



Teaching and Learning Development Plan
2006 – 2008

About this Plan

The College marked 2005 as an year for academic quality improvement. An initiative of the Deans Committee for this year was the formulation of a teaching and learning action plan for the period 2006–2008. The draft plan was developed by a subcommittee and was later approved by the Deans Committee. Although the terms of reference stated an action plan, the final output of the Committee is more akin to a strategic plan. No doubt, this change was deliberate as the requirement for enhancing teaching and learning differed from one division to the other.

Therefore, it is expected that each year, individual faculties and centres will develop an Action Plan comprising annual targets, accountabilities and completion dates to address their most pressing issues for developing teaching and learning while working towards progressive implementation of this Strategic Plan within the plan period.

MCHE will relentlessly seek improvements in teaching and learning to offer our students a first class educational experience during their study at the College.

Dr H Hameed
Rector
January 2, 2006

Teaching and Learning Development Plan 2006–2008

1 Background

A key objective of MCHC as identified in its current Strategic Plan (2000-2005) is improving the teaching and learning across all its Faculties and Centres. Several strategies are identified in the strategic plan to achieve this objective:

- Give high priority to excellence in teaching in the recognition and reward system of the College
- Provide students with world class academic support services and infrastructure
- Ensure independent professionally validated student appraisal of all subjects taught in the College and use student feedback to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- Establish a strong monitoring and supervisory mechanism related to teaching
- Identify and realize flexible modes of delivery for College programmes to ensure opportunities to a wider audience
- Develop curricula through discussions and interaction with students, employers, other stakeholders and professionals
- Apply innovative and effective teaching/learning strategies and establish a strong mechanism for continuous structured evaluation and feedback of learning outcomes
- Conduct regular surveys of the major employer needs and alumni, and use data from those to guide curriculum development and create partnerships with industry and employer
- Encourage self-learning and life-long learning as a necessary and viable form of staff development

At the Deans Committee meeting held on 10 March 2005, it was resolved that the task of developing an action plan be delegated to a sub-committee. The Committee comprised seven members drawn from various Faculties and Centres of the College.

The members are:

1. Abdulla Nafiz (Chairperson), Dean, Faculty of Management and Computing
2. Mariyam Nooradhdheen, Dean, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies
3. Dr. Ahmed Shareef, Dean, Faculty of Education
4. Aishath Shaheen, Acting Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences
5. Fayyaz Ali Manik, Asst. Lecturer Gr II, Faculty of Shari'ah and Law

6. Mohamed Musthafa Hussain, Deputy Director, Centre for Open Learning
7. Fathmath Thoufeega, Asst. Lecturer Gr II, Centre for Open Learning

The terms of reference of the sub-committee are as follows:-

1. Document the existing quality assurance practices within the Faculties,
2. Through internal environment scans, anecdotal evidence or other means, establish the major issues compromising the quality of teaching and learning within MCHE,
3. Develop strategies and actions to address the issues identified. It is necessary to ensure that these are do-able,
4. Develop a discussion paper to document, sensitize and guide staff to enhance quality to be tabled at the next Deans Committee,
5. Revisit the issue of obtaining feedback with a view to establishing 2005 as a base year for course experience data,
6. Report the recommendations of the sub-committee by 31 March 2005.

To accomplish the tasks in the terms of reference, the sub-committee held three meetings in its secretariat (Faculty of Management and Computing).

This paper reflects the collective input of all the members of the sub-committee. The information presented in this document is based on the observations and the discussions of the committee members. The observations are mainly restricted to analysis of the Faculty/Centre's internal environment. Due to time constraints, the committee could not collect any data from sources such as students, sponsors, industry experts and parents. These are important stakeholders whose views and perceptions of quality at MCHE, in a way, are more important than the collective views of the members of the sub-committee.

2 Existing Quality Assurance Practices within MCHE

Several quality assurance practices exist within MCHE. Broadly, the practices could be categorized under course administration, course development and delivery, and evaluation (course, subject and teaching). However, the practices vary among the Faculties and Centres in a number of ways. The variations are partly due to varying academic administration structures, quality assurance processes and reporting practices at various Faculties. It is also due to the nature of courses offered and the mode of course delivery.

In terms of course administration, in some Faculties all the Course Coordinators or subject Coordinators report to the Deans.

However, in other Faculties with larger student populations Course Coordinators report to the Head of Department. In these Faculties, Course Coordinators mainly deal with student related issues while the Heads of Departments are responsible for monitoring curriculum delivery.

Several members noted that several of MCHE courses are approved by the Maldives Accreditation Board and complies with MNQF standards. However, not all the courses have been submitted for MAB approval although they have been approved by the Academic Board.

Many Faculties reported the use of various methods and processes to monitor course or subject delivery. Some Faculties hold weekly Course Coordinators meetings to identify administrative or academic issues relating to the course delivery while the others hold only fortnightly meetings. Yet other Faculties hold Subject Coordinators meetings to identify more subject specific “micro” issues rather than course related “macro” issues.

Despite the importance of evaluating teaching, not all the Faculties are able to undertake teaching evaluations on a semester basis and communicate feedback to staff. The members cited the administrative difficulties associated with data entry and processing of large amounts of evaluation forms in a timely manner for the exercise to be of use to the staff.

Some Faculties such as FHTS and FMC offer externally designed courses such as those from BTEC, CIMA, AAT and ACCA. The Faculties have no control over the contents or the assessments. Since, they are externally designed and are subject to internationally recognized standards we can assume that several aspects of quality such as assessment, marking and teaching materials, are already addressed. However, for these courses, we need to consider quality of teaching as well as the number of graduates and compare the pass rates with international averages. It is therefore critical that highest standards of teaching is provided to be able to compete equally with international students.

Following is a summary of the administrative practices or mechanisms currently in place through which quality is assured in courses run at MCHE.

- (a) Course Coordinators meeting
- (b) Progress review of subjects by the Subject Coordinators
- (c) Review of entry criteria
- (d) Annual course evaluation
- (e) Subject and teaching evaluation every semester
- (f) Examination paper review by the Academic Review Committee
- (g) Final marks review by Academic Review Committee

- (h) Academic staff meeting
- (i) Mid semester student representatives meeting with the Dean, Course Coordinators
- (j) Teaching observation on a selective basis
- (k) Quality assurance committees
- (l) External verifiers from overseas
- (m) First and last impression forms
- (n) Monitor schemes of work and lesson plans
- (o) Coordinators meeting with unit leaders

3. Major Issues Compromising Quality at MCHE

The members of the Committee observed that several good practices exist and are implemented at various Faculties of MCHE. However, the practices need to be documented and where best practices are observed they need to be shared with the other faculties. The members of the committee, however, identified the following issues as key factors that compromise quality at MCHE. Although the issues are stated separately many of them are linked to each other.

3.1 Frequent class re-scheduling

Contributes to student dissatisfaction and creates a perception of instability and poor planning.

3.2 Problems of managing part time lecturers

While there are several outstandingly high performing part-timers, some faculties reported part time lecturers who contribute to poor quality. However, the dilemma is that due to the shortage of qualified and experienced full time staff, several faculties have to rely on part-timers.

3.3 Full time staff residing overseas for further studies

In some faculties a large number of full-time staff are currently overseas. To fill this gap, these Faculties rely heavily on part-timers. This reliance, while it has many benefits also, causes scheduling instability; and consequently contributes to student dissatisfaction.

3.4 Large class size

In some faculties large class size creates several problems compromising quality. Lecturers are unable to provide the individual assistance and attention that most students require. Students lack the opportunity to interact with the lecturers and other students that help them optimise their learning.

3.5 Quality and experience of academic staff

The committee members were unanimous that the quality and experience of the full time academic staff in almost all the faculties are not adequate to deliver high quality teaching. The problem has been exacerbated in some faculties due to high turnover of the experienced staff to more attractive career alternatives elsewhere.

3.6 Teaching materials not revised on a systematic basis to keep pace with latest research and knowledge.

While several courses and the subjects in those courses are currently revised, it is not implemented in a systematic way. The revision is instead more ad hoc and is implemented by individual lecturers. Aligning curriculum in line with latest research and knowledge helps maintain the currency of the subjects taught.

3.7 Subject designs do not permit students to undertake their own research

A key deficiency in some of the subjects taught is that students are not given the opportunity to do their own research using the resources in the library and elsewhere. Some subjects contain very little activities that require students to undertake their own research in libraries. The members believe that it is a practice that limits the knowledge of the students and results in lack of vital research skills to allow them to proceed to higher levels of study with confidence.

3.8 Insufficient teaching and learning resources especially electronic databases

MCHE does not have sufficient stock of teaching resources at its disposal. This includes both electronic and paper- based resources. Some faculties even find it difficult to procure the software that it needs to teach. There is evidence that faculties rely on the resources that the staff obtain through their informal networks.

3.9 Students do not have their own text books

Due to lack of reference and text books in the libraries, many faculties do not prescribe textbooks in their subjects. These faculties provide photocopied notes and reading materials. Photocopied materials even though they may be of high quality in content and reproduction, can create perceptions of poor quality

compared well presented glossy text books and learning materials.

3.10 Not enough emphasis to develop soft skills of students

Not enough emphasis is given on changing attitude, developing work ethics, instilling integrity and building character. Knowledge and skills are of no use if not cemented by adequate character building. Graduates without sufficient grounding in character may not be of much use to the society and to themselves. Hence, the members believe that more emphasis needs to be given to build character along with theoretical and cognitive training.

3.11 Poor perception of quality by the industry

According to the members of the committee, some sectors do not fully understand the processes and mechanisms in place within MCHE to ensure quality of teaching and learning. While some faculties work very closely with the relevant sectors (for example, education) other faculties do not have such interfaces with the industry. No matter how good the quality is, even the best quality products need to be sold.

3.12 Lower entry criteria lead to poor quality

A lowering of the entry criteria appears to feed into poor quality. Members believe that higher quality inputs are more likely to result in higher quality outputs.

3.13 Insufficient skills of setting assessments and exams

Very few staff, with the exception of the Faculty of Education, possess teaching qualifications particularly skills in setting of assessments and examinations. Lack of skills and low confidence in assessment and instructional design play a key role in the ability of the staff to design and deliver high quality and relevant assessments.

4 Strategies and Action to Address Quality Issues

4.1 Undertake teaching and subject evaluations every semester

- Each Faculty/Centre should undertake mid-semester teaching evaluations of all the subjects

taught and communicate the results to staff (both part time and full time).

- Each Faculty/Centre must undertake an end-of the semester subject and teaching evaluation and communicate the results to all staff. Information from the subject evaluations must be prepared as a report and the information must be communicated to the subject Coordinator/Course Coordinator or the Head of Department.
- Undertake a course experience evaluation. Each Faculty/Centre must undertake course experience evaluations at each graduation for each course.

4.2 Minimise Class Re-Scheduling

Minimise class re-scheduling through centralized control of the timetable at the faculty level.

4.3 Strengthen recruitment of part-time staff

Recruit part time staff based on careful evaluation of the background, qualifications experience and commitment to the highest standards of behaviours and professionalism. Faculties must sign contracts with the staff clearly setting out the expectations and obligations of both parties.

4.4 Implement a class size policy across MCHE

Academic Board should design and implement a maximum class size policy for tutorials and lectures.

4.4 Recruit and retain qualified, experienced professional staff committed to MCHE's mission and values

- Current panel interviews for recruitment to be improved with pre-designed structured questions to filter
- Allow x number of consultations days per year / or x number of work days per year to gain industry experience

4.5 Revise and incorporate student feedback on subjects

Harmonize curriculum review cycle and ensure student feedback is reviewed and, where warranted, incorporated into the subjects.

Incorporate latest research and knowledge into the subjects to maintain currency of the subjects

4.6 Procure sufficient learning and teaching resources

- Staff to be provided access to electronic databases and resources
- Obtain membership of some professional bodies

4.7 Improve relationship with the industry

Industry members must be provided with copies of the Annual Course Reports to involve them more in the activities and performance of the Faculties/centres.

4.8 Enhance research skills of students

Faculties to incorporate subject related readings and references in the subject outline

4.9 Review admission criteria

- Review course admission criteria to assess adequacy and relevance to the current situation.

4.10 Enhance Assessment Administration, Marking and Feedback

- Review all examination papers at least by three peer reviewers
- Final marks to be moderated by a qualified and experienced moderator
- Assignments to be marked and feedback to be given students within two weeks of submission.
- All assessments to be reviewed by three relevant members of the Academic Review Committee

4.11 Promote and support research activities within the Faculties

- Encourage staff to include research findings in their teaching.
- Encourage staff to develop original learning materials (eg, course workbooks) incorporating their research and sell them to students at prices agreed by MCHS Staff to be allowed to retain a portion of the revenue

4.12 Undertake a Board of Studies once every semester

Hold meetings with the Student representatives from each course batch including the Dean and the College

Course Coordinator. Encourage Representation to table academic and non-academic issues relating to their courses. Faculty to note positive points to facilitate repeat of such practices and negative points and to improve or take action on those issues.

4.13 Encourage teaching observation by peers

Encourage academic staff to undertake teaching observation by their peers. The idea is to cultivate an atmosphere of collegiality and commitment to continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

5. Recommendations

As a result of the discussions, the members recommend the following actions to the Deans Committee for consideration.

- Undertake a more comprehensive quality audit involving the various stakeholders.
- Harmonize the academic reporting structures in line with the best practice.
- Identify processes to implement the recommended strategies and actions.



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