial provisions, even if subject to budget, should be of great help to the committees and heads of academic and administrative units in discharging their mandates.

To allow for longer term planning beyond 2013, identified as an area for improvement, MCUC should consider establishing one overarching Strategic Plan. This should inform all areas of its activities with a clear outline of its overall strategy in terms of future student profiles, future programme developments, the latter to include the choice of disciplines offered, a future vision for the research function of the MCUC, and generally outlining strategy for delivering the College mission.

## **1.7 Operational Planning**

MCUC states that "Operational planning is...considered part of the strategic planning process" (Portfolio, p.19). The five Strategic Plans (see section 1.6 above) are presented in the form of action plans. However, the Panel was unable to find evidence of robust operational plans at department or committee level. MCUC needs to monitor the management and operational aspects of its Strategic Plans, showing how the strategic intent is to be achieved in a measurable manner. The College would benefit from developing operational plans with clear objectives and

a resources strategy to implement these objectives which have been identified in the Strategic Plan.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop operational plans with clear objectives, key performance indicators and resources planning to support the implementation of the Strategic Plans.**

#### **1.8 Financial Management**

MCUC is a public listed company on the Oman Stock Exchange and the Panel is satisfied that it seems to be well managed in terms of its financial arrangements, with the Board committed to continued investment. Regular financial audits have been carried out by external auditors. However, the Panel was unable to find evidence of a clear and consistent link between strategic, operational and financial planning (see Recommendation 4 above).

#### **1.9 Risk Management**

MCUC recognises that “risk management is an integral part of sound management” (Portfolio, p.20). Whilst MCUC includes a risk register as part of its statutory internal auditor’s reports, the Panel found little evidence of systemic risk analysis. This needs to be addressed, particularly in terms of maximising effectiveness and the allocation of resources in proportion to the apparent risk associated with each of MCUC’s operations. The College has developed action plans based on the internal auditor’s reports but risk analysis should be conducted on regular basis with staff consultation to enable MCUC to take action or apportion resources appropriately.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement a risk management process which is regularly reviewed.**

#### **1.10 Policy Management**

MCUC states that academic policies and regulations have been developed in conjunction with its affiliate, UoB (Portfolio, p.20). A wide range of policy documents are contained in the *Quality Assurance Manual* although these are mostly related to academic areas. These are managed and reviewed through the Quality Assurance Committee. The Panel agrees with MCUC that there is a need to monitor and review policies for both academic and non-academic activities and supports the College’s plans to address this area.

#### **Affirmation 1**

**The Oman Accreditation Council affirms the need for Majan College (University College) to monitor and review policies for non-academic areas.**

#### **1.11 Entity and Review Systems**

MCUC established a Quality Audit Department in 2000 with a mission to promote “a culture of continuous self-analysis and review from which improvement initiatives are identified and implemented” (Portfolio, p.21). A range of review procedures for programmes are described including feedback mechanisms, use of committees and annual monitoring reports with action plans. Although the responsibility for quality assurance processes rests with a quality assurance department, the Dean plays an active role in this area.

As noted in section 1.10 above, MCUC needs to develop review systems for non-academic areas. The Panel agrees with MCUC that it should focus on improving data collection and analysis (e.g. Portfolio, p.78) in order to support its planning and review systems.

### **1.12 Student Grievance Process**

MCUC states:

*“MCUC is committed to providing its students with a supportive learning environment which allows students to seek feedback, voice their grievances and complaints” (Portfolio, p.24)*

MCUC appears to have a clear student grievance process in place. There are clear processes and procedures for dealing with both academic appeals and student complaints which are clearly communicated (through the *Quality Assurance Manual* and the Student Handbook). This was confirmed in interviews with students and staff. MCUC now needs to develop and implement plans to formally review and evaluate the effectiveness of its student grievance process.

### **1.13 Health and Safety**

MCUC outsources its health and safety services to professional agencies (Portfolio, p.25), such as secondment of staff to the College from a Medical Centre. The College has identified areas that need to be addressed such as emergency evacuation drills and training first aiders. However, the Panel did not see a comprehensive MCUC Health and Safety policy. MCUC should consider developing a health and safety policy that includes preparedness such as in health and safety equipment; first aid kits; a fire safety system; awareness of health and safety instructions and drills; orientation sessions; and public health notices. Principal health and safety policies need to be enforced, requiring staff and students to show they have read health and safety instructions and are obliged to follow them.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement health and safety policies and procedures which are regularly monitored and clearly communicated to the College community.**

### **1.14 Oversight of Associated Entities (e.g. owned companies)**

This area was not considered in the scope of the audit as MCUC does not own or control any companies or other entities.

## 2 STUDENT LEARNING BY COURSEWORK PROGRAMMES

Majan College (University College) claims that a ‘commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of education through its...programmes...is inherent in all decisions’ (Portfolio, p.2). The Panel found a number of areas of strength to support the validity of this claim and also some areas for further improvement in the delivery of coursework programmes.

This section of the Portfolio describes some good practices in student learning and management of programme delivery. MCUC has developed a profile for a successful graduate and now needs to ensure that elements of this are embedded in its learning outcomes. Over the years, the College has developed a robust approach to the review and development of programmes and to the monitoring of teaching quality. Data relevant to these areas has been provided but more analysis of this could be of value to the College.

### 2.1 *Graduate Attributes and Student Learning Objectives*

MCUC has defined a set of ‘generic attributes’ that it aims to instil in graduates (Portfolio, p.26). The mission specifies a range of what may be considered generic skills – intellectual discipline, creativity, problem solving and personal responsibility (Portfolio, p.8). The graduate attributes initiative is laudable as it allows MCUC to define clearly the profile of an MCUC graduate. However, the Panel was unable to establish how those very relevant and ambitious attributes were translated into everyday educational practice or communicated to the stakeholders.

Graduates reported that they had developed key skills while studying at MCUC, namely leadership; communication skills; time management; presentation skills and capacity for group work. However, there was a general lack of awareness of the MCUC generic attributes as such. Establishing a set of attributes requires that they quite visibly and logically filter down into the curriculum as a set of specific generic outcomes. These in turn need to be supported by specific teaching and learning input with measurements of achievement. There is also need for staff training to deliver those outcomes and a strategy to ensure that all module handbooks and teaching materials include reference to the particular attributes to be developed by the module.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) ensure that its graduate attributes are embedded throughout the curriculum and explicitly communicated to students through module materials provided.**

### 2.2 *Curriculum*

MCUC aims to develop programmes that are ‘robust, cohesive and well integrated while encompassing the desired skills and knowledge’ (Portfolio, p.29). It benchmarks outcomes against international universities. Initially MCUC operated under the UoB programme framework but the Panel was informed during the visit that this had now changed, with MCUC having greater autonomy in terms of developing programmes and student assessment which was gained recently through the acquisition of UoB ‘Accredited College’ status as referred to in section 1.5 above. The MA TESOL programme is validated and reviewed by the University of Leeds in the UK. MCUC has no involvement in this process (see Recommendation 3 above).

The Panel concluded that the validation and review process for MCUC’s own programmes, based on the UoB procedures, is robust. The process is reflective, carried out annually, and based on data collected through student results, progression, feedback, external examiners reports, module reports, and self-reflection (Portfolio, p.31). It informs the Faculties’ Annual Monitoring Report

(AMR) which includes an update on changes resulting from the previous year. The examples of AMR presented to the Panel contained evidence of good practice and this was supported by feedback from staff during the visit.

### **Commendation 5**

**The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for the rigour of processes used to develop, validate and monitor the quality of its own coursework programmes.**

Examples of changes undertaken as a result of annual monitoring were considered by the Panel. Not all Faculties, however, seem to make the same level of use of the data. In particular, students' evaluations were not always systematically reported in ways that are readily accessible to the reader or make remedial action feasible.

The Panel noted that the College currently runs three-year programmes (360 credit points) that lead to an award of a bachelor degree. According to the Oman Qualifications Framework (OQF), a degree should be either 4 years long or 480 credit points. The Panel confirmed that all programmes on offer at the time of the audit visit had been licensed by the Ministry of Higher Education.

## **2.3 Student Entry Standards**

Admission to MCUC is open to Omani and non-Omani students who meet the entry requirement based on both Ministry of Higher Education and UoB or UoL requirements (Portfolio, p.33). Prospective students are admitted directly to undergraduate programmes if they meet academic requirements and show evidence of Band 6 IELTS otherwise they enter the Foundation Programme.

The College has a well developed process for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) in order to assess students who come with previously completed studies. The APL procedures and streaming of students on entry demonstrate a sound and mature approach to widening access to higher education. A system has been developed by MCUC to evaluate the effectiveness of the APL procedures and to monitor the performance of students. The Panel concluded that there is a process in place to ensure APL students get adequate support and recognition from the point of entry to MCUC. The Panel supports the intention of MCUC to further enhance the monitoring of APL students and to provide more support as necessary. MCUC intends to provide separate induction, monitoring and co-ordination in order to support APL students.

### **Affirmation 2**

**The Oman Accreditation Council affirms the intention of Majan College (University College) to streamline Accreditation of Prior Learning procedures and to provide separate induction and monitoring for students in this category.**

## **2.4 Foundation Programme**

“The objective of the Foundation programme is to bridge the gap between the secondary schools and HE requirements particularly in terms of English language proficiency and academic and study skills” (Portfolio, p.33). MCUC's Foundation Programme includes English, IT and numeracy and also focuses on developing academic and study skills. The English department facilities include opportunities for students to study individually or in supervised groups to improve their language skills. The College intends to bridge any gaps between its learning outcomes for mathematics and IT and those in Oman's Academic Standards for General Foundation Programmes.

### **Affirmation 3**

**The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)'s plans to align the learning outcomes of its Foundation Programme with Oman's Academic Standards for General Foundation Programmes.**

#### **2.5 Teaching Quality**

The overall MCUC approach for enhancing teaching and learning is described as a 'student-centred' approach (Portfolio, p.35). The self-study described some of the learning and teaching methods adopted by the academic programme teams. These included a range of lectures, tutorials, as well as case studies, use of PowerPoint, group work and guest lecturers from industry. The College also set out a well-developed rationale for its approach to teaching at the three different levels (corresponding to the three years of study) in programmes (Portfolio, pp.36-37) and recognised the need to do further work to implement these approaches.

The Panel concluded that while some progress has been made towards the aim of being 'student-centred' there is evidence that more can be done to support students' learning in order to meet their individual learning goals. It was reported that approximately 300 students (around 19% of the student population) use the library on a regular basis. Further work needs to be done to develop the capacity of students and staff to use information resources for independent learning. Among the strategies that might be used to this end is an information literacy programme jointly developed and offered by academic and professional library staff. The College could also consider the range of mechanisms available to develop teaching staff in relation to the pedagogy of adult learning and the methods that are most effective in ensuring independent learning capacity in students.

MCUC has a range of mechanisms for evaluating the quality of teaching including a peer review process used for staff development and dissemination of good practice and a student feedback form at the end of each semester. Focus group meetings have also been held with students. Feedback indicates that the quality of teaching is generally good, and this was confirmed in interviews with students who praised the availability and friendliness of the staff.

MCUC indicated that the Teaching Excellence Committee had developed Teaching Standards and these were provided to the Panel. However, it was not clear how the Teaching Standards are communicated to staff, or how they are implemented and monitored. No reference is made to them in the peer review of teaching. The Panel suggests that MCUC consider how these standards might be better integrated into the approach to assessing teaching quality and how they might inform the planned framework for career progression and promotion. The College might also consider how the student surveys carried out by the Teaching Excellence Committee (Portfolio, p.7) might be linked to the efforts to evaluate teaching quality.

#### **2.6 Plagiarism**

MCUC's approach to academic integrity is pro-active and positive. A robust programme of plagiarism awareness is in place, supported by a number of mechanisms (induction, student handbook, module components). The plagiarism detection software *Turnitin* is used to detect plagiarism and also as a formative tool for students.

Students confirmed that good academic practices are taught in the disciplines, with specific reference to examples that were meaningful to them. The awareness of this issue by both the staff and the student communities was judged by the Panel to be at a level comparable with international good practice.

## Commendation 6

**The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for its systematic approach to tackling plagiarism including the use of appropriate software by staff and students and the inclusion of academic integrity requirements throughout the College.**

One reservation concerns the extent to which students who do not come through the Foundation programme are supported to deal with academic integrity issues. While there was no evidence that currently the small number of students who are admitted directly to undergraduate study have problems regarding academic integrity, the Panel suggests the College ensures there are no gaps in the exposure of all full-time and part-time students to appropriate support.

The Panel also formed the view that overall statistics on plagiarism offences and data from the Unfair Means Committees should be subject to scrutiny by the Academic Board as well as the Examination Committees. This would enable the Academic Board to see patterns across the institution and take steps to remedy recurring problems.

### 2.7 *Student Placements*

Work-based learning is not a compulsory part of the curriculum at MCUC but all students are required to have some exposure to industry in order to complete case studies, or real-life projects. The self-study acknowledged the difficulty of guaranteeing systematic exposure to work placement for all students (Portfolio, pp.42-43). According to data provided, only 35% of students were provided with industry training in 2007 and 17% in 2008.

However, Student Services offers as many inter-semester placements as it can muster. The students the Panel spoke to who had been on student placements were satisfied both the services provided by the College and with the placements they were offered. A number of alumni indicated that they had been able to find definitive employment with the employers who had hosted them on placements, confirming the usefulness of student placements. The College indicated that it has plans to fine-tune the programme to ensure that the placements are 'more focused and meaningful' (Portfolio, p.44). The Panel agrees with this intention, particularly as opportunities for student placement are scarce.

### 2.8 *Assessment Methods, Standards and Moderation*

Four principles underpin assessment regulations at programme and module level: accessibility, consistency, comprehensiveness and external standards (Portfolio, p.44). Assessment design is scrutinized through a system of 'internal peer review' prior to sending to MCUC's External Examiners for approval, and further discussions. It appeared to the Panel that a lot of effort goes into designing assessments. Assessment design is also regularly reviewed through the annual programme review.

There are procedures in place for marking and moderation of student work, and College mentors support new staff through this process. Blind and double marking procedures are used with student work in some parts of the College.

Evidence of good practice was identified by External Examiners, although some comments were made about developing more critical forms of assessment at Level 3. The Panel agrees with the External Examiners that a higher level of consistency across the different faculties can be achieved through more standardisation of marking and other procedures. It was noted that a staff workshop on "Criterion-based marking" had been delivered to support this.

**Affirmation 4**

**The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College) in its efforts to move towards greater variety and consistency in its approaches to assessment tasks.**

**2.9 Academic Security and Invigilation**

MCUC claims that “Assessment security and invigilation is given greatest emphasis” (Portfolio, p.50). Detailed guidelines for staff are provided in MCUC’s *Quality Assurance Manual*. In 2008, MCUC carried out an internal audit to review its procedures in these areas and have made adjustments in the light of its findings, e.g. improving security of assessment packs. Students interviewed commented on the high level of security they were exposed to during examinations. Following the Panel’s consideration of the evidence, the procedures for security were judged to be robust.

**Commendation 7**

**The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for the strong academic security and invigilation system in place.**

**2.10 Student Retention and Progression**

The College reported an overall student retention rate of over 97% and provided data to show relativities between programme areas. These retention rates are very high, by international standards, and this is an area where MCUC is to be commended. These results may be read in conjunction with the dedication of staff and the positive perception of MCUC in Oman as reported by external stakeholders in interviews.

**Commendation 8**

**The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for having systems in place that support a high level of student retention.**

The Panel noted that surveys of students suggested they were critical of the available facilities (see section 9.1 ) but this does not seem to have a major impact in terms of student retention.

**2.11 Graduate Destinations and Employability**

MCUC claims that College graduates enjoy a high level of employability (Portfolio, p.53). The ethos of the College, which as a city-based institution serves the business and government sectors, orients it towards establishing good relations with organisations well placed to influence the employment of MCUC graduates. The Panel heard positive accounts from graduates and employers of the proactive approach of the College placement service but also about the activities of individual academic staff who frequently contact employers with a direct recommendation on an individual student showing promise. Representatives from industry were impressed with the quality of MCUC graduates. However, as MCUC notes, “formal destination data is not available for all students” (Portfolio, p.53), data which would have supported the anecdotal evidence. The College should consider developing a mechanism for collecting, benchmarking and analysing data on graduate destinations and employability.

The employer surveys of 2006 and 2008 show good practice in finding out the needs and priorities of employers in relation to the MCUC graduates and attempting to track changes over time (Portfolio, p.28). However, the Panel felt that more analysis of the data from the surveys would have been appropriate with development of explanations of patterns in the results.

### 3 STUDENT LEARNING BY RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

MCUC does not offer research programmes as defined in the Quality Audit Scope note of the OAC's *Quality Audit Manual* (p.22) and this area was not included in the Portfolio. An element of student research is embedded within level three of the undergraduate academic programmes and within the MBA programme. The Panel considered an overview of project supervision within undergraduate coursework programmes which showed that research work is effectively integrated into the programmes. Student research will be an aspect for development as the College builds its capacity for staff research and consultancy according to the aspirations set out in its Strategic Plan.

For MBA students, whether supervised by UoB or MCUC, it is important that these arrangements are clearly defined and publicised prior to the commencement of the programme. Postgraduate students would benefit from having a research student guide to ensure clarity of expectation. A policy for supervision of MBA students needs to be set out and clearly communicated.

#### **Recommendation 8**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop clear policies and guidelines for postgraduate supervision and support for student research.**

## 4 STAFF RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY

MCUC is designated as a University College so there is an expectation that the institution will carry out research in accordance with the institution's obligations as a University College. These obligations include the following:

*“A University College must engage in advanced research relevant to local and national needs” (ROSQA, Executive Summary, p.3).*

It is clear that there is a strong drive from senior management and commitment from the Board of Directors to engage staff in research. This will need to be reflected in the College's mission and vision. The definition of what is considered as research, and what can and cannot be funded by the College is set out clearly in the MCUC Research Policy although the College needs to develop clear research key performance indicators/targets.

### 4.1 *Research Planning & Management*

MCUC has developed a *Strategic Plan for Research for 2008-2013* with two key goals: to engage more staff in scholarly and research activities and to carry out more collaborative research projects with local industry. The Panel was provided with a set of Research Policies and Procedures and informed that the research and scholarly activities of the College are managed by the Research Committee. The Research Committee is representative of all staff across the College. The Committee might wish to consider whether it is an adequate strategy to renew representatives each year as, for example, a three-year cycle might give staff more time to adapt and relate their engagement with the Strategic Plan targets. The Committee has met to translate the Strategic Plan into a research policy, but was not directly involved in the drawing up of the Strategic Plan.

#### **Affirmation 5**

**The Oman Accreditation Council agrees with Majan College (University College) that staff research is an opportunity for improvement and supports its efforts in activating plans for long term capacity building.**

The key element missing for the development of the research profile of MCUC is an overarching strategy outlining plans for the future, and targets to get there. The targets and milestones identified in the Strategic Plan do not clearly indicate how these are going to be met, through which channels, and with what resources. The College also needs to outline its aspirations at the level of the mission which currently does not explicitly mention research. The Panel was informed that the College wished to base its research efforts on applied research with strong connections and service to industry and business. The Panel formed the view that the existing strong relationship with UoB along with the growing link to UoL could provide a good foundation and source of advice to MCUC in its efforts to develop its strategies for a detailed research management plan to include key research fields linked through key performance indicators/targets.

#### **Recommendation 9**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College), as part of its Strategic Plan for research, develop specific key performance indicators and targets in line with available resources.**

## **4.2 Research Performance**

The College provided information that recorded academic staff involvement in 70 research and related activities in last five years. However, given that 30% of staff were described as holding doctorates, the Panel considered the performance could have been higher while acknowledging that a number of the staff with doctorates might have been recent appointees to MCUC and the focus of development in recent times has been on developing quality programmes.

Evidence was found in interviews and documentation (Portfolio, p.54) that staff were entitled to ten research days per annum, although it was stated that staff do not always take this opportunity. The Panel were not able to detect how the output resulting from this entitlement was measured and monitored. A strong focus seems to be on faculty attending national and international conferences. Refereed publications are encouraged but the output is so far quite low and the Panel suggests that MCUC devise a target of a minimum number of research journals in line with its research capacity. The Panel was able to affirm (see Affirmation 5) the recognised need for research capacity building (Portfolio, p.56) but was unable to find evidence of how the expertise of UoB and UoL was capitalised on to enhance MCUC's own research profile.

In line with its Research Strategic Plan, the College needs to develop clear performance indicators and targets to support its aspirations in the research area (see Recommendation 6). Likewise, its research policy, with links to an appraisal and reward systems, together with adequate research funding, needs to be reviewed to pave the way for capacity and capability building in the research domain. The case of staff not yet qualified at PhD level could be used as a lever to boost incentives and build capacity. In developing a scheme of incentives it will be important for MCUC to require that outputs of research lead to publication in addition to the criteria listed in its Research Policies and Procedures.

While the College acknowledges that the focus has been on teaching and learning rather than research and the basic infrastructure appears to be in place, there is much work to be done for MCUC to develop the potential of the staff to undertake research in a sustainable manner. The Panel supports the College's plans to improve in this area.

## **4.3 Research Funding Schemes**

The Panel found evidence of investment in staff research and of a commitment to research from the Boards of Directors, and of Trustees. At the time of the audit, the research budget represented 1% of the MCUC's budget which amounted to OMR 25,000. For the longer term the Panel considered that this may need to be increased to sustain research as well as the requirements for research infrastructure including ejournals and edatabases although it recognised there is limited access to electronic resources via UoB.

## **4.4 Consultancy Activities**

The College has established the Majan Professional Development Centre (MPDC) and has aspirations to extend the number and range of consultancies it undertakes. The Panel heard about two existing consultancies (Shell and the Ministry of Interior) but could find no evidence of a clear strategy for engaging more widely with local or national industries. This will be essential if MCUC is to be successful in applied research as MPDC can provide an avenue to joint applied research ventures. This gap should be addressed in the detailed research planning suggested in section 4.1. above.

#### **4.5 Ethics and Biosafety**

MCUC has a research ethics policy in its Research Policies and Procedures. The College needs to ensure that this is communicated to all staff and that there is a system in place to monitor the effectiveness of this policy.

#### **4.6 Intellectual Property**

MCUC states that “All academic staff are expected to ensure that all reproduction of intellectual properties are appropriately acknowledged” (Portfolio, p.55). The College needs to develop a more comprehensive policy which incorporates all aspects of intellectual property rights and ensure that this is clearly communicated to staff and adherence to this policy is monitored.

#### **4.7 Professional Development for Research**

The College has acknowledged the need for long term capacity building plans if it is to achieve its goal as a significant applied research institution in the chosen areas of disciplinary research. One of the first steps should be an analysis of the profile of the individual staff members to ascertain their interests, research goals, and capacity.

#### **4.8 Research Commercialisation**

This is an area MCUC will need to develop as its research plans are being implemented.

#### **4.9 Research – Teaching Nexus**

MCUC’s recognition of the importance of integrating teaching and research to enhance the student experience was noted (Portfolio, p.55), as were the few examples of how this translated into some classroom activities, assessment strategies and staff research output. Given the embryonic set of activities around this theme, and the strategic advantage that would be gained through informing the local and national communities about latest pedagogic developments that underpin the curricula and from developing the area of research, the Panel would suggest a strategic approach to enhancing that nexus, with clear link to curriculum developments. For example, the College might investigate systematically, through the Research Committee, ways in which the nexus can be fostered in the curriculum, and draw up plans to further enhance it. MCUC could consider developing a research base to ensure that faculty remain current in their field which would underpin the teaching base.

### **Recommendation 10**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop a clear, consistent strategy to develop the research-teaching nexus which is clearly linked to curriculum development.**

## 5 INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

MCUC has had interactions with industry and government entities and some consultancy work has resulted from those interactions. There appears to be an element of serendipity in the way partnerships are formed with employers, and little evidence that employers are involved in a systematic way (through invitations, consultancies, or as advisory members of an academic board) in developing the curriculum.

External stakeholders the Panel met indicated that they found MCUC to be an institution with a good reputation, responsive and supportive. The interviews suggested that there was scope for a more systematic interaction with external stakeholders, particularly for establishing systematic liaison and disseminating MCUC's areas of expertise within the industry and the community.

### 5.1 *Industry and Community Engagement Planning & Management*

Realistically, MCUC sets as its immediate goal the building up of an applied research capability, working closely with the industries and meeting their immediate needs. Based on evidence to hand, the Panel was unable to satisfy itself that deliberate planning or concerted actions are in place. As an example, none of the faculty the Panel talked to was able to pinpoint regular liaison mechanisms with industries or professions on either the teaching or the research side. There has not been a practice of appointing industry advisory committees on the basis of academic disciplines or programmes although this is included in MCUC's action plans. Although at the time of the audit there were efforts to involve external stakeholders in the placement of, and the employment for, students, they are no substitute for well-serviced channels for communication and regular feedback.

#### **Recommendation 11**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop a formal, systematic approach to building relationships with industry and the community, including mechanisms for regular feedback and interaction with external stakeholders.**

### 5.2 *Relationships with Industry and Employers*

The Panel noted the positive relationships MCUC has with local business organisations and with its corporate social responsibility activities. In line with Recommendation 11, the Panel strongly suggests that MCUC develop plans and take immediate steps to involve industries and professions in the design and delivery of its curriculum as well as in the orientation of its applied research. MCUC needs to build on its active programme of student placement and employment services and ensure that it understands and is appropriately responsive to the needs of targeted industries and employers.

### 5.3 *Relationships with Professions*

MCUC states that it considers the standards of professional bodies when developing programmes, such as the inclusion of the ACCA profession certification standards into the BA Accounting degree programme (Portfolio, p.58). Although there are few professional bodies in Oman at present, MCUC could continue to look to developing relationships with relevant international professional bodies overseas. The College can consider these professional standards when developing and reviewing its programs.

#### **5.4 Relationships with Other Education Providers**

MCUC states that “In the spirit of academic collegiality and co-operation, MCUC is open to sharing and discussed its practices and systems with other providers” (Portfolio, p.58). MCUC has described a number of examples where it has worked actively with other HEIs and although it is not a priority area, there is evidence that liaison is taking place. However, what MCUC aims to gain from these relationships and how it evaluates outcomes from these relationships is not clear.

#### **5.5 Relationships with Alumni**

MCUC recognises that, up until recently, it did not have a systematic approach to developing and managing its relationship with its alumni. In its discussions with alumni, the Panel identified that most thought very highly of MCUC. They also commented on the fact that the College did not seek to keep in touch systematically with its alumni population. MCUC has not capitalised on this body of graduates neither to gain feedback nor to use them as a pool of experts or as contacts within industry. Alumni also commented that they were not approached for publicity purposes.

In February 2008 an alumni association, under the auspices of the MCUC management team, was formed. This is a promising start. Community building is an important aspect of the institution and the MCUC should not lose sight of the need and the advantages of keeping in close contact with its alumni. However, MCUC needs to develop a systematic approach to the collection and analysis of the tracking data of its alumni.

#### **Affirmation 6**

**The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College) in its establishment of an alumni association, recognising that the College needs to take full advantage of this initiative.**

#### **5.6 Relationships with the Community at Large**

MCUC recognises its corporate social responsibility and has been involved in a number of fund-raising activities with partners in the local community, including charity associations and educational networks (Portfolio, p.57). These have been well received by the College and external communities.

## 6 ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

MCUC “approaches its students and their needs from a holistic point of view” (Portfolio, p.59) and involves faculty members in the planning and managing of the College’s academic support services. The College recognises the importance of integrating and streamlining information technology with registry functions and intends to upgrade its registry software. It also intends to provide each student with an email facility. Although physical library facilities are reported to have improved, there is a pressing need for the College to enhance the library resources to meet its research aspirations. The Panel found evidence of improved IT facilities although an IT replacement plan needs to be formalised within the College Strategic Plan. The Panel also formed the opinion that there is a requirement for further resource planning to support ongoing IT literacy and skills training for students at all academic levels. During the visit the Panel noted that MCUC has a new student advising system in place but was unable to conclude whether this was functioning effectively.

### 6.1 *Academic Support Services Planning & Management*

Academic Support Services are planned and managed by the various committees with resource requirements for each faculty and department planned annually through a process of consultation (Portfolio, p.72). Whilst reference to learning resources also features in the College *Quality Assurance Manual*, central planning and organisation is not clear. The College’s *Resources and Facilities Strategic Plan: 2008 – 2013* includes the goal ‘to plan and provide adequate and quality resources to support the College’s mission and vision’ (p.4) but there is no indication of how this goal will be achieved. The Panel was unable to determine where the jurisdiction and responsibility lies for this key function and concluded that MCUC requires a clear delineation as to how these processes are managed as part of its overall strategy.

#### **Recommendation 12**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement an operational plan for its academic support services which is linked to clearly delineated responsibilities and adequate resources.**

### 6.2 *Registry (Enrolment and Student Records)*

The Registry’s mission is “to provide effective and efficient support to the College in achieving its objectives” (Portfolio, p.60). The Registry has developed a number of service objectives covering key areas of its activities: admissions, student records and providing internal liaison and coordination with all academic faculties and departments. MCUC has identified a weakness in the Registry system in that student data is manually collected and updated. It is in the process of updating its software in order to have an effective system for data collection and registration, including online registration.

#### **Affirmation 7**

**The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)’s plans to upgrade its registry software in order to improve its collection, tracking and analysis of student data.**

### 6.3 *Library*

A new library was opened in 2006 and includes the main library, a group study area and the Learning Resource Centre (LRC). Feedback from students (Portfolio, p.64) and interviews

indicated that, on the whole, students were satisfied with current library provision. Although the College library undertook a survey in 2008, analysis of the results is superficial and feedback could have been analysed in further depth. Students have access to international journals through the Athens system at UoB, although this has had problems in terms of speed. Multimedia materials have been ordered but the Panel was unclear how these are going to be incorporated within the existing library infrastructure. MCUC recognises that “students do not use the available journals as much as they should” (Portfolio, p.65) but there are no explicit strategies in place to address this. In light of its research aspirations, the Panel suggests that MCUC should augment the library facilities, including co-operative and inter-library networks, and increase the number of titles in line with its operational planning (see Recommendation 12 above).

#### **6.4 *Information and Learning Technology Services***

MCUC has invested in its IT facilities over the last 10 years and now has a wide range of IT facilities, including a fibre optic network and a wireless campus, a VLAN facility and the plan to create email accounts for all students as part of its proposed new registration software. The implementation and use of video-linking facilities with the UoB to enhance student learning is a positive addition. IT facilities are reviewed annually by the internal auditors and it is evident that the College recognises that the current ratio of one computer for three students is not an ideal situation, although this does not appear to adversely affect student learning, and that internet speed is restricted by the service provider beyond the control of MCUC. The Panel was made aware that some of the old and possibly outdated computers will be replaced but no clear plan for this was evidenced as part of the overall resources picture for IT goals in 2009. Although there is a Technology Advisory Committee it is recommended they have a clearer role to play (see Recommendation 12 above). The Panel noted that although the College does have local physical data backup and recovery, evidence was lacking for an off-site data backup and disaster recovery plan.

#### **6.5 *Academic Advising***

MCUC has established a new academic advising system in order to increase its support for students. Workshops on academic advising have been delivered to staff as part of the implementation of the new system. While MCUC recognises that there have been some challenges encouraging students to engage with the system, mechanisms need to be put in place to review and monitor the success of the new system with staff and students.

#### **6.6 *Student Learning Support***

MCUC has systems in place to identify students in need of extra support. This is provided through timetabled consultation hours with staff; the provision of extra classes and peer assisted learning schemes. The College needs to review how it monitors the effectiveness of its current system for providing student learning support. Interviews with staff and students highlighted the need for further support in providing the IT resources to develop students’ information literacy skills

#### **Recommendation 13**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement resource plans to support ongoing information literacy and skills training to support student learning.**

#### **6.7 *Teaching Resources***

Planning for teaching resources is managed through consultation with all departments (Portfolio, p.72). Staff and students interviewed seemed satisfied with the current teaching resources. The Panel noted that MCUC is moving towards IT based resources and training is in place for staff in

this area. Although the College has developed a *Resources and Facilities Strategic Plan: 2008-2013*, improvements to teaching resources are clearly linked to future campus developments. Long-term plans for teaching resources need to be considered in line with Recommendation 12 above.

## 7 STUDENTS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

According to MCUC, “student support services is [*sic*] intended to complement academic learning and pastoral care in order to maximise student learning” (Portfolio, p.73). MCUC has identified Student Support as one of the core areas of strategic focus, reflected in the *2008-2013 Student Support Strategic Plan*.

Subsequent to its review of the Portfolio and the audit visit, the Panel identified a number of areas with limited critical analysis in relation to student support services. Whilst MCUC recognises shortcomings and describes potential action for its full-time undergraduates seeking assistance with training or employment opportunities as well as improving extra-curricular services, the Panel believes there is an underlying need for the College to address the needs of its part-time student population, which constitute a significant part of the total student enrolment, and to improve its approach to student satisfaction. The Panel further endorses its earlier recommendation that MCUC develop specific objectives and key performance indicators to adequately encompass key areas of student support services, including appropriate planning and management, fully engage its part time students, more effectively gauge student satisfaction and stabilise its student health and advisory services.

### 7.1 *Students and Student Support Services Planning & Management*

MCUC acknowledges that this area could benefit from better planning and coordination across the institution (Portfolio, p.74). A Student Support Management Committee has been formed to manage and enhance the provision of Student Support Services. Whilst the current *2008-2013 Student Services Support Strategic Plan* outlines goals in this area, the Panel strongly endorses its earlier recommendation (Recommendation 4 above) for the College to develop specific operational goals with plans for their implementation.

### 7.2 *Student Profile*

Omani students make up 90-95% of MCUC’s student population. Of the 1607 students enrolled in undergraduate programmes in February 2008, around 40% of the population was female (Portfolio, p.3). Figures submitted to the Panel showed that part-time students make up 40% of the population. Over 60% of students are self-financing, with around 30% on either full or partial scholarships.

### 7.3 *Student Satisfaction and Climate*

MCUC advocates a “friendly though firm behaviour toward students” (Portfolio, p.75). Mechanisms are in place for students to give their views and voice their concerns (such as course committee meetings with students). Outcomes from these meetings are discussed at the Academic Board; however, there needs to be a more formal system for communicating actions taken to the student community. Although a number of surveys have been recently carried out with students, the Panel concluded that measurable student surveys should be regularly reviewed to measure, record and analyse how student satisfaction is progressing in order to respond appropriately.

#### **Recommendation 14**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) strengthen and broaden its methods for regularly collecting and analysing feedback for both academic and non-academic services and ensuring that action on feedback is provided to the College community.**

#### 7.4 *Student Behaviour*

MCUC states “Students are required to exert sufficient care and commitment in order to fulfil their role and special obligations as members of the academic community” (Portfolio, p76). Students are provided with a thorough induction on behaviour and conduct when entering the Foundation level and when they join the undergraduate programmes. Each faculty provides students with their own handbook which contains a Student Code of Conduct. The Panel found that there were neither separate handbooks outlining the code of conduct for postgraduate students nor for students enrolled on the UoL programme, an area that needs to be addressed.

##### **Recommendation 15**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) provide further support for postgraduate students, for example through the provision of Student Handbooks.**

The College Disciplinary Committee handles cases relating to student behaviour and the Panel during interviews sensed that students are treated fairly through a transparent and clearly communicated process.

#### 7.5 *Career and Employment Services*

MCUC states that periodic workshops on job seeking strategies are conducted (Portfolio, p.77). Those students seeking industry training or employment through the College Student Services and Placement Centre complete a form to give to an academic advisor. Whilst the employment record of the MCUC appears encouraging, the College needs to develop a systematic approach to data collection in relation to the effectiveness of its career and employment services, graduate destinations and feedback from employers. This area for improvement has been identified in the *2008-2013 Student Support Strategic Plan*, but as noted in Recommendation 4 above, an operational plan needs to be developed to implement suggested changes.

##### **Affirmation 8**

**The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)’s efforts to develop a proactive approach to its career and employment services.**

#### 7.6 *Student Finances*

MCUC provides a number of financial assistance mechanisms such as scholarships, discounts and flexible payment facilities to support students who have financial difficulties.

#### 7.7 *Accommodation, Catering and Transport*

Hostel accommodation is provided to students from outside the Muscat area, with free transport. The majority of students seeking hostel facilities have been accommodated. MCUC provides staff in the hostels and have formed a Hostel Committee which meets on a regular basis. Overall, those students in hostel accommodation seemed satisfied with the provision.

The College outsources its catering facilities; three catering companies have been employed in the last five years. MCUC acknowledges that finding caterers is a challenge but it needs to devise and implement a plan in order to meet the catering needs of the institution.

#### 7.8 *Medical and Counselling Facilities*

MCUC health services are outsourced (Portfolio, p.25 and p.80) although at the time of the Audit Visit the Panel was informed that MCUC was between contracts and consequently there were no

campus health facilities available. MCUC recognizes that it needs more staff with first aid certification and experience on campus. This area, however, is not included in the 2007-2008 staff training plan. Whilst there is a plan for a full-time counsellor to be appointed, there seems to be no progress in this area. MCUC needs to develop its medical and counselling facilities as part of its overall approach to health and safety, in line with Recommendation 6 above.

### **7.9 *International Student Services***

There are few non-Omani students enrolled in MCUC. The majority of non-Omani students at MCUC are already living in Oman. MCUC does support overseas students with a special induction and assistance with visas but this is a very small percentage of the student body.

### **7.10 *Social and Recreational Services and Facilities***

MCUC recognises that, up until recently, it has been reactive rather than proactive in this area. Students' feedback also indicates that student activities and facilities could be improved and in this respect the College's Strategic Plan for resources includes building a sport hall. The Panel met with student representatives from the Shabab Majan Group who are involved with promoting student activities. Such an initiative will support the College's plans for a more proactive approach in this area. The Panel was given to understand that there had been a general lack of enthusiasm from the students since many of them were part-time (40% of the total student population). MCUC needs to ensure that all members of the student community are taken into consideration when social and recreational services are being developed and implemented.

#### **Affirmation 9**

**The Oman Accreditation Council affirms that Majan College (University College) needs to increase student participation in activities and supports its plans to enhance this, for example through setting up the student activity group Shabab Majan.**

## 8 STAFF AND STAFF SUPPORT SERVICES

“In fulfilling its mission, MCUC aims to foster an organisational environment in which all staff...strive for excellence and fulfill their potential” (Portfolio, p.81). During the Audit Visit, the Panel noted the apparent high level of commitment and loyalty to the institution and its mission on the part of many MCUC staff. Meetings with staff confirmed that they are committed to contributing to a culture of dialogue and quality improvement. In discussions with students, there were many occurrences of positive feedback on staff who found that the MCUC distinguished itself from other institutions because of the ‘personal touch’ and the ‘friendliness’ of staff.

However, the institution cannot rely solely on good will and positive dispositions. Institutionally, there is an awareness of that a lot more needs to be done to develop and support staff. This has been put in the hands of the Staff Development Committee which has representation from all the Faculties. The College has established a programme of induction and mentoring for new staff which is a good way to start enhancing this aspect of the provision. The Panel concluded that whilst there is an awareness of what needs to be done in this area, there is a considerable distance to be covered in terms of developing and supporting staff services including professional development, rewarding performance, planning evidence based monitoring and appraising performance for career progression.

### 8.1 *Human Resources Planning & Management*

Human Resources planning occurs at two levels: as part of MCUC’s strategic focus (*2008-2013 HRM Strategic Plan*) and annually through the Heads of Faculty (Portfolio, p.82). The HRM Strategic Plan has two strategic goals: one focusing on staff recruitment and retention and the other “to provide an organisational environment that is conducive to self-reflection, evaluation, continuous improvement, transparency and growth” (HRM Strategic Plan, p.4).

The roles and job descriptions of staff sampled are well documented. Systems are also in place to monitor performance through appraisal and interviews with staff confirmed that the system seems to be working satisfactorily. What is missing is an overall route for career progression and promotions (see section 8.7 below). The Panel noted that MCUC is developing a succession plan, a revision of grade structures and a committee to consider staff development (Portfolio, p.89). The College also needs to consider developing and implementing a training plan for support staff. As mentioned above, MCUC needs to develop operational plans to support the implementation of its strategic vision (see Recommendation 4 above).

### 8.2 *Staff Profile*

In 2007/2008, MCUC had 57 academic staff and 54 administrative and support staff with female staff account for around 43% of the total staff (Portfolio, p.84). Staff come from around fifteen different countries, thus providing a multicultural working environment. The Panel noted that MCUC plans to increase the proportion of academic staff with doctoral qualifications, in line with its future research aspirations.

#### **Affirmation 10**

**The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)’s plans to increase the proportion of staff with PhD awards in order to support its future research aspirations.**

### 8.3 *Recruitment and Selection*

MCUC outlines its recruitment and selection process for academic staff in the Portfolio (p.84). The Panel was unable to find evidence on how systematic this is in terms of selection criteria, training for the selection of staff and where the responsibility lies in making the selection. According to the affiliation agreement with UoB, MCUC is responsible for the recruitment and selection of teaching staff and will consult with UoB on the suitability of such staff. However the College *Quality Assurance Manual* does not appear to contain a written policy or detail procedures available for staff recruitment. There is no feedback mechanism in place to ensure that the recruitment and selection process is appropriate and effective. The Panel was informed that applicants for academic positions are requested to give a teaching demonstration. The College is pro-active in seeking to recruit Omani local candidates. One of the stated strategic goals in the HRM Strategic Plan is to attract recruit and retain staff who provide added value to the organisation. It is not clear how MCUC intends to implement the plan, who will take overall responsibility or what centralised support will be provided.

#### **Recommendation 16**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement a recruitment and selection policy for academic and non-academic staff with supporting procedures which are clearly communicated and regularly reviewed.**

### 8.4 *Induction*

MCUC has established an induction programme for new staff which takes place at both a central and faculty level, supported by a mentoring scheme. There is a useful Staff Handbook which has pastoral as well as academic features. The induction process has been reviewed by the staff involved and actions taken as a result. This review could be carried out on a regular basis in future. Despite some lack of uniformity between departments being identified (Portfolio, p.86) which ought to be addressed to ensure fair and consistent treatment of staff, these are very good initiatives and appear to be much appreciated by staff. The Panel concluded that MCUC has effective staff induction, mentoring and support network processes in place.

#### **Commendation 9**

**The Oman Accreditation Council commends Majan College (University College) for setting up an effective staff induction and mentoring programme and providing a support network for new staff.**

### 8.5 *Professional Development*

There is an institution-wide programme of professional development for academic staff which covers some key areas of academic practice. Currently MCUC has a bottom-up approach to developing its staff development schedule; annual staff appraisal for individuals feed in to the schedule developed by Head of QA, who is responsible for academic professional development. Staff development sessions take place at department and college level; visits of external examiners also provide an opportunity for staff training workshops. Academic staff appear to be working to a set of 'teaching standards' which was established by the Teaching Excellence Committee. This is a relatively new initiative, and MCUC needs to record and monitor how this is embedded in the curriculum, how this informs the appraisal scheme, and how it might feed into the planned career development scheme for promotion. Specific attention should be paid to 'innovative' forms of teaching and assessment in line with the teaching and learning strategy outlined in the Strategic Plan.

The recently formed Staff Development Committee should support a more systematic approach to identifying and addressing training needs for academic and non-academic staff. MCUC needs

to ensure that training plans are aligned with the College's goals and objectives (such as building research capacity and first aid training).

#### **Affirmation 11**

**The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)'s plans to formalise the planning and delivery of staff development opportunities for all staff through the introduction of the Staff Development Committee.**

#### **8.6 Performance Planning and Review**

MCUC states that "the performance appraisal plays a significant role in providing feedback to staff thereby resulting in enhanced staff performance and identification of areas for development" (Portfolio, p.88). The Panel reviewed and was satisfied with MCUC's Performance Planning and Appraisal forms and guidelines although it could not find evidence for robust policies to deal with poor performance. Regular feedback on staff performance is sought from students at the end of a module and is forwarded to the QA Committee, the Teaching Excellence Committee, and the Dean. It is less clear how the feedback loop is closed, i.e. what actions are taken as a result of this feedback.

MCUC has introduced a system of peer observation and review although its role is not clear. The College needs to decide whether it is developmental, and therefore not linked to appraisal of performance, or used to judge staff performance, in which case a clear statement of how this is achieved needs to be established. Academic staff indicated that performance appraisal consisted of peer-review, Head of Faculty evaluation, and self-evaluation. MCUC needs to develop a clear, consistent process in this area and ensure that it is disseminated to all teaching staff.

#### **8.7 Promotion and Other Incentives**

Whilst the Panel was assured of academic staff loyalty to MCUC and that immediate material reward was not a priority, it was noted there was a lack of a clear career structure for staff with no evidence of promotion or staff research being linked to promotion. MCUC recognises the lack of structure for promotion (Portfolio, p.89) and intends to address this area but has no clear plans to do so.

#### **Recommendation 17**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement a framework for academic career progression along with a formalised scheme for rewarding excellence, including research output.**

#### **8.8 Severance**

Termination of staff contracts is either through non-renewal of contract or through dismissal (for example, for breach of the staff code of conduct). MCUC should develop a formal system for documenting severance and dismissals, e.g. records of exit interviews, with an appropriate appeals process in place.

#### **Recommendation 18**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement a formal system for handling staff severance along with an appropriate appeals process.**

### **8.9 Staff Organisational Climate and Retention**

There is an ethical code of conduct for staff which is clearly articulated in the Staff Handbook which provides guidelines for staff in dealing with students and colleagues. Although discussions with staff suggest that the organizational climate is collaborative and open, there is no evidence of regular surveying of staff as to their levels of satisfaction with the College. Whilst acknowledging that such a survey necessitates dedicated resources and some form of electronic data collection tool, the Panel strongly suggests that this would be a very useful mechanism to develop in order to fully understand enablers and barriers to efficiency within the academic and the staff communities.

MCUC is aware of the challenges facing staff retention, particularly in terms of academic staff, and it has developed strategies to improve retention, including more local and regional recruitment, improved remuneration and a revision of teaching loads (Portfolio, p.91). The Panel recommends that as part of that strategy, the institution reviews its approach to rewarding teaching excellence. MCUC also needs to look into developing and implementing a formal staff grievance process.

#### **Recommendation 19**

**The Oman Accreditation Council recommends that Majan College (University College) develop and implement formal mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating staff training, performance appraisal, workloads and staff satisfaction on a regular basis.**

### **8.10 Omanisation**

MCUC has been proactive in recruiting Omani staff with 14% Omani academic staff and 64% administrative staff of Omani origin. MCUC might want to consider plans for improving on those percentages in future years, bearing in mind its Strategic Plan to maintain diversity of staff in terms of nationality and ethnic background.

## 9 GENERAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND FACILITIES

MCUC has outlined its determination ‘to significantly improve its facilities and resources both in qualitative and quantitative terms such that it is comparable with international standards’ (Portfolio, p.8). The College has a range of mechanisms in place to oversee management of the facilities and engages consultants as necessary.

MCUC has been allocated land in another part of the capital area (Al Ma’abelah) and is still working through the strategic options for the development of this and the existing campus (Portfolio, p.93). There are plans to develop current facilities to improve social facilities for students. MCUC has an active marketing department but needs to develop mechanisms to measure its effectiveness.

### 9.1 *General Support Services and Facilities Planning and Management*

MCUC has developed a specific *Strategic Plan for Resources and Facilities* to “ensure that academic space and resources will cater for the individual needs of an increasing variety of students” (p.4). This Plan sets out some broad costings on development goals and the relative advantages and disadvantages of the Darsait and Ma’abalah sites in terms of the long term goals of the College. The current campus facilities in Darsait, Muscat, have been improved over the last twelve years with new buildings, adaptations and refurbishments. The result is an attractive campus that caters for approximately 2400 students (Portfolio, p.92) although the College is aware of some deficiencies that require attention, such as increasing the social facilities for students.

#### **Affirmation 12**

**The Oman Accreditation Council supports Majan College (University College)’s plans to develop current facilities with a view to increasing social space for students.**

### 9.2 *Public Relations and Marketing*

MCUC described a range of strategies and plans which are the responsibility of the Marketing and PR departments (Portfolio, p.93). The marketing budget has been significantly increased to allow further extension of strategies including school visits, branding exercises, consultation of external stakeholders and so on. While the Panel could see that a wide range of strategies were being used, there was a view that there needs to be more focus on efforts to maximise marketing impact particularly with the wider community served by MCUC. The College needs to undertake an exercise to produce a plan that will allow it to maximize the impact of its marketing effort over the coming years.

### 9.3 *Communication Services*

Information was provided on the range of communication methods used in the College including email, general meetings and meetings of the extensive range of academic committees. There is however a major gap in the tools available for communication with students, namely a student email system. As previously mentioned (see section 6 above), plans are under way to introduce a system and the Panel supports this initiative.

Discussions during the audit visit suggested that communication within the College was satisfactory, primarily because of the relatively small scale of the institution and the opportunities made available through the network of committees that oversee academic and related activities.

#### **9.4 *Facilities Management***

MCUC has divided facilities management into four areas: building and maintenance; grounds maintenance; services, supply and maintenance; and planning with project management. The day to day responsibility for managing the facilities is with the Head of Facilities and Administration. The Panel examined evidence of planning and oversight of facilities and the arrangements for on-going maintenance such as the Maintenance Report Register and concluded that this area was being satisfactorily handled.

## **APPENDIX A. AUDIT PANEL**

Dr. Rahul Arora (Panel Chairperson)  
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Oman Dental College  
Muscat  
Sultanate of Oman

Dr. Bakhit Al Mahri  
Dean  
Salalah College of Applied Sciences  
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Dr. Joelle Fanghanel  
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Prof. Mairéad Browne  
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University of Technology, Sydney  
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Mr. Peter Cheung  
Secretary General  
Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE)  
Hong Kong

Tess Goodliffe (Executive Officer)  
Oman Accreditation Council

## APPENDIX B. ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND TERMS

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

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACCA .....                | Association of Chartered Certified Accountants                                                                                                                                                                              |
| ADRI .....                | A four step, cyclical model for analysing a topic, comprising:<br>Approach → Deployment → Results → Improvement.                                                                                                            |
| AMR .....                 | Annual Monitoring Report                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| AMT .....                 | Academic Management Team                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| APL.....                  | Accreditation for Prior Learning                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 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.                                                                          |
| ASM.....                  | Additional Supporting Materials                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Call Back Interview ..... | An interview conducted by the Audit Panel towards the end of the Audit Visit for which it has invited specific people, usually at short notice, to respond to particular issues on which the Panel will require assistance. |
| 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.                                                                       |
| Executive Officer.....    | An OAC staff member assigned to an Audit Panel to provide professional guidance and support.                                                                                                                                |
| External Reviewer .....   | A Member of the OAC Register of External Reviewers; a person approved by the OAC Board to participate as a member of the OAC's various external review panels.                                                              |
| HEI.....                  | Higher Education Institution (also known as HEP – Higher Education Provider                                                                                                                                                 |
| HoF .....                 | Head of Faculty                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| IELTS.....                | International English Language Testing System                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 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> .             |
| MCUC .....                | Majan College (University College)                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| MoHE .....                | Ministry of Higher Education ( <a href="http://www.mohe.gov.om">www.mohe.gov.om</a> )                                                                                                                                       |
| OAC Board.....            | The governing body of the Oman Accreditation Council                                                                                                                                                                        |
| OAC.....                  | Oman Accreditation Council ( <a href="http://www.oac.gov.om">www.oac.gov.om</a> )                                                                                                                                           |
| OFI.....                  | Opportunity for improvement.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| OQF .....                 | Oman Qualifications Framework.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Panel Chairperson.....    | The Chairperson of the Audit Panel.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Panel Member .....        | An OAC External Reviewer who is a member of an Audit Panel.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Portfolio .....           | see <i>Quality Audit Portfolio</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Quality Assurance.....    | The combination of policies and processes for ensuring that stated intentions are met.                                                                                                                                      |

|                               |                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Quality Audit Portfolio ..... | The report produced as the result of a self study. Also forms the main submission made to the OAC by the HEI being audited.                           |
| Quality Audit Report.....     | A public report published by the OAC which presents the findings and conclusions of the Audit Panel's External Review of a HEI.                       |
| Quality Audit.....            | An independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the system and processes by which a HEI sets, pursues and achieves its mission and vision.          |
| Quality Enhancement.....      | The combination of policies and processes for improving upon existing <i>approach, deployment</i> and <i>results</i> .                                |
| Random Interview.....         | An interview conducted <i>in situ</i> by individual Panel Members during the Audit but separately from the main interview sessions.                   |
| Results.....                  | The third dimension of the ADRI cycle, which focuses on the evidence of the outputs and outcomes of a topic's <i>approach</i> and <i>deployment</i> . |
| ROSQA.....                    | Requirements of Oman's System of Quality Assurance                                                                                                    |
| SM.....                       | Supporting Materials                                                                                                                                  |
| System.....                   | In this Report, <i>system</i> refers to plans, policies, processes and results that are integrated towards the fulfilment of a common purpose.        |
| UoB.....                      | University of Bedfordshire, UK                                                                                                                        |
| UoL.....                      | University of Leeds, UK                                                                                                                               |



