



جامعة التقنية والعلوم التطبيقية بالمصنعة
University of Technology and Applied Sciences - Al Mussanah

e-ACT 2020

Official Magazine of UTAS-Al Mussanah

6th Issue, December 2020



“We should all work together for the sake of our country’s magnificence, with a persistent resolve to promote it to the loftiest levels.”

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimur

“But while it is right that we should draw confidence and strength from our achievements, it is to the future that we must turn our eyes and hardened our resolve.”

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimur

**UTAS-Al Mussanah:
Then and Now**

.....

**Tribute to His Majesty
Sultan Qaboos**

.....

**2020: The Year of
Challenges and Growth**



5

**UTAS - Al
Mussanah
Welcomes
its First
University
President**

6

**UTAS - Al
Mussanah:
Then and Now**

12

**Events and
Activities**



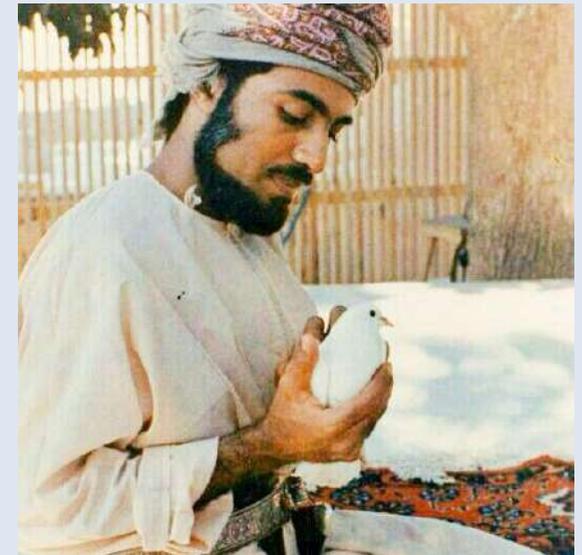
14

**Approved RG,
GRG and URG
Projects in
Engineering**



18

**Tribute to His
Majesty Sultan
Qaboos**





25

**ACT Conducts
9th Student
Forum of the
Colleges of
Technology**



26

**2020: The Year
of Challenges
and Growth**

28

**The Resources
Use for
Successful
Online
Teaching and
Learning**



30

**Academics in
COVID-19:An
Introspection
on Challenges
with an Eye on
Opportunities**



36

**The Majestic
Oman**



Dr. Issa bin Saif bin Mohammed Al Tubi
Dean

Warm greetings to all of you! Welcome to the 6th Edition of our annual magazine e-ACT 2020! This edition focuses on the achievements of the University during the demanding, yet motivating year 2020.

I am highly proud of our faculty members, technical staff, and administrators' commitment towards the continuous quality improvement of our services and resources during such challenging year. I would like to express also my special thanks to our students and their parents for their tremendous cooperation and patience with all the major COVID-19-related changes.

I would like to also take this opportunity to share my delight and optimism on the merging of the Colleges of Technology and the Colleges of Applied Sciences to establish the University of Technology and Applied Sciences as per Royal Decree 76/2020 issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq in the month of August 2020.

The articles in this edition discuss different topics including but not limited to 'Tribute to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos & Crowning of New Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq', History of UTAS-Al Mussanah', '2020: The Year of Challenges and Growth', 'Online Resources Used in UTAS- Al Musanna for Successful Online Learning', and several other articles related to the topic of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the magazine highlights the accomplishments of our students and staff in 2020.

The magazine team and ETC deserve a special mention. Without their industrious work and tireless labour, this issue would not have seen light.

As we welcome 2021, I wish you all a peaceful, eventful, and productive year.



UTAS – Al Mussanah Welcomes its First University President

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Al Mussanah honored the visit of its President, HE Dr. Saeed Al Rubaie, with a number of general directors at the University on Monday, 15th September 2020. The visiting team inspected the university buildings and facilities with the primary goal of discussing the technical and health measures for the academic year 2020-2021.

During the visit, Dr. Rubaie was toured around the Business Department, Engineering Department, Information Technology Department, and English Language Center. The Head of the Educational Technology Center (ETC) introduced the preparations for the first semester and the Center's capabilities on various programs and other available technologies. The visit ended on a positive note. Dr. Saeed Bin Hamad Al Rubaie expressed his admiration on the achievements, research, technologies, and the progress achieved by UTAS-A. He further advised the management to continually seek for improvement and development.

UTAS-Al Mussanah: Then and Now

By: Mr. Omar Almaamari & Ms. Salwa Al-Busaidi , Educational Technology Centre



The University has gone through many developments, both in terms of approved academic programs and in the number of students admitted, which was also accompanied by an increase in the number of employees. Furthermore, the

University has developed in terms of quantity and quality of scientific qualifications, as technical colleges began by granting diplomas in business studies only in the disciplines of Accounting, Marketing, and Business Administration.

Initially, Arabic was the approved academic language, and in the academic year 1995-1996, the colleges began teaching in the General National Professional Qualifications (GNVQ) program and adopted the English language as the primary language of study. Certifications were offered in the disciplines of Accounting, Office Management, Information Technology, and Engineering - Electromechanical, Electrical and Mechanical.

In the academic year 1998-1999, the technical national diploma program was approved in the disciplines of Accounting, Office Management, Automobile Mechanics Engineering, Manufacturing Technology Engineering, Electrical Technology Engineering, Communications Technology Engineering, Communications and Electronics, and Information Technology and these programs were kept until the academic year 2004-2005.

The new program that was introduced in the colleges included the disciplines of Human Resource Management, Office Management, Electronic Management, Certified Accounting Technician, Marketing, Accounting, Communications Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Electronics and Communications Engineering, Quantity

Surveying Engineering, Architecture, Mechanical Engineering, Databases, Networks, Internet and Electronic Security, Software Development, and Software Engineering.

Now, in the academic year 2020-2021, according to the Royal Decree, the Colleges of Technology joined with the Colleges of Applied Sciences as the University of Technology and Applied Sciences.

**The Colleges of
Technology joined with
the Colleges of Applied
Sciences as the University
of Technology and
Applied Sciences.**





Messages from the Pioneers



Ms. Asia Juma Khamis AlBalushi
Trainer

Words of thanks are always very difficult to formulate, because they make us feel their limitations and their failure to adequately express gratitude

to those who deserve it. I stand today to express my deep gratitude and appreciation for the response and cooperation I sought in achieving my goals. I was proud to be appointed in 2005 in this institution as a laboratory technician for half a year. Then after that, I was appointed in the Ministry of Education in 2006 as a teacher of Science and Math. However, I had the wish to return to this institution and I was transferred in 2007 as a laboratory technician. At that time, the number of employees in the laboratories was few and I was a technician for two subjects: Physics and AutoCAD. Then, I was promoted to the position of an Assistant Science Trainer and then to a trainer. The number of laboratory employees increased as the number of students increased. We will continue the education process according to the approach of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, God willing, and Sultan Haitham, may God protect him.

Ms. Badriya Khalid Mohammed AlSalmi
Head of Counseling and Graduates Follow Up

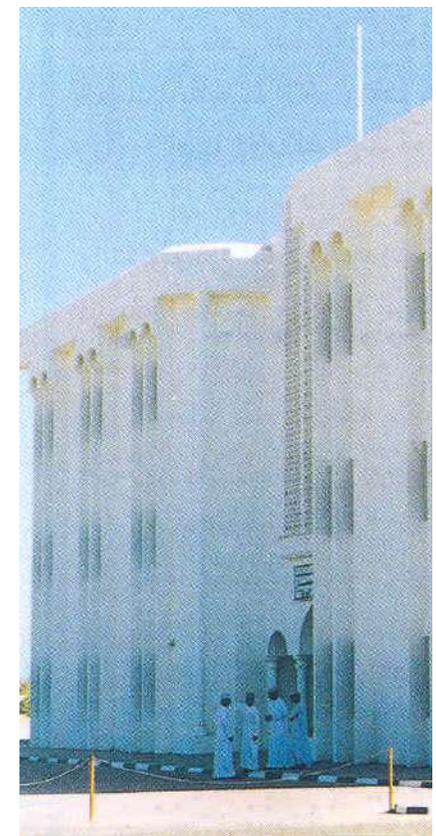
My career in this institution began a few years after its inauguration. It was not structured by the current administrative and academic divisions. The department I worked in dealt with student affairs and is named the "Student Affairs Department". The Department was responsible in guidance and counseling, training students, conducting external practical training, following-up graduates, and supervising and organizing graduation ceremonies. It also carried out all the work of the Admission and Registration Department. All of these were done by the Department staffed with two people only. We had to implement the work entrusted to us and to also propose ideas to facilitate and make our work more efficient. These multiple tasks that we carried out gave us a lot of experience, which was not limited to the areas of my job description as a social specialist. We pursued relentlessly in obtaining the knowledge and skills to help us complete the work with the quality we desired despite the difficulties we faced due to the lack of ability and resources. For me, it was a wonderful and important experience in my career. We had determination, patience, love of work, and dedication to serve this College and our country Oman. In 2004, at which time I became the Head of the Department of Housing, Student Activities and Graduation. In 2008, I was promoted to Head of the Guidance and Counseling Department which is the position I occupy now. The work environment in this academic institution is an active and changing environment concerned with knowledge, research, education and the integration of modern technology. It is a developing and dynamic environment far from the boring routine. Thus, it provides opportunities for employees to strive for development, innovation and creativity.



Mr. Mohammed Salim Khamis Al Musallami
Student Affairs

Graduation is the culmination of years and years of study, fatigue, and staying up late. Graduation comes after a long period of struggle and determination to achieve success. It is the day when the educational stage is completed and it is the start of the transition from the educational journey to the new working life. It constitutes a basic stage in the life of every student; a stage that concludes the academic phase of life and commences practical life.

My career started in the Financial Affairs Department as a Budget Accountant after I graduated from Technical Industrial College in Al Mussanah in 1996. The number of students at that time did not exceed 500 and the number of employees was not as large as it is now. I was the earliest member of staff to supervise student activities despite the lack of facilities, but there was a remarkable presence in the field of student participation. After some time, the name changed to become Al Musanna College of Technology, and the number of students and administrative and academic staff increased steadily, reflecting the wise leadership and interest of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may God rest his soul. Here we are today, and the Sultanate is continuing the process of building and reconstructing its renewed renaissance of His Majesty Sultan Haithan bin Tariq, may God preserve and sponsor him. UTAS-Al Mussanah is a jewel in the crown of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, as the Majestic Sultan hopes.

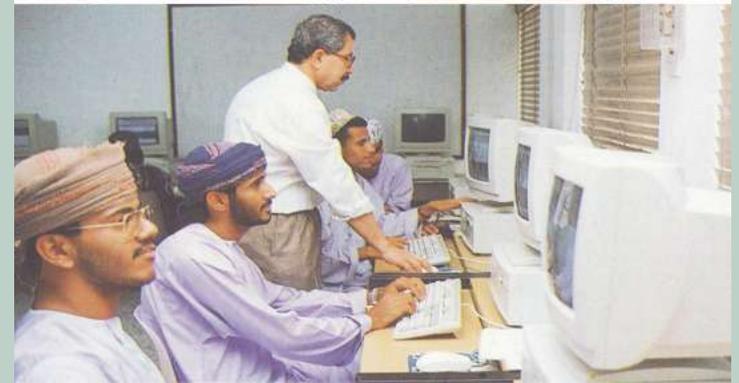
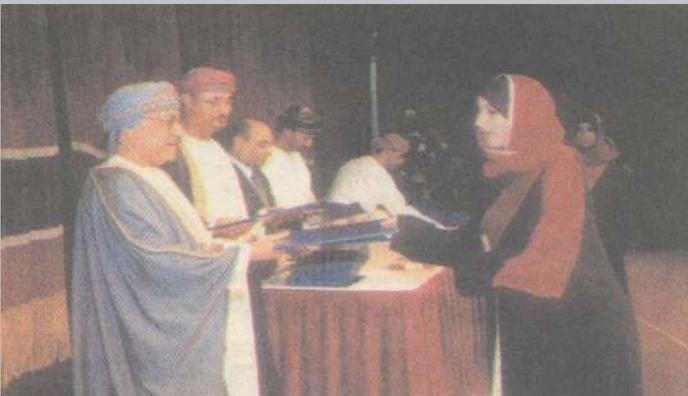


UTAS-Al Mussanah began its academic activities in 1993 and received its first batch of students in 1994. Initially, there were only 102 students, 12 staff members, and 17 administrative staff. There were only two courses of study: Accounting and Management, and the language of instruction then was Arabic.



FIRST GRADUATION CEREMONY

The pioneering efforts of the University resulted in the successful completion of its first academic year, and produced the first set of 58 graduates in 1995.



OMANI NATIONAL DIPLOMA (OND)

In 2001, the University introduced a change in the existing system and started the Omani National Diploma (OND).



RAPID DEVELOPMENT

In the following years, the University has shown tremendous improvement in terms of its facilities and technology as the total number of students and staff increased manifold. It was in 2005 when the rapid development commenced.





UTAS- AL MUSSANAH

Today, UTAS-Al Mussanah continues to offer dynamic learning opportunities for students to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and competencies required in the national and international labor market.



Events and Activities

IEEE Oman Organizes Online Competition 2020

By: Mr. Naga Venkata Rama Krishna, Counselor, IEEE Student Branch, UTAS-AI Mussanah

IEEE Oman Section organized an online competition for the members of different IEEE Student Branches in the Sultanate. This competition is aimed at providing the platform for these students to propose their innovative ideas to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in various domains such as Education (Online Learning), Army, Police, Medical Staff (Frontline Warriors), Online Shopping, and Facility Management. There were about 16 teams who participated in the competition in which the final presentation was held on 12th July 2020.

The first place was bagged by UTAS-AI Mussanah team with Ms. Nusaiba Abdul-Aziz Al Busaidi (52S161032), BTech, EPE and Ms. Khoula Issa Hilal Al Kharousi (52J1646), BTech, EPE, as members. The team was mentored by Ms. Rahila N. Begum Gadi. This victory added to other previous accomplishments in the Engineering Department.

Here is a tabular presentation of the result of the IEEE Oman Section online competition according to rank.

Rank	Name of Participant	Name of University/College
1	NUSAIBA ABDULAZIZ AL BUSAIDI KHOULA ISSA AL KHARUSI	UTAS- AI Mussanah
2	AMIRA ATIYAQ AL WAHSHI JAWAHER KHAMIS AL ALAWI	UTAS- Ibri
3	ALI HAMED AL MUHARBI AHMED SAID AL MAZROUI	Sultan Qaboos University

UTAS-AI Mussanah IEEE Student Branch is grateful to IEEE Oman Section for this rare opportunity and is looking forward to more opportunities in the future.

The winners were awarded with certificates and cash by Mr. Yahya Al Belushi, Chair, Student Activities, IEEE Oman Section on 17th September 2020 at IEEE Room, EE Building, UTAS-AI Mussanah .



Department of Engineering and UTAS-AI Mussanah IEEE Oman Section Organize Web Workshop

A web workshop titled “Android APP Development with AI Engine” was held on 29th June 2020 under the auspices of UTAS-AI Mussanah and IEEE Oman Section. The primary goal of this workshop was to expose students to the emerging AI Technology for them to learn to incorporate it into an Android App. It also aims to further promote students’ knowledge on AI as a technology that is transforming every walk of life. AI is a wide-ranging tool that enables people to rethink how we integrate information, analyze data, and use the resulting insights to improve decision making.

Ms. Tresa Sangeetha, a lecturer of the Engineering Department served as a resource person during this workshop. Ms. Sangeetha designed this workshop in a way that students are be able to use MIT App inventor, one of the most popular mobile app development cloud based tools, in their future projects. During the workshop, the participants were briefed on the various machine learning algorithms and were given a hands-on-trial on the AI game ‘quick draw’ which was developed using reinforcement



learning algorithm. Moreover, various AI tools for image classification and audio classification like teachable machine, image and audio classifier were discussed. The discussion was supplemented with live image and audio samples. Aside from teaching the student participants about developing an Android App using MIT App Inventor, they were also encouraged to submit a project within a day and were given prizes.

The winners of the Android App competition are Mr. Hussein Ali Hamood Ali Al-Ghafri (BTech-Computer Engg), Mr. Saif Sultan Saleh Ali Al-Maqbali (BTech-Computer Engg), and Mr. Yasser Juma Naseeb Al Jahwari (BTech-Electronics and Communications Engg).

Mr. Mohamed Sajid Ali, Head of EE Section, awarded a token of appreciation to Mr. Naga Venkata Ramakrishna, Student Branch Counselor, IEEE UTAS-AI Mussanah Branch for coordinating and ensuring the success of this event.

Webinar on Photovoltaic Technology towards Zero Energy Buildings Conducted

Engineering Department

A research webinar on “Photovoltaic Technology towards Zero Energy Buildings” was organized by Dr. Vanitha Mahadevan and Dr. Senthil Rajaram, members of the Research Committee of Engineering Department in coordination with the SDP Committee. The webinar, participated in by as many as 46 staff, was conducted on 2nd July 2020 with Ms. Sindhu S Nair, EE Section lecturer as speaker.

The speaker underscored that environmental protection is one of the key goals of green engineering and sustainability. It was further emphasized during the webinar that the primary requirement for the implementation of green engineering is to develop various environment-friendly products and SMART technologies including smart energy efficient buildings. In this scenario, advanced renewable energy systems can play a pivotal role in developing energy efficient smart buildings by acting as electric power generators within the new framework of smart cities. In addition, it was made clear during the webinar that a Zero Energy Building (ZEB) produces enough renewable energy to meet its own annual energy consumption requirements, thereby reducing the use of non-renewable energy in the building sector. It is important to note that preserving environmental sustainability and

building world-class infrastructure and livable cities are two major objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Hence, this webinar was conducted to put to the fore the necessity of focusing on technology for the development of smart energy efficient eco-friendly buildings like Zero Energy Buildings using Photovoltaic Technology.

Another important information shared during the webinar was that a ZEB is an energy efficient grid-connected building. The premise is that ZEBs use the electric grid or other energy networks to transfer any surplus of on-site renewable energy to other users. A building is said to be ZEB, if its total energy consumption is zero. One of the promising eco-friendly renewable energy resources is solar energy and hence Photovoltaic Technology is the main concern in ZEB. Conventional Photovoltaic panels will be replaced with more efficient, less expensive transparent or semitransparent photovoltaic glass. These transparent solar panels can act as PV panels and can generate electricity more efficiently. In concluding the webinar, the speaker, organizers, and participants share the belief that by replacing windows or facades with PV glass, ZEBs will become a reality.

C&A and EE/ECE Sections to Join Forces for Research

The Civil and Architectural (C&A) Engineering Section was commissioned by the EE/ECE Section to serve as co-investigators in the research proposal titled "Smart Integrated Agriculture Unit using Aeroponics and Aquaponics System towards Sustainable Farming in Arid Regions" by Ms Analene Montesines Nagayo of the Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EE)/ECE Section. The said

research proposal is an approved proposal under ACT Internal Research Fund and was submitted as an entry to the Energy Globe Award 2020 competition last November 2019.

Engineering Staff Participate in the External Moderation of Teaching & Assessment Methods

Representatives from the C&A Engineering Section, together with some staff from Mechanical Engineering and EE Sections, participated in the external moderation activity of teaching and assessment methods conducted last February 2020. This activity was attended by representatives from Shinas College of Technology who acted as external moderators.

Mechanical and Industrial Engineering Section Milestones

The Mechanical and Industrial (M&I) Section has made remarkable accomplishments in funded research projects. Along with the ongoing 3 RG and 2 URG research projects from TRC with a funding of RO 16,800, staff members along with students are awarded with 1 RG and 2 URG research projects with a funding of RO 12,800 in the academic year 2020-2021.

Approved RG, GRG and URG Projects in Engineering

RG Projects

1 .Design and Development of an IoT Based System for Post-Harvest Data Collection and Manipulation of Dates Quality and Quantity by Implementing Image Processing and Artificial Intelligence Techniques for the Socio-Economic Upliftment of Oman

Principal Investigators:

- ◇ Dr. Vanitha Mahadevan
- ◇ Ms. Bindu Puthentharayil Vikraman

Co-Investigators:

- ◇ Mr. Mali Satya Naga Krishna Konijeti
- ◇ Ms. Betzy Babu Thoppil
- ◇ Ms. Al-Anoud Nassr Rashid Al-Hinaai (52S15246-B.Tech ECE)
- ◇ Ms. Halima Hamed Hilal Al Jabri (56J1551-B.Tech CSE)

2. A Novel Hybrid Sut-Pv Solar Renewable Energy System

Principal Investigator:

- ◇ Dr. Khadersaba A

Co-Investigators:

- ◇ Mr. Eugene Vega
- ◇ Mr. AbdulHamid Hamdan Humaid Al Hinaai

GRG Projects

1. Telemedicine System using Internet of Things and Mobile Communication Technologies integrated with Decision Support System for Medical Diagnosis

Principal Investigator:

◇ Mr.Mahmood Al Ajmi

Co-Investigators:

- ◇ Analene Montesines-Nagayo
- ◇ Naga Venkata Rama Krishna
- ◇ Fatma Al Buradai

URG Projects

1. Design and Fabrication of Cost Effective Mechanical Ventilator Setup with Microcontroller Based Smart Monitoring System

Main Faculty Mentor:

◇ Mr. Sumesh M

Student Researchers:

- ◇ Hussain Ali Alreesi (52S16782)
- ◇ Ali Ghalib Alhamdani (52S163454)
- ◇ Salah Hilal Darook Al Balushi(52J15297)

2. Development of Image Processing and Decision Support Systems for the Hybrid-Powered IoT-based Aeroponics and Aquaponics Greenhouse

Main Faculty Mentor:

◇ Analene Montesines-Nagayo

Student Researchers:

- ◇ Majid M.A. Al Mujaini
- ◇ Mohammed S. H. G Al Hinaai
- ◇ Hussein A. H. A Al Ghafri
- ◇ Saif S.S. A Al Maqbal

3. Design and Fabrication of Fruit Sorting Machine

Main Faculty Mentor:

◇ Mr.Kedar Chimote

Student Researchers :

- ◇ Ahmed Zahran Ali Zahran Al Mawali (52S15190)
- ◇ Ismail Dawood Salim Al-Hamdani (52J1629)
- ◇ Issra S. M. H. Al Kindi

4. Design and Implementation of Smart Industrial Inspection Robot.

Main Faculty Mentor:

◇ Mrs.Asan Banu

Student Researchers :

- ◇ Mohammed Ali Al Harthi (52S1515)
- ◇ Abdullah Salim Al Rawahi (52J15100)
- ◇ Ahamed Said Al Baloshi (52J15291)
- ◇ Zainab Hamood Said Alaamri (52J1613)

5. IoT Based Multipurpose Remote Health Surveillance System.

Main Faculty Mentor:

◇ Mrs. Sindhu S Nair

Co- Faculty Mentors:

- ◇ Mr. Mohammed Jubair Meera Hussain
- ◇ Mr Mayasa Said Suliman Alkindi

Student Researchers:

- ◇ Dehkrayat Zahran Al Sulti (52J173537)
- ◇ Suha Ali Al Kiyumi (52J17470)
- ◇ Yumna Nasser Al Jahwari (52J17314)
- ◇ Rowaida Mohammed Al Kindi (52S16809)

6. Design and Development of Autonomous Honey Harvesting Machine.

Main Faculty Mentor:

◇ Dr. Senthil Kumar Muthusamy

Technical Support:

◇ Mr. Emanuel Rances

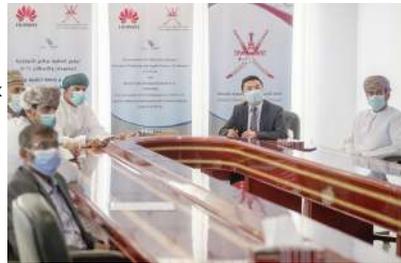
Student Researchers:

- ◇ Muhand Abdullah Saleh Al Balushi
- ◇ Khalid Sulaiman Ali Al Maqbal

UTAS-A Signs the HAINA Program

Dr. J. Lenin Fernando, Information Technology

UTAS-A signed a Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) with Huawei Tech. Investment (Oman) LLC on the 5th Huawei Authorized Information and Network Academy (HAINA) Program in Oman.



The MoC was signed by Dr. Issa Saif Mohammed Al Tubi (Dean of UTAS – A) and Mr. Robin Chen (CEO of Huawei Oman). The agreement stipulates that Huawei will deliver its training and certification programs to UTAS-A through HAINA. Huawei will also promote UTAS-A as a training organization to students and customer base for HAINA-based programs and selected professional programs according to the University's capability and capacity. Additionally, Huawei will provide Huawei Certification Academy Instructor (HCAI) training for professional instructors for each course direction.



CISCO Academy Instructor Certifications

As the leader in networking technology, CISCO brings out expertise and global recognition by certifying instructors. This is for the reason that the cutting edge of industry breakthroughs on knowledge and network provide a wealth of resources. Consequently, certification validates skills and knowledge which is why many of CISCO courses align to industry-recognized certifications and are included into degree or vocational programs. Fortunately, comprehensive curriculum based on the latest advances in the industry, along with teaching resources, are made available at no cost to academic institutions on the educational platform, NetAcad.com. Hence, the Department of IT continues to encourage its staff to get instructor certifications whenever opportunities arise.

IT Essentials	•5 Instructors
CCNA : ITN	•9 Instructors
CCNA:SWRE	•7 Instructors
CCNA : ENSA	•6 Instructors
CCNA Security	•3 Instructors
Cybersecurity Essentials	•1 Instructor
IoT Fundamentals : Connecting Things	•5 Instructors
IoT Fundamentals : Big data Analytics	•1 Instructor

Information Technology Events

Smart City Platform Conducts Workshop in Collaboration with IT

Smart City Platform, in collaboration with the Department, conducted a workshop on Internet of Things on 18th February 2020, in the Al Batinah region. In response to the Oman Smart City Platform initiative, Ms Tamarasi was selected as the Smart City Speaker. This was attended by college staff and students from the Batinah region.



participants during the workshops on “(IoT) Internet of Things ”

ISACA Student Group Organizes Seminars

The ISACA-SG organized a seminar on “ISACA Certifications” and “DIGITAL FORENSICS” which was held at the UTAS-A auditorium on 11th February 2020. The guest speakers of the event were Mr. Srikanth K Kota from Bank Muscat and Mr. APN Ajith Kumar from Muscat Pharmacy & Stores LLC. The seminar was attended by more than 30 students and staff.

IT Department Conducts Live Webinar

The Department hosted a live webinar on “Deep Learning and Avoiding Publications in Fake, Hijacked or Predatory Journals” on 1st July 2020 by Dr. J. Joshua Thomas and Dr. Varun Menon, from Malaysia and India, respectively. The webinar was attended by around 130 staff and students across Oman.

HRDC of Engineering Organizes Webinar on Online Platforms

The Human Resources and Development Committee (HRDC) of the Department of Engineering invited Ms. Sahana Roshan to conduct a webinar on the “Best Practices for Classroom Management and Interactivity on MS Teams” which was aimed at providing insights into MS Teams and other online platforms to boost teachers' efficiency. The interactive session was attended by more than 67 staff from the Departments of IT and Engineering. During the webinar, staff shared valuable information about online teaching along with their experiences and achievements with online platforms.

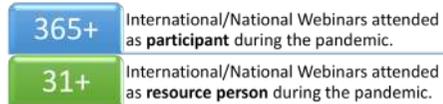
Student-Centered Learning Webinar Conducted

As part of SDP activities and to create awareness and provide insight into Student-Centered Learning (SCL) approach to its staff, the Department of Engineering invited Ms. Baliha to host a webinar on SCL on 22nd June 2020.

Over 60 participants registered for the webinar. The presenter highlighted the difference between Teacher-Centered Learning vs Student-Centered Learning, objectives and benefits of SCL, the framework for SCL, and implementation approaches and challenges in CoTs, which included possible post-pandemic impact on students' studying and learning styles.

Staff Development as COVID-19 Crisis Continues

Staff development may have taken a backseat due to the many demands and emergencies facing organizations in the pandemic era, but the staff at the Department of IT have worked diligently to enhance their skills over this period.



Students Participate in the 2nd Student National Symposium

Student researchers participated in the 2nd Student National Symposium IR4.0 (SNSIR4.0) with the motto "Change for Better". This symposium conducted on 14th June 2020 and organized by Higher College of Technology (HCT) encouraged the interaction of research students and the academic community in an informal setting to present and discuss new and current work. Researches that were presented and discussed included the following:

Title of Paper: **Impact of Higher Education on Economic Growth of Oman**

Author(s): Shifaa Nasser Salim Al-Hinai, Raya Nasser Abdullah Al-Mawaali, Gnana Rajesh.D.

Title of Paper: **Autism and Advanced Technology: Use Advanced Technology Brings a Major Change into the Lives of Children with Autism**

Author(s): Amira Mohsin AL-Hamdan, Sara Mohammed AL-Hatmi, Gnana Rajesh.D.

Title of Paper: **The IoT and Personal Data Protection**

Author(s): Rajaa Said Saif AL Salhi, Jawaher Hamood Abdullah AL Maqbali, Gnana Rajesh.D.

Title of Paper: **Intelligent Greenhouse**

Author(s): Yaqoob Yousuf Said Alawfi, Murshid Qasim Mohammed Almaawali, Almahalab Said Aamir Alabri, Gnana Rajesh D

Students Compete in Oman Huawei ICT Skill Competition 2020

Huawei is a leading global Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solution provider. The Huawei Certification System is well-recognized and is becoming a standard for ICT talent cultivation. To promote ICT industry technology



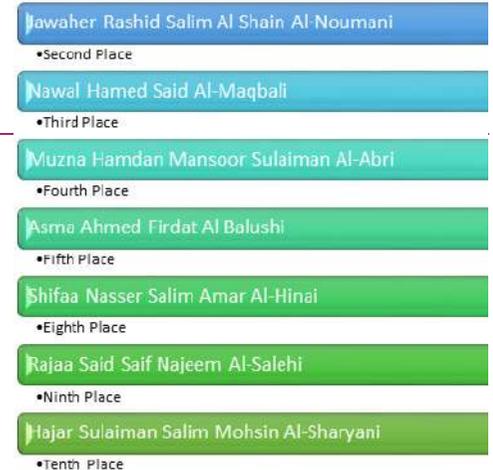
certification, and develop ICT industry talent and a strong ecosystem, Huawei initiated the 'Huawei ICT Competition'. The Oman Huawei ICT Skill Competition Middle East 2020 preliminary exams were held from 17th - 19th November 2020. Out of the 42 students who attended the competition from all departments of UTAS-AI Mussanah, 11 students from the IT Department were selected from the top 74 scorers in Oman and are eligible for the National Finals for ICT competition 2020 to be held early December 2020.

IT Students Place Third in the Datathon 2020

Three diploma students from the IT Department - Yaqoob Yousuf Said Al Awfi, Murshid Qassem Al Mawali, and Asaad Said Al Dairi won third place in the Datathon 2020 during the 9th Student Forum of Colleges of Technology hosted by UTAS-AI Mussanah. The winning team received certificates, mementoes, and an OMR 350 cash prize sponsored by National Bank of Oman (NBO). The team came up with a solution to a real data case based on the provided datasets. Their solution was then judged by a jury, which awarded the most precise creative solutions. The team was guided by Dr. Divyajyothi M.G.

UTAS-AI Mussanah ISG Members among Top 10 in ISACA Global Educational Quiz 2020

The UTAS-AI Mussanah and the Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA) Muscat Chapter organized an Online Educational Quiz Contest for ISACA Student Group (ISG) across Oman on 3rd October 2020. The IT Department ISG had seven students who placed among the top ten prize winners. The quiz was attempted by more than 70 ISG members from three UTAS (AI Mussanah, Nizwa and Ibra).



IT Students Win Gold at Arab University Beach Volleyball

Nasser Ali Saleh Al-Saadi and Alyaqadhan Ali Saleh Al Saadi as part of the Oman men's team won gold at Arab University Beach Volleyball championship in Muscat.





Tribute to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said started ruling the Sultanate of Oman on 23rd July 1970. He led Oman for nearly half a century and transformed it into the remarkable country it is today.

Since the beginning of the reign of Sultan Qaboos, the Sultanate of Oman began the commercial export of oil, which was discovered in commercial quantities in 1968, and the country witnessed an economic recovery with the beginning of his rule. He divided his political program into national development projects for every five years, which he called five-year plans.

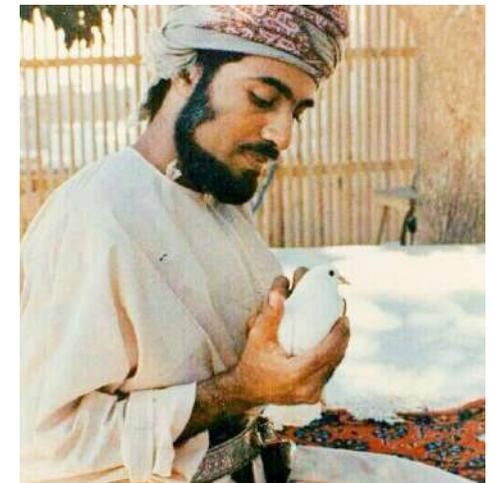
Sultan Qaboos changed the country from traditional tribal rule to formal democratic rule, by establishing the State Consultative Council. After several years, he replaced it with the Shura Council, whose members represent all regions, which is an advisory council supervised by the highest executive body known as the Oman Council.

The most important achievement of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos is that he established a government based on democratic system. He began to form an executive authority consisting of an administrative apparatus that includes the cabinet and various ministries, in addition to the administrative and technical departments and specialized councils. One of the first ministries that Sultan Qaboos established after assuming the reins of government directly is the



Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As part of achieving ties and connections with the outside world, one year after Sultan Qaboos' accession in 1970, Oman joined the Arab League. Oman established friendly relations with the rest of the Arab world, standing with Arab and Islamic causes and supporting them in all fields.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos believed and supported positive neutrality, and he sent diplomatic missions to most countries of the world to represent Oman. He also opened the doors of Oman to foreign missions, consulates, and embassies, and international and regional bodies were established in Oman. Sultan Qaboos's policy achieved stability and security, which are the two main pillars of building the Sultanate and achieving its economic and social development.





After Sultan Qaboos secured his foreign policy and established friendly relations with the countries of the world, he turned to the home front and worked to improve it. During his reign, Oman witnessed a rapid renaissance in all fields. In the field of education, he established schools in all parts of the country and made them freely available for all children. In the health field, he ordered the establishment of large numbers of hospitals, clinics, and medical centers all over Oman, and supplied them with doctors, equipment, tools and medicines; thus, ensuring the health of Omanis in cities, villages, and rural areas alike. In the industrial field, oil production has expanded and developed, so oil refineries have spread in the country in addition to cement factories, fish canning factories, and other manufacturing industries.

Sultan Qaboos encouraged farmers and worked to develop agricultural methods and transform them from the old traditional methods to modern methods that depend on modern machinery and equipment not only on manual labor. In addition, surplus in food such as wheat, vegetables, fruits, etc., is exported to neighboring countries either fresh or canned.

Trade flourished during the reign of Sultan Qaboos both internally and externally. The prosperity of trade was associated with the development of transportation, including agricultural products within Oman and abroad, as well as industrial products transported to and from neighboring countries and the rest of the Asian, African, and Western countries - especially England, France, and the United States.

Oman is linked by a network of land and sea transportation. Sea and air ports were established for internal and external communications, and two large ports were opened, namely Sultan Qaboos Port in Muttrah and Raysut Port in the southern region.

In 1981, Oman joined the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, and Sultan Qaboos thus achieved his country's cooperation with the rest of the Arab Gulf states in the field of joint defense and in the realization of various economic projects. Oman today is experiencing a period of prosperity, safety, and continuous development. Oman is one of the most stable and secure countries in the world.



ODE TO THE SULTANS

A Speech Choir Composition for National Day

by Dr. Edilberto C. Cruz, English Language Centre



(Solo, male) From the hills of Dhofar a bright light did shine
A man of destiny, benevolent and kind
Marking a new era in the history of Oman
Change for the country, peace to our land.

(Chorus) Hail the Sultan, Leader of this land!
Qaboos bin Said, Ruler of Oman!

(Boys) Down from the hills he rode through the towns
Wake up my people! A new day has dawned
The future awaits us, waving its hand
Let's claim it together for our dear motherland.

(Chorus) Hail the Sultan, Leader of this land!
Qaboos bin Said, Ruler of Oman!

(Girls) To the north and the south, the east and the west
Of this blessed country he gave all the best
Jobs, education, comfort and cheer
Pride in our culture, freedom from fear.

(Chorus) Hail the Sultan, Leader of this land!
Qaboos bin Said, Ruler of Oman!

(Solo, female) But alas! Man, being mortal, must eventually fade
And so our great sultan in a graveyard was laid
While the people looked on heartbroken and sad
Longing for the words of a father they once had.

(Solo, male) Lift up your heads people, our grieving is done!
From the city of Muscat, a new leader has come
Haitham bin Tariq is his illustrious name
Taking up the mantle after Sultan Qaboos' reign.

Chorus Hail our new Sultan, Leader of this land!
Haitham bin Tariq, Ruler of Oman!

(Girls) And so as we celebrate our National Day
We go to Allah most humbly and pray.

(Boys) Bless our new leader with wisdom and health
Grant peace to our country, progress, and wealth.

Chorus Boldly we strive to reach greater heights
With Sultan Haitham bin Tariq leading the fight
Go forward with courage, onward dear Oman!
May Allah ever guide us as we march on as one!



“The youth of the Free World have an important role to play in restoring human dignity, in encouraging peace and strengthening understanding between peoples. We hope that your presence among us will be a constructive contribution, and an effective impulse for this peace and understanding”.

“It is equally important that we appeal to young people to realize their great role in building the nation in various fields. And to strive for a greater and happier life that can be achieved only with effort and race and overcome all difficulties that may obstruct the way or obstruct the march”

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said

Ref: <https://omanspire.om/article/details.php?articleid=154&id=10>

“Youth are the wealth of a nation, its inexhaustible resource and the arms that build it. They are its present and future. We will always listen to them, and sense their needs, interests and aspirations which will definitely be accorded the attention that they deserve. On top of our national priorities is the education sector, with all its types and levels. It will receive full attention, and it will be provided with the supporting environment which motivates research and innovation. We will also provide it with all means of empowerment, since it is the base upon which our children will be able to participate in meeting the requirements of the coming phase of development”.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq

Ref: <https://www.thearabianstories.com/2020/02/24/priority-for-education-and-employment-full-text-of-his-majestys-speech/>

Business Students Participate in a Symposium in UTAS-Nizwa

by: Dr. Alamelu Mangai, Business Studies Department



Supervisor Dr. Alamelu Mangai and student researchers from left to right, Ahmed Ramadhan Mubarak Al Harrasi, Mohammed Said Obaid Al Shahi, and Humaid Ali Muslem Al Mamari

The student-researchers highlighted the introduction, objectives, research questions, review of literature, methodology, data analysis, and recommendations of their research work. They were applauded for their work and were given a positive and encouraging feedback by the Chairperson and members of the symposium organizing committee.

Aside from their certificate of appreciation, the students and staff of the Business Department of UTAS-AI Mussanah who attended the symposium were further invited to UTAS – Nizwa to present their research work in front of the students and teaching staff.

The research work, which was prepared and completed under the guidance of Dr. Alamelu Mangai Raman, lecturer of the HRM Section of the Department of Business Studies, was published in the symposium proceedings.



Students of the Department of Business Studies participated in a 2-day symposium titled “Higher Education and Industry-Bolstering Connection Towards Oman” organised by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS)–Nizwa on 15th – 16th December 2020. More than 30 research papers were presented at the said symposium held via Google Meet.

Mr. Humaid Ali Muslem Al Mamari, Mr. Ahmed Ramadhan Mubarak Al Harrasi, and Mr. Mohammed Said Obaid Al Shahi from the Human Resource specialization of UTAS-AI Mussanah presented their research work titled “The Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Fostering Entrepreneurial Attitudes and Competencies among Secondary School Students” on the second day with the theme, “Promoting Entrepreneurial Culture in HEIs”.

International Webinar on SCL Conducted

Dr. Alamelu Mangai Raman, a lecturer of the Department of Business Studies delivered a talk titled “Time for SCL: A New Paradigm on Education” at an online webinar organized by S. A. Arts and Science College (affiliated to University of Madras, Tamandu, India) in connection with the Educational Development Day on 15th July 2020.

The webinar was attended by more than 200 academicians and students who, through real time activities, were left enlightened on the importance of Student-Centered Learning (SCL), its characteristics, approaches, methods, and online tools. The webinar was livestreamed via UTAS-AI Mussanah YouTube channel.

Dr. Raman was appreciated by the University Management for her effective discussion of the salient features of SCL which are important for the further promotion of effective teaching and learning experience in the University.

Business Department Lecturer Delivers Keynote Address in an International Conference



Dr. C. Radha Priya, a lecturer from the Department of Business Studies, at UTAS-AI Mussanah was the resource person in the two-day International Conference titled, ‘Management in

Uncertain Environment (ICMUE 2020)’ - an online paper presentation platform on 27th and 28th August 2020 organized by Yuvakshetra Institute of Management Studies (YIMS), Kerala, India. Dr. Priya, an advisory committee member, delivered her keynote address on the topic, ‘Managing Finance for Sustained Economic Prosperity’. There were 35 papers presented during the two-day

conference which were judged by a panel chaired by six (6) professors from different specializations from various parts of the globe. A valedictory session was held on 28th August 2020 wherein the best paper award was given to Mr. Yogesh Babu from Karunya Deemed University, Coimbatore, India.

More than 500 participants from different countries attended the conference. The management and the organizing committee thanked all the resource persons for their valuable and thought-provoking inputs.

International Webinar on Transforming into Professionals (TIP)



Mr. Jaffer Ali Khan, Head of Section – Accounting, Department of Business Studies, UTAS-AI Mussanah lectured on the topic “Search Within” at an online webinar organized by S. A. Arts and Science College (affiliated to University of Madras, Tamilnadu, India) in connection with the Personality Development Program titled “Transforming into Professionals” [TIP]. Mr. Khan’s presentation highlighted the soft and employability skills and gave a broad view on New Education Policy and Dual Specialization.

This webinar, which was conducted on 30th July 2020, had a remarkable attendance of more than 350 academicians and students.

Technology Transfer Office Encourages Innovation at UTAS-AI Mussanah

by Dr. Aziza Abdallah Humaid Alqamashoui
Deputy of Technology Transfer Office



The Technology Transfer Office (TTO) at UTAS-AI Mussanah comes directly under The Research Council (TRC) of Oman. TTO has been established with the purpose of acting as a link between the academia and the outside community such as public and private sector companies, startup companies, non-governmental organizations, etc. In essence, TTO focuses on the three important and

critical dimensions with respect to cultivating an ecosystem for technology transfer, i.e. scientific, legal, and industrial, in order for the office to carry out its responsibility of bringing innovations from the lab to the market; thereby, resulting in a fruitful completion of the process.

It is the primary responsibility of TTO to encourage innovation in the field of science and technology and also to detect innovation in various other fields. TTO intends to provide the intellectual academic support for initiating the IP protection procedure which is necessary in the case of new technologies. TTO will also be an active participant in ensuring the protection of such innovation through the framework of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). It is also the aim of TTO to work as a channel to help find potential investors or licensees in this area. Here at the University, TTO provides the conducive environment for the creation of new startups which have emerged as part of research findings and innovation.

TTO also aims to be an institution par excellence in the dissemination of knowledge with respect to innovation and IPR. TTO strives to achieve this by conducting seminars, workshops, panel discussions, certificate programmes in IPR and innovation. Moreover, TTO seeks to release working papers on innovation and IPR practices in Oman, which will be beneficial to multiple stakeholders involved and interested in different areas of education.



Students brainstorming at the Technology Transfer Office.

UTAS-AI Mussanah Concludes the SAIL

Mr. Mudhafer Abdulhasan Alajmi, Student Affairs



UTAS-AI Mussanah, formerly known as ACT, held a 2-day event for students from 11th-12th February 2020. This was dubbed as the SAIL, which was organized by the Student Council with the participation of student committees and academic communities.

The activities varied, which ranged from cultural, artistic, scientific, to social in nature. Different student committees organized an exhibition that aimed to showcase the committees' goals and most prominent achievements during the past 5 years.

The Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovation organized a market drop, wherein students get the chance to present their business projects. It was expected that the said exhibition would motivate students in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation.

The Okaz Poetry Group organized a workshop titled, "Asrar al-Khurf." Mr. Ahmed Al-Busaidi addressed the importance of knowing the letters, their poetic maqamas, and how to seal poetic verses with a consistent rhyme. "I am Graduating and Ready" was the title of the workshop presented by the Information Technology Community. In the said workshop, the most important skills that students must acquire upon graduation were explained.

The engineering community presented a lecture titled "Non-Randomness in Life." Ms. Mai Al-Saadi was the presenter who talked about the importance of time management in the life of a university student and how to properly invest in time. The Inshaad Committee also organized a workshop named, "Basics of Nasheed." This was presented by Mr. Fahad Al Shaqusi, wherein he dealt with the basics of chanting and the importance of vocal and music maqamas.

"How to Write a Press Release" was the title of the workshop organized by the Tawasul Committee. This was presented by journalist, Saeed Al-Hendasi. He talked about the types of journalistic news and how to write news.

The Library Friends Committee organized a workshop titled, "How to Read with Your Permission." This was presented by Ms. Fatima Al-Rawahi who explained the process of listening to books by voice. She also shared her experience in this field and offered some books that students can read by listening to her oral readings.

The 2-day event included several competitions such as codes competition and the device display competition, which were organized by the Information Technology Community. The community also organized a workshop titled, "How to Use Information Technology in Trade." Available technologies in marketing the product through the use of social media was explored during this workshop.



ACT Conducts 9th Student Forum of the Colleges of Technology

The 9th Technical Forum of the Colleges of Technology (CoTs) was conducted from 1st – 4th March 2020 in Al Mussanah College of Technology (ACT), now known as UTAS-Al Mussanah, under the patronage of Her Excellency, Dr. Muna bint Salim Al Jardani, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Manpower for Technical Education and Vocational Training. This forum aims to create a stimulating environment for innovations for students of technological colleges and develop the types of skills students need in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The forum of this year focused on the following:

- Using modern methods for marketing innovations and graduation projects;
- Innovating new products and services for student employment by using open data; and
- Creating a competitive environment among students in various fields of innovation.

This forum had several competitions in the field of innovation and entrepreneurship such as the Markathon, Datathon, and Robotics Challenge.

All the CoTs participated in this forum with the heads of entrepreneurship units from each college and 12 students from each college for a total of 84 students. There were 24 activities, workshops, and competitions held during the four-day forum.

The Student Forum activities concluded on Wednesday, 4th March 2020, with the contestants in the competitions honored by Dr. Abdul Hakim bin Hilal Al Ismaili, Director General of Technical Education and Vocational Training, Ministry of Manpower and Dr. Issa Saif Mohammed Al Tubi, the Dean of the College, in addition to representatives of the sponsors of the competitions (Omantel, Oman Arab Bank and the National Bank of Oman).

Omantel Markathon Competition Winners

- First Place - Nizwa College of Technology
- Second place - Al Musanna College of Technology
- Third Place - Ibri College of Technology

Oman Arab Bank Robotics Challenge Winners

- First place - Al Musanna College of Technology
- Second place - Ibra College of Technology
- Third place - Ibri College of Technology

National Bank of Oman Datathon Competition Winners

- First place - Ibri College of Technology
- Second place - Salalah College of Technology
- Third place - Al Musanna College of Technology



Omantel Markathon Competition Winners



Oman Arab Bank Robotics Challenge Winners



National Bank of Oman Datathon Competition Winners

2020: The Year of Challenges and Growth

In coordination with the Health and Safety Committee, RMC closely followed, implemented, and monitored the Ministry of Health's guidelines on campus to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

by Ms. Rekha Pardesi, Coordinator- Risk Management Committee

On 21st of January, the Risk Management Committee (RMC) organized a lecture on financial risk at the college auditorium. This lecture titled Oman Economy: Its Associated Risks and Opportunities was delivered by Mr. Hettish Karmani, the Head of Research from Ubhar Capital. The event was well received by staff and students.

On 2nd February, RMC, with the support of Quality Assurance Department (QAD), organized the Risk Management Enrichment Sharing event. During this event, guest lecturer, Mr. Mohammed Al-Hinai, the Risk Management & Insurance Manager from Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries Company (ORPIC) talked about important issues on risk management. Furthermore, RMC and the guests from the Quality Department (QD) of the Ministry of Manpower, namely; Dr. Salim Hamood Al-Jabri, Dr. Bennet Ebenezer, Dr. Vaseem Hashem, and Dr. Nida Mallare discussed and reviewed the risk management practices of UTAS-AI Mussanah. Before the end of the session, the QD experts provided suggestions to RMC for further improvement.

This sharing session proved to be a milestone for RMC members as it enhanced their understanding on risk management and offered them additional guidance in the implementation of risk management practices in the University. A plan for identifying and mitigating possible and known risks in centers and departments was also developed in addition to a 'risk register.' Moreover, the Online Risk Management System (ORMS) was updated according to the received suggestions and feedback. Subsequently, ORMS was integrated with the existing help desk systems which enables the automatic registration of identified risks.



Mr. Mohammed Al-Hinai, the Risk Management & Insurance Manager from Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries Company (ORPIC) talked about important issues on risk management.



Guests and Participants during the Risk Management sharing event.

Through ORMS, a survey is deployed to identify possible risks in UTAS-AI Mussanah. From the survey, the data will be generated and are considered by each center and department through their respective HoCs and HoDs in the preparation of their risk register in ORMS and their corresponding mitigation plan. The RMC chairperson and deputy review each center and department's registers and identify major risks and finalize the UTAS-AI Mussanah risk register with mitigation and treatment plans.

Risk Management during the Pandemic

The year 2020 has been an unusual year for RMC as it had to deal with a crisis that was never tackled ever before. The Committee held its first meeting regarding COVID-19 pandemic on 18th February 2020, before any case was reported in Oman. In this meeting, awareness drive and precautionary measures to be carried out on the University premises were discussed. Awareness posters were then put up at prime locations on campus and shared on social media. Hygiene posters were posted in all washrooms and hand wash, sanitizers, and tissue papers were made available. In order to better ensure everyone's safety, biometrics attendance system had been suspended temporarily and the use of paper for communication has been minimized.

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Oman on 24th of February and on 10th March 2020, a "Supreme Committee on COVID-19" was formed in Oman to 'undertake measures to tackle developments resulting from Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic'. Understandably, RMC followed the guidelines from the Committee and developed strategies for the smooth operations in UTAS-AI Mussanah including the conduct of distance teaching and learning. Together with the College Council, RMC has been constantly communicating with all staff every decision made by the Supreme Committee and ensuring that all of its decrees are strictly followed.

In coordination with the Health and Safety Committee, RMC closely followed, implemented, and monitored the Ministry of Health's guidelines on campus to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All the decisions taken by the College Council and RMC chairperson were published as COVID-19 declarations through e-mail. In addition, thermal screening at the main entrance of UTAS-AI Mussanah started upon the proposal of RMC in June and social distancing protocol was put in place on campus.



QAD During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant changes to education. Today, advancement in information technology is set to meet the new learning philosophy: the convergence of e-learning technologies with blended learning. UTAS-AI Mussanah through the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) has made adjustments in leadership and management styles in order to support innovative teaching and learning.

Towards the end of the first quarter of 2020, the QAD had to change the mode of communication between and among the departments and college staff in general. Working remotely was normalized to the extent that staff had become expert in Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and other similar platforms. QAD's biggest challenge was the internal audit of both the departments and the committees. Despite the fact that this process was normally done in a setting involving face to face interaction to clear doubts and justifications, the QAD still managed to perform the audits remotely through the coordinators of both the committees and the departments.

The operational plans of the centers and departments and the committees' action plans were designed by aligning them to the goals and objectives of the new Strategic Plan and with the primary consideration of the measures for COVID-19. While the University's achievements were not discussed to the staff, all the results were shared via email and posted in the University portal for their information and reference.

QAD also managed to implement the first cycle of the Strategic Plan 2020-2024. In its first year of implementation, the College (now the University of Technology and Applied Sciences) achieved 20 out of 26 targets.

The last quarter of 2019-2020 was extremely challenging due to the global pandemic. Nonetheless, the QA coordinators of the centers and departments have demonstrated exceptional efforts and patience in working with the QAD. All of these achievements materialized because of the leadership of Dr. Rayya Al Amri and Ms. Balqees Al Mandhari.

Resources Use for Successful Online Teaching and Learning

by Mr. Shahnawaz Khan, Educational Technology Centre



COVID-19 has had varying effects on education across the globe. Such effects have resulted in numerous adjustments not only in terms of modes of teaching and learning but in every educational aspect.

UTAS-AI Mussanah has addressed the required necessities of online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This article then seeks to outline the existing resources and tools of the University that are being utilized to effectively transform traditional education into online education in this continually shifting educational landscape. These online resources and tools are being used to conduct online classes, communication with students, online sharing of study materials, and online exams.

1. Office 365 Exchange Online

The email and messaging service offered by Microsoft through Office 365 Exchange has played a vital role in carrying out effective communication between staff and students during the lockdown period due to COVID-19. While this was in place even before pandemic, the University has witnessed a tremendous increase in the utilization of this service by the students and staff.

2. Microsoft Teams

Microsoft (MS) Teams service played a highly critical role during the pandemic as it is the main tool used for conducting online classes, discussion with students, meeting, exam, academic advising, workshops, training, etc.

This tool provides the face to face talk, chat, voice calling, sharing of desktop, presentation, simulations, assignments, and also conducting online examinations.

Further, MS Teams offers different roles and permissions to attendees such as presenter and creator for the best control and smooth conduct of online classes, exams, and other online activities.

3. E-learning through Moodle

At UTAS-AI Mussanah, Moodle had been in use for a long time for online teaching and learning. However, there has been an exponential increase in the use of this application by students and staff during the pandemic time. The majority of quizzes, assignments, online classes, communication, and exams were conducted through Moodle. Also, sharing of study materials and videos was made possible with the use of this online application.

4. MS OneDrive

Teachers and students share large files and folders consisting of study materials, assignments, and other required documents. This Drive allows students and staff to keep their files and folder in a centralized storage, which is accessible anywhere.

5: ETIMAD System.

During the lockdown period, university's multiple in-house applications supports all students and staff in different ways. Among all of them, ETIMAD application helps students and staff during the teaching, learning and while attending the exam. ETIMAD provides the single point authentication to

access all other applications of the university. It helps students and staff in resetting their password, finding the suitable document from knowledge base, opening the service desk request for their problems etc.

6: - Software Used in UTASA (U-Software).

U-software available under E-Timad helped students and staff while working from home during the lockdown period. ETC has uploaded all required software for teaching and learning under U-software link and can be downloaded from anywhere. Hence, students and staff uses this facility while attending class, attending exam and while conducting classes.

7: - Students and staff Service desk.

UTASA students and staff can open a service desk request from anywhere in case of any technical issues arises while working/attending online class from home. This service helps a lot to all our students and staff during lockdown period. There was multiple service desk request raised by UTASA students and staff and attended by ETC and resolved successfully.

8: - Use of A-Tube.

A-Tube application facilitate the students and staff to upload and download the teaching and learning Videos. Hence, A-Tube provides tremendous help to UTASA student and staff during lockdown period of COVID-19 in their teaching and learning. Teacher were recording their course videos and uploading to the A-Tube and notifying their students to watch the same through email. Hence, students were downloading the video related to their course and downloading and watching them from home.

SL-No.	Issue Reported	Reported Source	Reported by.	Remark.	Repeated Issue.
1	Sign in Issue Reported by the Student.	Email	Invigilator	Suggested to reset the password.	1 Time
2	MS team application not responding.	Email	Invigilator	Login through the web browser solves the problem.	3 Time
3	Attendance and spot light not available for invigilator.	Email	Invigilator	Teams Organiser manages the teams activity.	30 Times
4	Spot light issue with second invigilator	Email	Invigilator	Teams organizer enabled the same for Invigilator2	50 Times
5	Attendance Downloading issue for invigilator2	Email	Invigilator	Teams organizer only can download the attendance.	32 Times
6	Enquiry about private chat during exam.	Email	Invigilator	Out of the meeting persona can send and receive chat message one to one.	5 Times.
7	Starting the video recording while exam.	Email	Invigilator	Organizer can start the video recording.	3 Times
8	Issue with hiding or deleting the video from MS team posts.	Email	Team Owner	Provide document with guideline for the same.	5 Times
9	Issue with Large Gallery View.	Email	Invigilator	Team organizer can only manage the large gallery view.	45 Times
10	Issue with total number of students visible in large gallery view.	Email	Invigilator	Once total camera count reaches to 11, After that large gallery view automatically will be highlighted.	45 Times
11	Teams recorded video recovery request.	Email	Teams Owner	Provided step by step document for the same.	5 Times
12	Permission issue of invigilator1 and invigilator2	Email	Invigilator	Explained through ETC info and MS teams.	20 Times
14	Issue of Team, Channel deletion and restoration	Email	Teams Owner	Deleted Teams can be restored by opening a service desk request.	8 Times
15	Issue of files or folder deletion from Teams.	Email	Teams Owner	Provided step by step document to restore the same.	3 Times
16	Issue of Camera video blur display during exam.	Teams call	Invigilator	Computer display monitor resolution settings.	1 Times
17	Issue of exam team deletion by the invigilator2	Service desk	Team Owner	Suggested to remove the invigilator from Team after exam, and deleted team can be restored by ETC after opening a service desk request.	10 Times

Technical issues recorded during semester I, A.Y. 2020-21

Library Activities

The year 2020 is memorable as it saw active participation and contribution of the Library Students Committee. The Committee organized a workshop dubbed as "Reading by Ear" with the UTAS-AI Mussanah-Library Services Section's support on 2nd February 2020 under the Saayl event. This fun enriched workshop, presented mainly by Ms. Fatima Al-Rawahi, is highly educational and was attended by a large number of students.

Despite the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Committee did not budge and continued to organize activities on campus. As such, a webinar on "Self – Learning" was conducted on 19th November 2020 and was presented by Mr. Osama Al-Marzuqi. The said webinar was equally well appreciated by students.

The UTAS-AI Mussanah Library Services Section in coordination with the Human Resources Development Committee (HRDC) also organized two webinars offered by ProQuest Digital Library Database. The first webinar on "ProQuest Database Training for Students" was conducted on 12th October 2020 for the University students using the Arabic language. Meanwhile, the second webinar on "ProQuest Resources Training for Faculty & Staff" was held on 4th November 2020 for the University staff and was delivered in English language. During these two webinars, Mr. Anas Obaid inducted the students and staff about ProQuest Resources through a live demo focusing on how to create accounts, access the resources, and download materials.

It is important to note that we are currently navigating through the biggest potential challenge of our lifetime in connection with the global educational crisis. Consequently, there is a demand for innovative and comprehensive responses from academicians and administrators.

Academics During COVID-19: An Introspection on Challenges with an Eye on Opportunities

Mr. James Joseph, Engineering Department



We are in the midst of a calamitous period, the biggest threat to the human progress ever recorded in recent history. COVID -19 has been affecting people from all walks of life and across the globe. Indubitably, Sultanate of Oman being no different from other parts of the world, has shown remarkable

resilience in facing and overcoming the challenges. This article is an attempt to rustle some information up regarding the challenges that the UTAS – Al Mussanah has encountered as a result of this pandemic.

Challenges

Reshaped Pedagogy

It can be categorically stated that the approach towards education by the teachers, students, and administrators has been radically reshaped since physical contact between students and educators inside the University is restricted.

Drop in Campus Activities, Co-curricular Activities and Competitions

Students' activities and intercollegiate competitions have plunged to the lowest level ever in the recent past and this may have severe adverse effects among students. Further, the skill development training programs has also halted, which may be detrimental to the accomplishment of career objectives for both staff and students.

Shortage of Digital Infrastructure

Lack of digital infrastructure and inadequate accessories have also been negatively affecting at least the initial phase of the implementation of online teaching and learning.

Loss of Instructional Time due to Lockdown

The pandemic has resulted in lagging of academic program completion which may have long-lasting repercussions in academics in particular, and society in general.

Student Engagement

Ensuring complete participation from the student community and getting them wholly engaged to the teaching-learning process and motivating them to stay glued to online teaching approaches are yet another challenge faced by academicians during this pandemic period.

It is important to note that we are currently navigating through the biggest potential challenge of our lifetime in connection with the global educational crisis. Consequently, there is a demand for innovative and comprehensive responses from academicians and administrators.

Responses and Opportunities

Proactive Approach of the Academic Staff and Administration

Teachers in UTAS – Al Mussanah have risen to this situation with befitting response to the challenges of higher education by carefully crafting online classes, developing teaching and learning resources conducive for this mode, designing and preparing appropriate assessment, procuring the requisite digital accessories, and upgrading themselves to better facilitate online teaching.

Innovation and Collaboration Opportunities

University administration and academic departments could use this situation as an occasion for partnership with other research and higher education institutions for active student research and usage of open educational resources and information providers.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

MOOCs are online courses that are accessible to anyone who are interested in an academic program. Only a computer and an internet connection are necessary for getting access such programs. Further, MOOCs are loosely structured, free, and are creating learning communities. Teachers should encourage their students to get registered for such courses as these are excellent opportunities for knowledge enhancement.

Flipped Classroom

It is a peculiar instructional strategy which is intended at augmenting students' engagement in practical work and live problem solving. In this approach, teachers provide reading resources and online instructional sessions. Students on the other hand, complete their reading at their homes and the time they spend in the campus is utilized fully for small projects, practical sessions, experimentation, and research based activities. This strategy could be effectively implemented for several practical based courses and could also be extended to post COVID period.

It is imperative that we face the challenges head on by tapping potential opportunities and building comprehensive contingency measures. This pandemic may also serve as a catalyst for reinventing educational strategies that capitalize on collective strength and interdependencies of academic institutions. In the meantime, as academicians, we shall strive extraordinarily to live up to our objectives in this unparalleled challenging time, focusing on opportunities, to provide great digital educational experience.

COVID – 19 Brings Challenges to Students

Abdul Aziz Saleh Saif AlMazroui (52S1514)



Being away from the classroom and learning online are new experiences for us and forced us to rely more on the world of technology. To make matters worse, network irregularities during lectures and online examinations

were highly stressful. But thankfully, with the cooperation and continual help of our teachers and our distinguished administration, we have overcome most of these adverse conditions. Further, we have gained confidence with studying through distance education where learning and skill development are conducted through various online platforms.

It will pass!

Nasser Said Al Bakri (56J1816312)



During the early days of 2020, around 7.8 billion people across the globe were not ready to hear that there is a new monster coming their way to change their lives forever!

Truly, 2020 was an exceptional year as every person's life has been affected by this disease. Yes, you are right, it is

COVID-19. But believe me, humans are great. We have been experiencing hard times and difficulties since the first cry we made after we got out of our mother's womb; yet, those obstacles and difficulties we faced in our journey were in fact what made us able to stand on our feet right now.

No doubt, we, the students, are facing this tough time too.

We are currently separated physically and socially, but with the able support of the University administration, we will overcome this. Apart from online learning, we come across other challenges every day. Right now, everyone is having a stressful time as well as working under pressure. But there are some people who are making all of these look like a piece of cake! Or at least trying. Guess who they are? Indeed, they are our teachers. They are giving their best and making time in order to deliver their lessons and help bring out the best in us. Our teachers are exerting a lot of effort to keep us motivated and work hard. Besides that, whatever the pressure we experience as students, our teachers' struggles are undoubtedly way more serious. We should be grateful to them.

Always remember that hard times create amazing people, and without high pressure, the crystals will not exist!

Do not worry, it will pass.

Challenges During the Pandemic

Dr. Shaji Kalistine Apolinmary, Information Technology Department



The anguish and agony caused by the pandemic cannot be conveyed in full through printed words. COVID-19, along with its catastrophic impact, has been affecting the social, political, and economic spheres of the lives of large sections of the population across regions, countries, and the whole world. Considering its sweeping effect, the pandemic can very well be compared with the revolution in France, the

October revolution in Russia, the democracy movement in China, and the Industrial Revolution originating in England and spreading throughout the world. These are all major movements in history, which have greatly affected the lives of people.

The impacts of such a disaster cannot be easily classified and put in watertight compartments of times of despair or the spring of hope as the whole world struggles stoically against the dreaded virus. These paradoxical thoughts were echoed in the opening sentences of Charles Dickens' novel titled *A Tale of Two Cities*. It gives a graphic picture of the mood of the French Revolution. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was a season of Light, it was a season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair..." (Para 1, Line 1, p1).

COVID-19 cannot be brushed aside as just another epidemic gone wild. It has defied the boundaries of race and culture. Its catastrophic influence on almost all walks of human life has made it a social and economical disaster. Millions of people have fallen prey to the deadly clutches of the virus and millions more have lost their jobs. People who are precariously clinging on to their employment have suffered drastic pay cuts.

The pandemic has brought about a stunning blow to many areas of life and one of the worst affected is the educational domain. Schools and colleges, which were once the hub of frenetic activities in academics, sports, and co-curricular events, must resort to virtual education. Gone are the days of back slapping camaraderie among students, healthy interactions between the teachers and the learners, frantic efforts in the playfields to win with the true spirit of sportsmanship, and the intellectual crossing of swords in debates, discussions, elocutions, and quizzes. Was it not truly said that the battle of Waterloo was won in the playgrounds of Eton?

Another pitiable outcome of the online education is that there are thousands of students who are unable to afford a stable internet connection and a smart phone; sometimes a laptop is out of their reach. The late bloomers in a class find it difficult to keep pace with the teacher's stride as individual attention is not possible in the virtual classroom. In these days of gloom, a ray of hope is shown to the students by the teaching community.

All the darkness of the forlorn world
Cannot quench a guiding light.
A teacher holds a kind beacon
To dispel the darkness of despair
And to bring the spring of hope.

They too serve in the war against the unseen enemy
By reaching out to the eager minds far away
With ample sustenance in these times of crisis every day.
All the darkness of the forlorn world
Cannot quench a guiding light.

As this pestilence is yet to come to an end, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist of the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that "at least for the next year or so, the world needs to be geared up to do everything possible to keep the novel coronavirus at bay while scientists work on vaccines". Until an effective vaccine within the reach of the common man is invented, governments should ensure that the people afflicted and otherwise are taken care of. Equally, teachers and students must continue to adopt and adapt teaching and learning strategies and techniques to respond to the new normal.

Perceptions on Education and Its Digitization

Dr. Divyajyothi M.G, Information Technology Department



As technology is redefining and reshaping lives, the digitization of education, along with its technical expertise requirement, innovation, and authentic learning experiences, has creatively entrenched itself into mainstream classroom and across all disciplines. Fortunately, it seems to be yielding positive results. This is in contrast with the bygone days when education was more practical, textual, verbal, and oral; it was never digital nor electronic. Besides the two fundamental entities (the teacher and the blackboard), the areas of knowledge and its transfer along with the various research findings remained within the volumes of books in the libraries and the teacher. Accessibility was limited too, but digitization has comprehensively changed primary and secondary school education along with university courses with impacts across all sections of the societies and communities.

This educational reform has positive and negative effects. For example, while global digital connectivity makes everything accessible with just one click, it has drastically wiped out the human connection and group connectivity, which are required for an educational fraternity or any organizational entity. Academic honesty is also a challenge that came up with the advent of digitization and the electronic age. Students know that with a click, they get to pick anything from an array of options. This said, students copying from Google without properly referencing their source is a likely problem.

Online learning or eLearning has been the alternative method of teaching and learning during the pandemic period. The usual hustle and bustle of a school with the bells, the naughtiness of

children, and the vibrancy of hundreds of college and university students who would soon become or join the workforce of the world economy, seemed to have disappeared with the advent of COVID-19. It has also given rise to a phenomenon where parents in urban households do not concede with the fact that controlling children is becoming a problem. The frustrated tech-savvy child has become an interruption for the working parents as the rooms of flats and houses have become classrooms and offices in action. If this trend goes on, it can lead to continuous psychological problems for the young and the old.

As we are moving towards a virtual workforce in many organizational sectors, it is paramount that in education, a balanced approach is followed by adopting certain traditional methods. Activities such as class debates that promote holistic thinking, interactive learning, and collaboration with a good combination of technical innovations are still imperative. Just like in any other educational endeavors, when balancing the traditional and technological approach, the uniqueness of each learner should be given due importance.

Schools are the building blocks of our future entrepreneurs, IT professionals, engineers, doctors, etc. It is where we see role models of our societies who would concoct growth and transform lives. In education, it's the teachers who play the most crucial and important role in reimagining and reshaping the impregnable minds of today's youth into global leaders and world citizens. It is then vital that digitization of education must be coupled with continuous professional development of teachers for them to keep up with the demands of the changing times.

UTAS-AI Mussanah Comes to Grips with Online Learning

Ms. Blessy Jayaron Jose, Information Technology Department



UTAS-AI Mussanah continued to optimize its online learning platforms at the onset of the first semester of academic year 2020-2021 as a response to the pedagogical challenges of the pandemic. This has spotlighted the critical needs of students to have reliable internet access from their

homes. At the same time, other issues have arisen with online learning. It has also required the educators of the University to use online learning platforms in an efficient manner. In response to the pandemic, a sudden transition from traditional classrooms to virtual classrooms took place, which involved live or recorded versions of classroom lectures, group discussions, and interaction among students using video conferencing.

In connection with online teaching, UTAS-AI Mussanah has played a major role in enhancing student education. The University has advanced the use of online learning to address social distancing requirements through the use of MS Teams as a base platform to carry out online teaching and learning. All required online activities, attendance documentation, teaching-learning procedures, electronic assignments, usage of Help Centers, and invigilation duties during exams were conducted successfully – all due to collaborative efforts that led to the academic development of students. For educators, these were novel and challenging experiences that triggered many realizations.

Webcam and pen tablet utilization was one of the significant highlights this semester. With the help of webcams and pen tablets, online teaching and learning has proven to be

successful, especially for Mathematics classes. Later, these pen tablet notes can be uploaded in e-Learning as a teaching tool, which students can download or print for studying purposes.

On an additional note, UTAS-AI Mussanah did not restrict the use of online platforms merely to online teaching, but also included online assessments. Several assessments such as quizzes and midterm exams were carried out in eLearning (Moodle) via MS Teams. Staff development program sessions were also conducted via Teams and other online platforms in the form of webinars within the University and outside. These webinars have proven to be worth implementing as they provide continuous opportunities for professional development despite this pandemic. While UTAS-AI Mussanah is doing a good job in optimizing and enhancing its use of online learning technology, the University is keen to further explore the full potential of all these available technologies.

E-Research Opportunities During the Pandemic

Dr. Rachappa Jopate, Information Technology Department



Research under any circumstances is quite challenging when done sincerely, with a result in mind. The COVID-19 situation has created additional challenges for researchers in conducting their research. The ongoing pandemic has brought a complete change in lifestyle; it has presented its own set of challenges and new opportunities for utilizing our time in a better way. This situation initially put a halt to all research work but, after some time, it was realized that this unique situation also comes with opportunities.

A research journey has many twists and turns, ups and downs. E-research incorporates the use of information and communication technology to facilitate research. This type of research makes use of internet-based tools and techniques. This scenario made it possible for researchers to research topics that could not be done with traditional methods. It allows researchers to collect a variety of information from a wide range of populations with the help of online surveys, questionnaires, online interviews, online discussions, etc. As researchers, it is important that we go through all possibilities, capabilities, sources of data, and ensure that these sources are put to the right use and in the right context.

E-research does have a few hitches. It is difficult for researchers to verify or identify online participants for a study, or to control the research environment. This is because internet-based research can be done from various settings across the globe and collecting an impartial sample that represents all segments of the population may become difficult. Also, everyone may not have access to the internet at all times, and may not be able to connect when the researcher needs. For conducting any collaborative research, e-research has gained significant amounts of attention. More frequently these days, computers and other electronic resources and digital libraries are used for gaining information. Consequently, e-research provides information instantly. In today's scenario, e-research is giving opportunities for all the fields and specializations to contribute effectively in their fields of interest and bring remarkable change in the society.

IT Department Prepares and Implements Action Plan for AY 2020-2021

Mr. Faheem Ahmad and Mr. Agha Urfi Mirza
Information Technology Department



COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. According to their website, WHO first learned of this new virus on 31st December 2019, following a report of a cluster of cases of 'viral pneumonia' in Wuhan, People's Republic of China.

Globally, as of 7:03pm CET, 25th November 2020, there have been 59,481,313 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 1,404,542 deaths, reported to WHO. The disruptive effects of the COVID-19 outbreak have impacted almost all sectors of our society. The education sector is no exception. At the beginning of the academic year (AY) of 2020-2021, the opening of colleges and universities poses new challenges and accompanying risks for transmission on campuses and in their surrounding communities. Although the risk of severe health effects of COVID-19 in young adults without underlying health conditions is relatively low, the community might be at a considerably higher risk for severe illness and death if these young people were to become infected.

Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 among students and staff at or near colleges and universities is complex. Transmission could occur in college classroom settings especially if there is no mandatory use of face masks, insufficient physical distancing, or inadequate hand hygiene. However, social and residential settings outside of

classrooms likely pose a significant risk. A model response both in planning for and responding to outbreaks is required to reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission.

Under the patronage of Dr. Najiba Said Hamed Al Zadjali, HoD-IT, the Health and Safety Committee (HSC) in collaboration with the Risk Management Committee (RMC), and with the support of members and stakeholders, the IT Department Action Plan was successfully implemented at UTAS –Al Mussanah. These are as follows:

- ◇ Different instructions, guidelines, and measures were collected and distributed in the Department through different modes like posters, banners, websites, both in digital and print format to create awareness about the COVID-19 and its preventions.
- ◇ IT staff attended the webinar on COVID-19 conducted by WHO.
- ◇ COVID-19 awareness survey was conducted to make staff aware about COVID -19 and how to prevent it.
- ◇ An isolation room was created at the clinic in UTAS-Al Mussanah to isolate any person with symptoms.
- ◇ The temperature of every person is checked at the main gate of the university.
- ◇ In all the offices and facilities, "1.5 m Keep Distance" stickers were pasted both in Arabic and English.
- ◇ Wearing masks and using hand sanitizers were ensured. Some exams were conducted with 50%

capacity in the examination rooms and labs.

- ◇ It was ensured that the computers used by students should not be used by students in the next session.
- ◇ Staff attendance was ensured as per guidelines issued by the Supreme Committee.
- ◇ Online classes, meetings, and exams were conducted successfully by the Department.
- ◇ All the offices, labs, and classrooms are regularly well sterilized.
- ◇ Wall-mounted sanitizer dispensers were placed in all facilities to ensure that every person can sanitize their hands.

With the action plan and its implementation at the IT Department, everyone is positive that this semester will be completed successfully by the grace of Almighty Allah.

Students practicing social distancing and wearing masks during an examination.



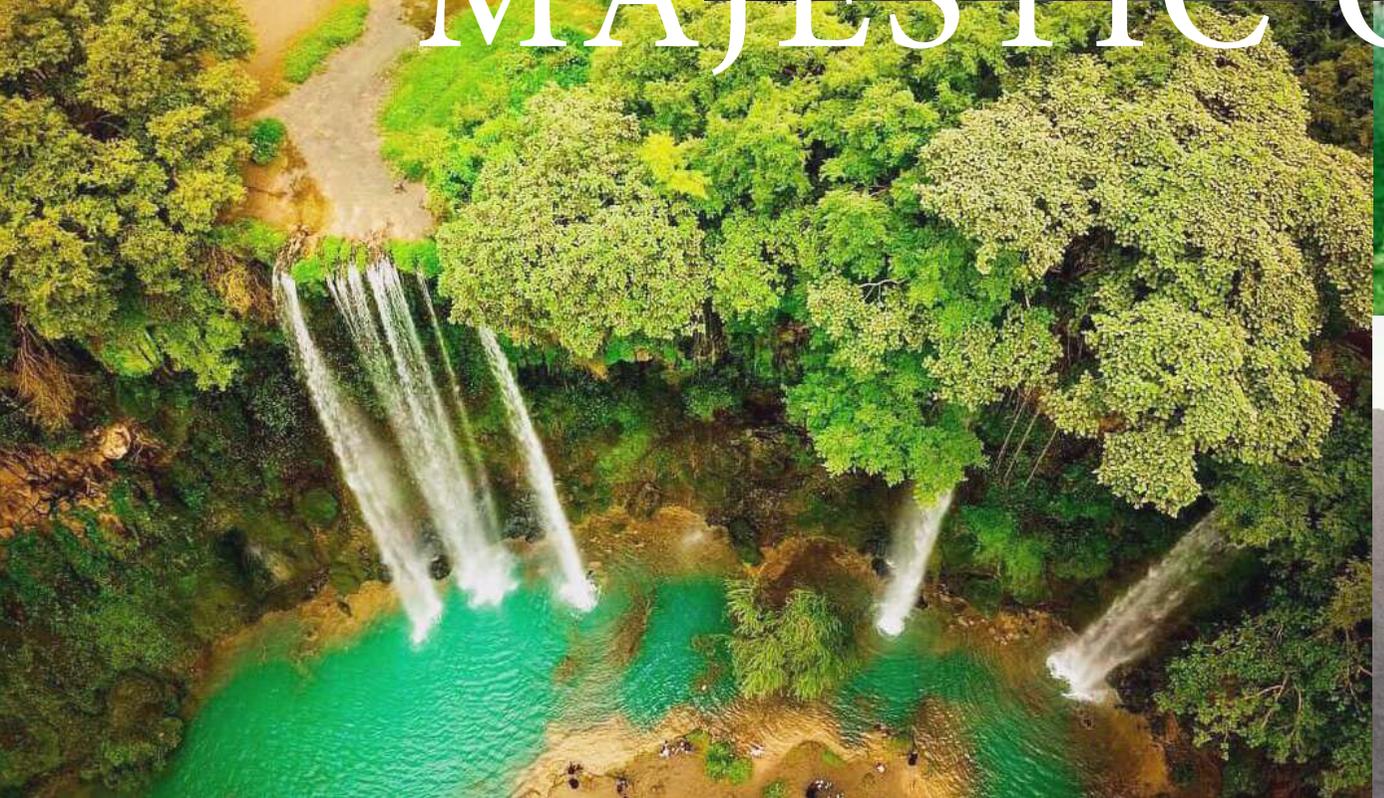


UTAS-AI Mussanah continues to offer dynamic learning opportunities for students to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and competencies required in the national and international labor market.





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