OAQHE
Oman Association for Quality in Higher Education

THE OAQHE NEWSLETTER

# Quality Matters

ISSUE 01 · OCTOBER 2026 · QUARTERLY

THE THEME

## Building a shared culture of quality *from compliance to commitment*



ON THE COVER · P.04

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*President of the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education*

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## Keynote Speakers



**Sheikh Khalid Muhammad Al Zubair**
Chairman, Injaz Oman



**HH Princess Dr. Al Jawhara bint Fahad Al Saud**
Member, Saudi Shura Council



**Rafic A. Bizri**
CEO, Hariri Foundation USA

FOREWORD

# From the Chair of OAQHE

Dear colleagues and friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of Quality Matters, a new chapter in OAQHE's commitment to bringing our higher education community together to share, reflect and learn from one another.

The launch of this newsletter comes at an important time. Higher education is changing rapidly, and with it, the expectations placed upon quality assurance. New technologies, changing models of learning, evolving student and employer expectations, and national ambitions are asking institutions not only to demonstrate quality, but to demonstrate impact.

This distinction is important. Over the years, our sector has become increasingly sophisticated in developing frameworks, gathering evidence, monitoring performance and reviewing practice. These are essential foundations. Yet the value of any quality system must ultimately be judged by what becomes better because of it.

A student survey has value when the student experience improves. A review has value when it leads to better decisions. A policy has value when it can be seen in practice. Accreditation has lasting value when the process strengthens the institution long after the review itself has ended.

For those of us who work in quality, this invites a deeper responsibility. We must continue asking whether our systems are helping institutions not only to demonstrate what they know about themselves, but also to discover what they do not yet see. The strongest quality cultures are not those that never encounter weaknesses. They are those with the confidence to recognise them, the openness to learn from them, and the capacity to turn that learning into improvement.

> ***"No institution should have to learn every lesson alone."***

This is the spirit in which Quality Matters has been created. I hope these pages become more than a record of activities or achievements. I hope they become a meeting place for ideas: where institutions share practices worth learning from, where quality professionals raise questions worth discussing, where students contribute perspectives we need to hear, and where local experience connects meaningfully with regional and international developments.

> ***"True quality is not found in frameworks alone."***
>
> — DR. SAMYA AL SHANFARI



**Dr. Samya Al Shanfari** · Chairperson, OAQHE ·

As Chair, I would particularly like OAQHE to help nurture a professional community in which knowledge travels. No institution should have to learn every lesson alone. Our collective strength will come not simply from having strong institutions, but from our willingness to share what works, examine what does not, and learn across institutional boundaries.

The title Quality Matters carries, for me, a deliberate double meaning. Quality matters—but what we choose to notice, discuss and improve also matters to quality.

As you read this first issue, I therefore leave you with one question that I hope will accompany future issues as well: *What became better because of what we did?*

If we continue to ask that question—with curiosity, courage and a genuine willingness to learn—quality assurance can become much more than a requirement of our institutions. It can become one of the forces through which they continually renew themselves.

Welcome to Quality Matters. I hope you will not only read it, but help shape the conversations it begins.

EDITORIAL

# Why quality culture, why now

Our first theme is deliberate. Frameworks and standards give quality its structure, but culture gives it life. Across this issue you will find institutions asking the same question in different ways: how do we make quality something people do because they believe in it, not because an audit is coming?

**The Editorial** · www.oaqhe.org.om/newsletter



## *The* Editorial Team.




Sulaiman Al Hasani
GCET
s.alhasani@gcet.edu.om



Wafa Al-Maawali
UTAS
wafa.almawali@utas.edu.om



Lujain El Maghraby
MUSCAT COLLEGE
Lujain.elmaghraby@muscatcollege.edu.om



Khalid Al Jardani
GCET
khalid.j@gcet.edu.om



Tess Goodliffe
SOHAR UNIVERSITY
tgoodliffe@su.edu.om



Huda Al Habsi
huda.alhabsi@gmail.com

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QUALITY INSIGHT · IN CONVERSATION

# H.E. Dr. Jokha Abdullah Al Shukaili

*President of the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQA), on the national quality journey and what a culture of quality asks of every institution.*






THE AUTHORITY · A NATIONAL JOURNEY

**2001**
Oman Accreditation Council established by Royal Decree

**2010**
Becomes the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA)

**2021**
Renamed OAAAQA; mandate expands to school education (RD 9/2021)

**2026**

**Q. The Authority's mission speaks of guiding and supporting the sector, not only judging it. How do you see that balance in practice?**

**A.** Guidance and support are both important interlinked elements in any effective quality assurance system that integrates compliance with self-evaluation and continuous improvement. The current mission clearly stresses quality enhancement and capacity building as key variables of OAQA's quality management and enhancement framework.

OAQA believes that quality assurance goes beyond periodic external assessment and review of education institutions. It is, rather, a culture of quality with shared responsibility. The role of external quality assurance activities is to drive continuous improvement and extend the range of responsiveness to change in institutions and the educational ecosystem as a whole. Such a balance between accountability measures and support is necessary for the healthy development of quality culture in institutions.

**Q. A quarter-century into Oman's quality journey, what has changed most in how institutions think about quality, and where is the greatest shift still needed?**

**A.** The landscape of higher education has remarkably changed quantitatively and qualitatively over the past few decades. OAQA has accompanied the sector since the early years of its development, and reform has been reflected in its name and mandate expansion over the years, culminating decades of partnership with institutions and other key stakeholders.

For example, the Oman Accreditation Council introduced the basic building blocks of the national quality management system in higher education in ROSQA in 2004, followed by the launch of the formative institutional quality audits in 2008. This non-summative audit scheme was necessary to prepare HEIs for the summative ISA which was launched in 2015.

> ***"The result of gradual reforms in our system was excellent preparation of institutions and the wide spread of knowledge and good practice in quality assurance."***

In summary, HEIs in Oman have made substantial progress in establishing formal quality management systems, driven largely by the national accreditation requirements introduced in the past 25 years. However, while structural compliance in the design of management systems has improved, some HEIs continue to face challenges related to the deployment of QA systems and the use of results in driving continuous improvement. Such challenges include system integration, resource sustainability, data-driven decision-making, and closing the quality loop. Put simply, OAQA reviews reveal a sector in transition from compliance-oriented quality assurance toward a more mature, improvement-driven quality culture.

Of course, some recent developments in the field, such as massive changes in the nature of economies, labour markets and technologies, including the progressive advancements in artificial intelligence, have also posed a challenge that QA systems need to address. Educators and quality managers alike are now expected to be more agile in responding to the changing needs and priorities of their environment, and consequently to be prepared for rapid reforms in the policy and practice of quality management in their institutions.

**Q. The Authority has recently launched its Strategic Plan 2026–2030. What are its most important priorities, and what difference should institutions, educators and learners expect to see?**

**A.** The launch of our Strategic Plan 2026–2030 came at an important moment for education in Oman: the conclusion of the first five-year cycle of Oman Vision 2040 and the review of Oman's Philosophy of Education. The plan is rooted in the Vision's priorities and inspired by the principles and goals of the Education National Strategy 2040. Its central purpose is to strengthen confidence in the quality of education and ensure that our work leads to measurable improvement for learners.

Our priorities include improving the quality of teaching and learning, strengthening internal and external partnerships, building national capacities, and making better use of evidence, data and digital systems. In the coming years, institutions

and educators should see an expansion of our external quality assurance programmes, along with more opportunities to participate in capacity building and partnerships. For learners, the difference we seek is an education they can trust — one that develops their capabilities and prepares them for the future.

**Q. How do you see the relationship between OAQA and OAQHE evolving in the coming years, and how can this partnership be further strengthened?**

**A.** We consider OAQHE a key partner in achieving our QA agenda, which actively strives to support our vision and mission through various pathways and tools, including awareness raising, quality enhancement and capacity building. OAQHE has played an important role over the years in providing platforms for knowledge sharing and the promotion of good practices, quality improvements and collaboration amongst educators, researchers and QA practitioners. Such a partnership is vitally critical in the coming years of our strategic plan, particularly when considering our goals and programmes for capacity building.

**Q. As expectations of quality assurance continue to evolve, what capabilities will quality professionals in Oman need most in the coming years?**

**A.** Projections of the future of QA in higher education are becoming increasingly challenging, as prediction of shifts in the economy and evolutions in careers is becoming very fluid, particularly in the long term. However, I think that the most essential capability for professionals in general, and QA practitioners in particular, in Oman is the capability for lifelong learning. The progression of professionals through informal and non-formal education will prepare them better to meet the expectations of the future and will foster their resilience for transformations in the sector.

> ***"QA professionals will also need the judgement to use data, digital tools and AI responsibly, alongside the ability to engage stakeholders and turn evaluation findings into meaningful improvement."***

**Q. Looking towards Oman Vision 2040, what is your message to the people who do quality work every day, to Omani HEIs and to students?**

**A.** My message to everyone who works in quality assurance is that your work matters. Every thoughtful evaluation, honest conversation and improvement you help achieve contributes to the goals of Oman Vision 2040. I encourage you to lead by example, demonstrating integrity, dedication, resilience and openness to change.

My message to all education institutions of all levels is to make quality a shared commitment across the institution. Listen to students and employers, use evidence to improve, and provide an education that prepares graduates to contribute with confidence to Oman's future.

My message to students is: take ownership of your learning. Develop your digital, collaborative, problem-solving, critical-thinking and creative skills, and remain curious throughout your lives. As you embrace new opportunities, hold firmly to the values, ethics and national identity that distinguish Oman. You are both the beneficiaries of this vision and the generation that will carry it forward

**ABOUT THE AUTHORITY**

OAQA is the Sultanate's national body for quality assurance of education, with a mission of guiding and supporting the education sector to meet national priorities while maintaining internationally benchmarked standards. The Authority is active in regional and international networks including ANQAHE and INQAAHE.

oaqa.gov.om

# Listening to Our Members: Shaping the Next Chapter of OAQHE

*A lively consultative session brought members together to help set OAQHE's operational priorities, future workshop themes and membership strategy.*

**DATE** 1 October 2026 **VENUE** Scientific College of Design, Muscat



*Members gathered around discussion tables for the OAQHE consultative session at the Scientific College of Design.*

The Oman Association for Quality in Higher Education (OAQHE) was delighted to welcome members for a lively consultative session held on 1 October at the Scientific College of Design.

The discussions covered OAQHE's operational planning, key topics for future workshops, areas where members would value support, and the ways in which the Association can continue to serve the higher education community.

As part of the session, attendees were also invited to complete a pilot membership survey, sharing their perspectives on the focus areas they value most — insights that will help shape OAQHE's future membership strategy. The responses will also contribute to a broader understanding of how the higher education sector can better respond to evolving needs and priorities.

A big thank you to everyone who attended, participated and shared their valuable perspectives.

### ON THE AGENDA

- Operational planning
- Future workshop topics
- Areas for member support
- Serving the HE community
- Pilot membership survey

> *"The insights gathered will help shape OAQHE's future membership strategy — and how the sector responds to evolving needs."*



*Table discussions explored priorities for OAQHE's operational plan.*



*Members exchanged views on where the Association can offer most support.*



*Participants captured ideas for future workshop topics.*



*Attendees listened closely as perspectives were shared across the room.*



*A full room: members from across the higher education community joined the session.*

## Watch this space!

More OAQHE activities are on the way. Follow our channels for upcoming workshops and opportunities to get involved.

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE · ACCREDITATION

# International accreditation in teacher-preparation programmes under the CAEP standards

*Concepts, requirements and mechanisms for implementation*




## Abdulkarim Abdullah Shuaib

**QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION UNIT · COLLEGE OF EDUCATION · SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY**

Works in the Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation Unit at the College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University. His practice centres on preparing teacher-preparation programmes for international accreditation review. Particular interests include standards mapping, evidence systems and the design of assessment rubrics.


The quality of teacher-preparation programmes has become a central issue in educational development, because the quality of the teacher has a direct effect on student learning and on a school's capacity to meet its goals. Colleges of education are no longer asked simply to deliver professional and subject courses; they are asked to demonstrate that their graduates hold the knowledge, skills and professional responsibilities that equip them to teach effectively in diverse school settings.

Among the significant accrediting bodies in this field is the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), which examines the quality of teacher preparation through standards addressing content, clinical practice, candidate quality, graduate impact and the quality assurance system. The central idea is that accreditation should not be treated as an administrative exercise or a file assembled when needed, but as an integrated system for assuring and continuously improving the preparation of teachers.

### THE CAEP STANDARDS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO INTASC

The first six standards focus on the quality of teacher preparation in terms of subject and professional knowledge; partnerships and clinical practice; candidate quality, recruitment and support; programme impact; the quality assurance and continuous improvement system; and financial and administrative capacity. A seventh standard relates to compliance with United States higher education legislation and is a specific requirement that is not usually included in the Arab university context.

| Standard | Focus |
|---|---|
| **1 · Content and pedagogical knowledge** | Evidence that candidates hold subject and professional knowledge and can apply it in teaching |
| **2 · Clinical partnerships and practice** | Effective partnerships with schools and the design of deep, varied field experiences |
| **3 · Candidate quality, recruitment and support** | Monitoring candidate quality from admission to graduation, with appropriate support |
| **4 · Programme impact** | Demonstrating graduate effectiveness and the satisfaction of graduates and employers |
| **5 · Quality assurance and continuous improvement** | Using multiple, valid sources of data to make continuing development decisions |
| **6 · Financial and administrative capacity** | Resources, leadership and infrastructure sufficient to run the programme well |

The InTASC standards carry particular weight within the first standard, because they define what a teacher should know and be able to do. They span ten areas, among them learner development, learning differences, learning environments, assessment, planning for instruction, and professional learning and ethical practice. It is not enough for a college to state that its students take good courses; it must show, with clear evidence, that the student teacher meets these standards before graduation.

# Beginning the accreditation journey

Before assembling an accreditation file, a college needs a clear academic and institutional infrastructure. The more genuinely that infrastructure is applied in practice, the more straightforward and more honest the file becomes:

- A conceptual framework expressing the college's identity and philosophy, whose influence is visible in courses, teaching methods and assessment tools.
- Programme outcomes and graduate attributes, linked to the strands of the conceptual framework and to suitable assessment instruments.
- Dimensions of diversity that ensure the student teacher encounters varied experiences during study and clinical training.
- Professional courses and transition points that prevent students progressing automatically without confirmation that they hold the required competencies.
- Clinical training that is gradual and structured; an internationally accepted example is fourteen weeks, equivalent to roughly 420 training hours.
- Standardised assessment tools (rubrics) and a central platform for collecting and analysing data across cohorts and specialisations.
- An integrated quality assurance system that connects the programme's elements and makes clear what is assessed and how results are used for development.

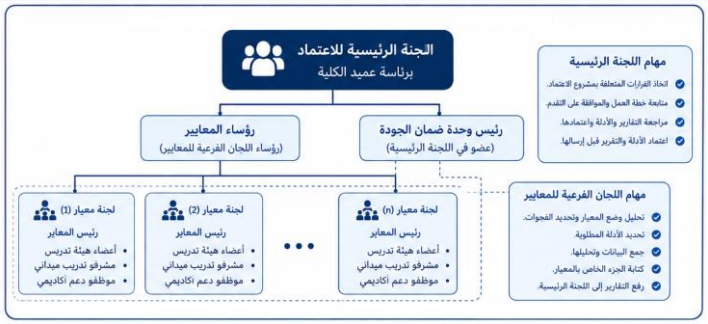
FIGURE 1 · THE PARTNERSHIP CYCLE IN CLINICAL TRAINING




FIGURE 3 · ROLE OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT




FIGURE 2 · ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEES




*Figures supplied by the author; artwork retains its original Arabic labelling.*

## CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

International accreditation is not a formality but a route to developing the quality of teacher preparation systematically. Its greatest value is that it pushes a college towards fundamental questions: what do we want from our graduate, and what evidence proves it?

- A clear mapping between the conceptual framework, programme outcomes, the InTASC standards and assessment tools.
- A central platform for assessment data, and involvement of schools in designing outcomes and analysing performance.

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE · RESEARCH POLICY

# The economics and methodologies of academic research

*A proposed framework for fair funding and evaluation criteria in the context of Oman Vision 2040.*




**Dr. Wael Mohammed Sami Al Abdullah**
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR · SCIENCE DEPARTMENT / PHYSICS UNIT
Assistant Professor in the Science Department, Physics Unit, College of Education, Rustaq. Part of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Sultanate of Oman. His contribution addresses the operational economics of experimental research.



**Dr. Nagham Qahtan Al Azzawi**
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR · ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, College of Education, Rustaq. An education quality expert within the University of Technology and Applied Sciences. Her contribution addresses evaluation criteria and fairness in productivity measures.


Scientific research and innovation are among the most important strategic pillars for achieving sustainable development and strengthening the knowledge economy in the Sultanate of Oman, in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. The academic community, however, faces a fundamental challenge: the divergence between theoretical research on one hand and experimental and applied research on the other — a divergence that shapes the cycle of scientific production, the scale of resources required, and the time needed to complete and publish a study.

## METHODOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES

Theoretical research relies on critical analysis and deduction. Its tools are digital libraries, databases and statistical analysis software, and its operating costs concentrate in subscriptions and licenses. Experimental research requires laboratory space, precise instruments, and chemical and biological materials, alongside the costs of safety and waste disposal; the budget of a single laboratory may exceed that of entire theoretical departments. The complexities here are not greater or lesser — they are different in kind.

## PRODUCTION CYCLE AND TIME

Theoretical research carries a relative flexibility in timing. Experimental research follows a longer cycle that demands collaboration across multidisciplinary teams and is subject to external factors such as the supply of materials or the repetition of experiments to secure reliability. This difference makes conventional productivity indicators — paper counts and citation factors — an unfair basis for comparison across disciplines.

## TOWARDS FAIR EVALUATION AND FUNDING

The paper calls for flexible, multidimensional evaluation criteria that take account of:

- The operational and logistical needs of each discipline, and the real cost of producing the research.
- The time required to complete and publish the work, and the nature of collaboration, whether individual or collective.
- The potential scientific and societal impact.

It proposes a dual funding framework: stable baseline support for theoretical research focused on access to knowledge, and continuing capital and operational funding for experimental research that covers instruments, materials and safety.

## KNOWLEDGE INTEGRATION

Despite the differences, integration between theoretical depth and experimental precision remains the best route to meeting national and global challenges such as climate change, sustainable energy, public health and digital education. Recognising the distinction between theoretical and experimental sciences is a foundational step towards a fair and effective academic system. Competition between disciplines is not the goal; integration between them, in the service of the nation's comprehensive development, is.

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE · RESEARCH INTEGRITY

# Beyond the indicators

*Measuring outcomes tells us what happened. Understanding why it happened is a different question — and often the more useful one. What Can Critical Realism Offer Quality Assurance?*




**Dr Laila Moosa Jarook Al Zidjali**

**Oman College of Health Sciences**

• Research Focus: Medical education, faculty development, student motivation, clinical training, and critical realism in medical/healthcare contexts.

• Notable Work: Co-authored research publications examining clinical teaching experiences and the roles of senior medical doctors as teachers in Oman (such as studies involving institutions like the University of Edinburgh and local hospitals).


When we seek to improve higher education, we often begin with what we can readily observe. We look at student grades, course evaluations, progression rates, examination results and accreditation reports. All are important indicators of educational quality, but they mainly tell us what has happened. They do not always help us understand why it happened.

An educational initiative may work well in one programme but produce very different results in another. Students experiencing similar curricula, assessment approaches or learning activities may also achieve different outcomes. Looking only at the measurable results can therefore give us an incomplete picture of what is actually happening.

**WHAT CRITICAL REALISM PROPOSES**

That what we observe is only part of reality. Behind observable events and outcomes are structures, relationships, conditions and mechanisms that can influence what happens. In education, this means going beyond the question, "Did students achieve the intended learning outcomes?" and asking what may have enabled or constrained their learning, and why.

In my own experience in health professions education, quality assurance and research, I have often wondered why an educational approach that works well in one programme or setting does not necessarily produce the same results elsewhere. Critical Realism gave me a useful way of thinking about that question. The intervention itself may be similar, but the context and the conditions in which it is introduced may be very different.

Educational outcomes rarely result from one factor alone. They emerge from the interaction of many influences, including learners, academic staff, curricula, assessment practices, institutional structures, learning environments, and the wider social and professional context.

**A FAMILIAR SITUATION**

Two groups of students undertake the same course, complete similar clinical placements and receive the same teaching from the same faculty member. One group performs exceptionally well while the other struggles. It may be tempting to conclude that one group was simply stronger. But there may be more to the story.

- Were the students equally prepared when they entered the course?
- Did they receive similar supervision and feedback?
- Were their clinical learning environments equally supportive?
- Did they have sufficient opportunities to practise and reflect?
- Could workload, staffing or other organisational factors have influenced their learning?

# Why Does the Same Intervention Work Differently Across Settings?

Higher education institutions invest considerable effort in strengthening curricula, improving assessment, promoting student-centred learning, developing academic staff, integrating technology and meeting national and international quality expectations. Yet introducing a well-designed educational intervention does not necessarily mean that it will have the same effect in every setting.

A teaching approach that works well in one programme may be less successful in another because the surrounding conditions are different. A faculty development programme, for example, may provide excellent training, but its impact may be limited if academic staff have few opportunities to apply what they have learned. Similarly, a well-designed assessment policy may not lead to better assessment practice if those implementing it interpret the policy differently, or do not have sufficient support to apply it consistently.

> ***"Instead of asking only whether an intervention works, we can ask: what works, for whom, under what circumstances, and why?"***

For those involved in quality assurance, this question is particularly relevant. We rely on indicators, benchmarks, surveys, evaluations and accreditation findings to judge how well our programmes and institutions are performing. These sources of evidence are necessary, but identifying a problem is not the same as understanding it. When an indicator shows that something is not working as expected, we need to explore what may be producing that outcome.

For example, a decline in student satisfaction may prompt an institution to introduce new teaching activities or revise course materials. Those actions may be appropriate, but they may not address the real issue if students are actually experiencing inconsistent feedback, limited academic support, excessive workload or difficulties within the learning environment. Understanding what lies behind the indicator allows improvement efforts to focus on the factors that are actually shaping the educational experience.

Critical Realism does not replace evaluation, evidence-based practice or established quality assurance processes. It offers another way of making sense of the evidence we already collect. It reminds us that context matters, and that similar interventions may produce different outcomes because they operate under different conditions.

Measuring educational outcomes will always be important. Grades, surveys, performance indicators and accreditation findings provide valuable information about educational quality. But perhaps we should see them as the beginning of our inquiry rather than the end.

## FOUR QUESTIONS WORTH KEEPING

| 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 |
|---|---|---|---|
| What happened? | Why did it happen? | What conditions contributed to it? | What can we learn from it? |

Throughout my career, some of the most useful questions have been the simplest ones. For me, that is the value of Critical Realism. It encourages us to look beyond what is immediately visible and to better understand the circumstances that shape teaching and learning. Sometimes, improving education begins not by introducing another solution, but by understanding more deeply what is already happening.

# Not Messengers, but Partners

*After a year on Sohar University's Student Advisory Council, final-year Accounting student Rawan AL Kharusi has a clear message for universities: the students who live the experience every day know best what is missing, so treat them as partners in making it better.*

IN CONVERSATION WITH QUALITY MATTERS



## Rawan Mahmood AL Kharusi

UNIVERSITY Sohar University
STUDYING Accounting, College of Business (final year)
COUNCIL ROLE Member, Academic Committee, Student Advisory Council
SERVED One full academic year

### STEPPING BEYOND THE ROUTINE

**Why did you join the Student Advisory Council?**

Honestly, I really wanted to experience something new during my journey. I wanted to make a difference in someone's life, and to step beyond the routine of studying by becoming more involved in the university itself.

### INSIDE THE ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

**What was being on the council like? What did you do, and what difference do you think you made?**

Being part of the SAC was an exceptional experience in so many ways. I learned a great deal from the other members, especially the council's management members, whom I worked with most closely.

I was a member of the Academic Committee, where my role involved helping students with academic issues, guiding them towards the right steps, and sometimes helping them make decisions.

I believe I contributed, even in a small way, to making students' voices heard.

> *"Change does not always begin with something big. Sometimes, it begins with simply being there for someone, listening to them, and making them feel that what they have to say matters."*

## LEARNING THE ROPES

### How were you prepared for the role? Were you given any guidelines?

I learned most of what I needed to know from my friend, Wiam Al Khatri, who had previously served as the head of the SAC. We also went through the SAC handbook together with the other members during our first meeting. Our second meeting was with the university administration, which helped us understand our role and the work ahead of us.



*Taking the podium: the Student Advisory Council's address at a university event.*

## WHAT WORKS, AND WHAT DOESN'T YET

### What were the good things about the SAC, and what could be improved?

One of the best things about the SAC is that it gives students a space to be part of change and brings their voices closer to the people making decisions.

As for what could be improved, I believe there needs to be greater recognition of the council and a clearer understanding of our role across the different colleges. It is important for everyone to recognise that we are not simply representatives who pass on students' concerns, but partners who can contribute to decision-making and problem-solving.



*On stage: a student panel discussion at a council event, putting student perspectives in front of the audience.*



*From the floor: students put their questions directly to the panel.*

## THE MOMENTS THAT MATTER

### How do you think you helped the student voice to be heard?

I often hear students' kind words and thanks after we have worked together, and that means a lot to me. Knowing that someone appreciates your effort and feels that you have helped them is a lovely feeling. Those moments remind me why I wanted to be part of the council in the first place.

## IN THE ROOM WHERE DECISIONS ARE MADE

**Did you attend university or faculty committee meetings? How could the university make student involvement easier, and how else can students shape decisions?**

Yes, I attended most of the committee meetings. I believe the university could make student involvement easier by selecting student representatives, introducing them to the work of the committees, and helping them understand how to participate and express their views confidently alongside other members.

I also believe students can contribute to decision-making by identifying gaps and issues that might otherwise go unnoticed, as well as by sharing their suggestions through surveys.

## STUDENTS AS PARTNERS IN QUALITY

**How can universities and colleges make sure students are involved in decision-making?**

Universities could select student representatives from different year levels across each college and involve them in meetings at least once every semester. This would give students regular opportunities to share their perspectives and ensure that their voices are part of the conversation, rather than only being heard when a problem arises.

**How can universities include students in improving teaching and learning, services, activities and the wider student experience?**

I believe the best way is to make students feel that they are partners in their university experience, rather than simply people who receive what is offered to them. Their opinions should be taken seriously, and they should be asked what they genuinely need.

> *"Those who live the experience every day are often the ones who know what is missing and what could make it better."*

## THE LAST WORD

**Is there anything else you'd like to add on how universities can build their relationships with students?**

I hope the relationship between universities and their students can be built on trust and open conversations. Students should not feel that their voices only matter when they are asked to speak, but that there is always room for them to express themselves and be involved.

## RAWAN'S BLUEPRINT: FIVE WAYS TO PUT STUDENTS IN THE ROOM

1. **Draw from every year group.** Select student representatives from different year levels across each college.
2. **Induct them properly.** Introduce representatives to the work of each committee and help them speak with confidence alongside staff.
3. **Meet regularly, not only in a crisis.** Bring students into meetings at least once every semester, rather than only when a problem arises.
4. **Listen for what others miss.** Students can spot gaps that go unnoticed, and surveys give every student a way to suggest improvements.
5. **Recognise the council.** Make its role clear across all colleges, as a partner in decision-making and problem-solving.



*Recognising the council's contribution: Student Advisory Council members honoured at a university ceremony.*

*Our thanks to Rawan for her openness and honesty, and our best wishes for her final year of study.*

# Working Together to Shape the Future of Foundation Education in Oman

*Nine Omani higher education institutions came together at the first GFP Collaborative Forum to tackle a shared question: how to deliver the new Oman Core Academic Learning Outcomes for General Foundation Programmes, and do it better together than alone.*




*Representatives of the participating institutions at the inaugural GFP Collaborative Forum, hosted by GCET on 10 September 2026.*

The Oman Association for Quality in Higher Education (OAQHE) welcomes the establishment of the **GFP Collaborative Forum**, initiated and hosted by the Global College of Engineering and Technology (GCET), with participation from Muscat College, International College of Engineering and Management, Majan University College, Gulf College, University of Nizwa, A'Sharqiyah University, Al Buraimi University and Al Buraimi University College.

With the introduction of the Oman Core Academic Learning Outcomes for General Foundation Programmes (OCALOs) by the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQA), collaboration among higher education institutions offering General Foundation Programmes is more important than ever.

## INSIDE THE FORUM

The first meeting, held at GCET on 10 September 2026, was built around open discussion rather than presentations. Programme leaders, quality specialists and foundation-year academics from across the sector compared notes on how their institutions are preparing for the OCALOs, and quickly found that they were wrestling with the same questions.

Working at the whiteboard, participants mapped the most pressing shared challenges: **staffing, ICT and staff upskilling**; the move to **computer-based examinations**; and the **design of GFP exit examinations** that can show students have achieved the new outcomes. The group then turned to solutions, including raising the sector's concerns with the Ministry together, and creating a larger, more permanent association between institutions to carry the work forward.





*Around the table: participants share their institutions' experience of preparing for the OCALOs.*

## EXPLAINER · WHAT ARE THE OCALOs?

### The bridge into degree study

For most students entering higher education in Oman, the General Foundation Programme (GFP) is the first step: a bridge between school and degree-level study. It builds the English language, mathematics, computing and general study skills that students need to succeed in their chosen programmes.

### From national standards to core outcomes

GFPs have long been shaped by the Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programmes, which set out expected outcomes in these four areas. The Oman Core Academic Learning Outcomes for General Foundation Programmes (OCALOs), introduced by the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQA), now define the core academic outcomes that every student should achieve by the end of a GFP, whichever institution they study at.

### What changes for institutions

- **A shared baseline.** Completing a GFP should signal the same core readiness for degree study across the sector.
- **Programme realignment.** Institutions are reviewing their curricula, teaching, assessment and exit requirements against the OCALOs.
- **Evidence of achievement.** Institutions need to show that their students actually achieve the outcomes, which links GFP delivery directly to quality assurance.

### Why collaboration matters now

Every institution offering a GFP is working towards the same outcomes at the same time, so many of the challenges are shared. Pooling expertise on assessment design, staff development and technology avoids duplicated effort, and helps make sure the OCALOs are interpreted consistently across Oman.




*Naming the challenges: staffing, ICT and upskilling, computer-based exams and exit exam design topped the forum's shared list.*

## OAQHE'S SUPPORT

OAQHE is pleased to support such initiatives, encouraging institutions to exchange good practices, address shared challenges, and explore collaborative approaches to enhancing the quality of higher education across Oman.

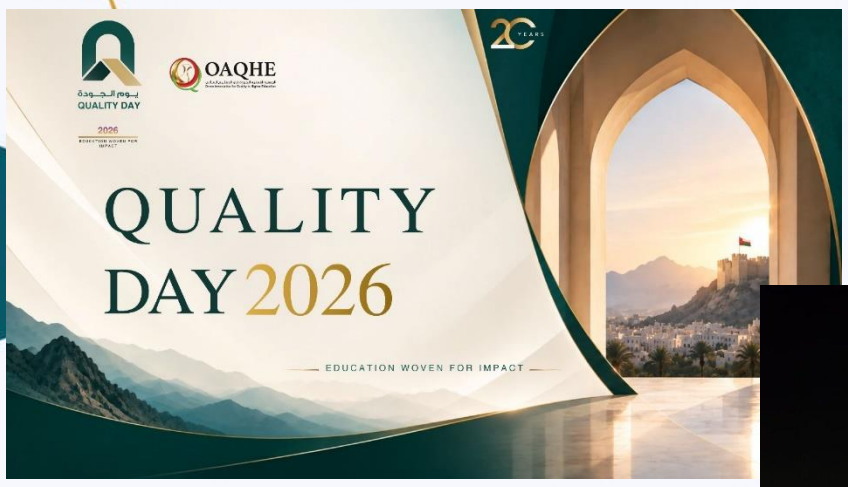
> *"We look forward to supporting the development of a sustainable collaborative platform and encouraging further inter-institutional cooperation."*

## PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Global College of Engineering and Technology** HOST | **Muscat College** | **International College of Engineering and Management** |
| **Majan University College** | **Gulf College** | **University of Nizwa** |
| **A'Sharqiyah University** | **Al Buraimi University** | **Al Buraimi University College** |

**Stronger Collaboration. Shared Knowledge. Collective Progress.**

# OAQHE 4th Quality Day.




*On 9 November, the fourth Quality Day brings Oman's higher education community together in Muscat, as the Association marks twenty years of service to quality.*



*The venue: W Muscat, where Quality Day 2026 takes place on Monday, 9 November.*

A forum that has grown with the sector returns this autumn. The fourth edition of Quality Day takes place on *Monday, 9 November 2026, at W Muscat*. It is the flagship gathering of the Oman Association for Quality in Higher Education (OAQHE), and this year it carries extra weight: it coincides with the Association's 20th anniversary.

Around 150 participants are expected: ministers and senior officials, vice-chancellors and deans, heads of quality assurance, employers, students and representatives of civil society.

> ***"For one day, the people who set, assure and experience quality in Omani higher education will be in the same room."***

PARTNERSHIP

## A partnership with Cambridge.

This year's Quality Day is co-organised with the University of Cambridge. The aim is practical: to narrow the gap between traditional learning environments and the demands of a fast-changing world. The conference will focus on aligning institutional academic standards with the development goals of Oman Vision 2040, and on building a system grounded in ethical leadership, diversity and sustainability.

The day is also expected to see three strategic partnerships announced, with the University of Cambridge, The George Washington University in the United States, and Unternehmer – Technical University of Munich TUM, the business accelerator of the Technical University of Munich. Together they are intended to serve Omani students, support quality assurance bodies and strengthen the national higher education system.

KEYNOTES

## Voices on the stage.

After an opening framing of the conference by OAQHE Chair Dr Samya Al Shanfari, the provisional programme features three keynote speakers from across the region.



### HH Princess Al Jawhara bint Fahd Al Saud

Member of the Education and Scientific Research Committee of the Saudi Shura Council and Associate Professor at King Saud University. Her work spans early childhood education, counselling psychology and educational policy.



### Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed Al Zubair

Chairman of INJAZ Oman, which under his leadership has trained more than 500,000 young Omanis in entrepreneurship, and a business leader with more than three decades in finance, technology and national service.



### Mr Rafic Bizri

President, Chairman and CEO of the Rafik Hariri Foundation for Education in the USA, which has supported more than 3,500 students to study in the United States and Canada.

The morning will also include a recognition ceremony and a session by Fakhriya Al Habsi on implementing the Oman Qualifications Framework (OQF).

PARALLEL SESSIONS

## Four conversations that matter.

At midday, participants will move into parallel panel sessions led by expert facilitators, with research papers presented by the University of Cambridge and the Technical University of Munich. Each session takes up one of the forum's four themes.

**01**

### Skills & employability

Turning high-quality curricula into competencies that match labour-market needs.

**02**

### Integrity & ethical leadership

A culture of quality and transparency that counters academic misconduct.

**03**

### Student success, equity & inclusion

Fair access to resources, services and academic support for every student.

**04**

### Sustainability & global collaboration

Embedding environmental, economic and social dimensions in quality practice and research.

A closing plenary will bring the four conversations together, setting out shared priorities and key recommendations.

AFTER THE FORUM

## From dialogue to action.

What sets this edition apart is what happens after the closing ceremony. The organisers have committed to a clear timetable:

**7 WORKING DAYS**

Conference Chair's summary and a list of action priorities sent to every participant.

**6 WEEKS**

First draft of a National White Paper on Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Higher Education circulated for consultation.

**3 MONTHS**

Final White Paper published, with a phased implementation roadmap, clear roles and key performance indicators.

The organisers have set clear measures of success: *at least six actionable recommendations*, *at least two pilot initiatives* and *a first Steering Group meeting within six weeks* of the event.

# The wider quality landscape

locally

## From Classroom to Industry. OAQHE at the Oman Career Summit 2026: reimagining education in Oman, from challenges to solutions

*The Oman Association for Quality in Higher Education (OAQHE) joined a panel discussion on Reimagining Education in Oman: From Challenges to Solutions at the Oman Career Summit 2026, held at the JW Marriott Muscat on 4–5 October. OAQHE was represented by Dr Tess Goodliffe, Deputy Chairperson of the OAQHE Board of Directors.*




*Organised by Career 180, the summit connects Omani talent with employers and education providers through talks, workshops and networking, with the aim of building skills and strengthening the bridge between learning and employment. Its strategic partners included Muscat University, the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education and OSHRM, and the programme featured more than 40 speakers across 22 sessions.*

*Dr Goodliffe's contribution centred on the relationship between higher education and industry. She emphasised* ***the importance of strong, working links between the two, and of ensuring that academic programmes remain relevant to the needs of the economy.*** *A key route to that relevance, she noted, is involving industry directly in curriculum design, so that what students learn reflects the knowledge and skills the workplace demands.*

*She also highlighted* ***the role of universities and colleges in promoting innovation and entrepreneurial skills, preparing graduates who can create opportunities as well as take them up.***

*The panel echoed a theme running through this issue: quality in higher education is increasingly judged by what it achieves for learners, employers and society. OAQHE's presence on a career-focused stage is a reminder that graduate readiness and quality belong in the same conversation.*

ARAB REGION

## Quality in the Age of AI. OAQHE joins the region's quality community at the ANQAHE Forum 2026

*Doha hosted the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) Forum 2026 on 7–8 October at the Sheraton Grand Doha. Organised by ANQAHE with Qatar's National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation, under the patronage of HE Lolwah bint Rashid Al-Khater, Minister of Education and Higher Education, the forum explored the opportunities that artificial intelligence and digital transformation open up for quality in higher education.*

*Members of the OAQHE Board of Directors took part in the forum's sessions and discussions, connecting with counterparts from accreditation agencies and universities across the region and bringing Oman's experience into a conversation that is fast becoming central to the sector.*

*ANQAHE President Dr. Jokha bint Abdullah Al Shukaili argued that the* ***real question is no longer whether AI should be accepted, but how it can support learning*** *— calling for assessment to be redesigned around analytical, critical and creative skills, and for accreditation bodies to act as strategic partners to institutions. The Minister, for her part, urged a shift from procedural compliance towards measuring education's real impact on students and society.*




OAQHE Board members at the ANQAHE Forum, Doha, October 2026.

*The forum closed with the Doha Forum Recommendations, a framework for developing quality standards, strengthening academic integrity and guiding the future of Arab higher education. For OAQHE, its themes —* ***impact over compliance, and assessment fit for an AI era*** *— set a strong agenda for the conversations ahead in Oman*

INTERNATIONAL

## Save the Date: INQAAHE 2027 Comes to GCC




***From 4 to 7 April 2027, Doha will host the 19th Biennial Conference of INQAAHE, the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education****. The conference is the leading global meeting for quality assurance agencies, institutions and policymakers. It is hosted by Qatar's National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation, the same body that welcomed the region to the ANQAHE Forum this October.*

*The theme is Beyond Compliance:* ***Reimagining Quality through the Lens of Human Value.*** *It asks the sector to treat quality assurance as human-centred and impact-oriented, judged by what it achieves for learners and society rather than by procedures alone. The sub-themes cover societal impact, AI-enabled external review, risk and resilience, and ethics and trust in quality systems.*

*For Oman's quality community, the conference is a rare chance to join a global conversation close to home. Members are encouraged to follow announcements and consider contributing.*

*Source: INQAAHE Conference 2027, Doha, Qatar.*

QUALITY TIPS

## Three things to try this quarter

**01**

Open your next quality meeting with one improvement story before any data.

**02**

Invite one student to shadow an internal review, then ask what they noticed.

**03**

Retire one report nobody reads. Document the decision. Enjoy the time.



▪ *More than four hundred participants joined the national conversation on quality culture (First Quality Day 2023).*

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES & KEY DATES

**9 NOV 2026** 4th Quality Day- registration and call for papers

**30 NOV 2026** Issue 02 submissions close - theme: Student Voice & Partnership

**Jan 2027** Issue 02 published theme: Student Voice & Partnership

**APR 2027** Issue 03 published theme: Digital Transformation & AI

FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

# Write for Issue 02

The theme of our next issue is Student Voice and Student Partnership. We welcome feature articles, case studies, opinion pieces and student contributions from every member institution — in English or Arabic.

CONTRIBUTE

Submissions close 30 Nov 2026

Feature: 1,200–1,800 words

Case study: 800–1,200 words

Opinion / student: 500–800 words

Guidelines: oaqhe.org.om/newsletter

NEXT ISSUE · 02 · JANUARY 2027

## Student Voice & Student Partnership

*Quality Matters*

*written by the sector, for the sector.*

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## *Stay* Connected.

*Questions, contributions or ideas for the next issue? Find the Oman Association for Quality in Higher Education on every channel below.*

WEBSITE oaqhe.org.om

EMAIL oaqhebod@gmail.com

LINKEDIN OAQHE Oman

X OAQHE1

INSTAGRAM OAQHE