

Ministry of Higher Education of Oman Continues Successful its Journey to Excellence!



Muscat, October 2017: In June 2017 the Ministry of Higher Education received the *Committed to Excellence* recognition from the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), making it the very first organization in Oman to receive this international recognition.

The European Foundation for Quality Management, a not-for-profit foundation, has developed the EFQM Framework for Excellence. This framework is the most-used organizational framework in Europe. It is also widely used in GCC countries. Over 30'000 organizations use the EFQM Excellence Model. Many organizations who have had a Quality Assurance Management System in place have recognized that in order to reach Excellence, they must not only assure quality, but they must also apply higher standards. Therefore, they are using the EFQM Excellence Model, which helps them develop their organizations towards Excellence. The EFQM Excellence Model is also used for assessing applications for the EFQM Excellence Award (European Quality Award). EFQM's *Committed to Excellence* is an assessment and recognition scheme that helps organizations introduce an Excellence initiative and deliver improved results.

In February 2017 the Ministry of Higher Education started its Journey to Excellence (J2E) by conducting EFQM Self-Assessments (based on best practice standards) in the three pilot areas: Directorate General for Planning and Development, Directorate General for Private Universities and Colleges, and Directorate General Higher Education Admission Center. After the self-assessments, selected people from the three Directorates were trained to become EFQM Leaders for Excellence. This training was followed by Lean Project Management trainings for the team members of six Excellence projects. The Excellence projects then were conducted and deployed within only 90 days! The project results are very substantial: increased employee and customer satisfaction, lean processes, and significantly reduced costs.



The prestigious EFQM recognition has been received as a direct result of the work done on the Ministry's processes and procedures, which have been carefully reviewed by an EFQM validator on site before the recognition was given.

After the successful pilot phase the Ministry started its second wave of the Journey to Excellence in September 2017 with EFQM Self-Assessments in three Directorates General, in the Minister's Office, and in the Undersecretary's Office. Again, Lean Project Management trainings were conducted, followed by ten Excellence projects. These projects will be finished and ready for deployment by December 2017. There are clear indications so far that these Excellence projects will lead to annual costs savings, and result in better work quality.

The start of this successful Journey to Excellence was conducted under the guidance of Dr. Karl J. Koller, international Excellence expert and EFQM advisor/trainer from the Institute for Total Quality Management (ITQM), Zurich, Switzerland.

What do people involved in the Excellence projects think about the Journey to Excellence?



Dr. Zaid Zabanoot, Director General and J2E project leader says: "Starting the Journey to Excellence was the start of transformations within the Ministry of Higher Education. During the current phase we have a strong focus on changing the way we are working. Our customers are in the center of our focus. We wished we could change everything at once, however, the reality is: it takes time. However, we have made big efforts to conduct the Excellence projects within

a short time (maximum 90 days) and be implemented immediately. We are interested to get the benefits (increased customer satisfaction, reduced costs, improved employee satisfaction, new services, etc.) fast. The international recognition from EFQM has given us confidence that we are on the right track. With the support of ITQM, our staff has learned new methods and techniques to continuously improve our quality. They also have received coaching support during their Excellence projects to gain experience. Our leaders learn new leadership skills so they can successfully lead the J2E. With the involvement of all our people we will develop our Ministry to higher levels of Excellence."

Ms. Sheikha Al Saadi, Excellence Project Team Leader from the Directorate of Scholarships gave the following statement about her experience: "The Lean Project Management training from ITQM opened our eyes. We can now see more clearly, that some of our processes are no longer up-to-date. They are too slow, too many people are involved, the processes are complicated and too many errors are created. We are "pushing" too much paper. We will no longer operate in this fashion. In many processes we will go digital.



We will design new processes that will make us proud, because the new processes will meet our customers' needs, keep our customers satisfied, reduce process time, and last but not least, save us costs. I am highly motivated to be part of our Excellence Project Team and I am looking forward to being involved in more improvement projects.”

Mr. Fahad Al Amri, Excellence Project Team Leader from the Directorate of Administration and Finance said about his experience: “It was very interesting for me to



see that through this start of the Journey to Excellence, after having attended the Lean Project Management training, we look at our work differently. We can now see the start of the development of an Excellence culture in our Ministry. We realize that we can do something more than just work—we can think how we can do our job better, how we can improve quality, increase speed in our processes, and become

more efficient and effective. We recognize more and more that all of us have customers—external and internal customers. It is our duty to make sure that we offer our customers great services, and that they are satisfied or even surprised about our services. Of course, I am also an internal customer, and I expect that my internal suppliers will provide me with accurate and error free documents within a short time, enabling me to do a great job. I am excited to be part of this Excellence Journey and to support our Ministry in becoming a role model for Excellence.”

Dr. Karl J. Koller, the Excellence expert from ITQM comments: “I am very impressed, with what has been achieved during the last eight months. The Excellence project teams are highly motivated to work in their projects. People are now ready to question unsatisfactory processes and rules in order to make them better. H.E. the Minister and H.E. the Undersecretary made it possible to start this Journey to Excellence and to make the Journey in each phase stronger. The challenge will still be to keep momentum, to keep the continuous improvement in the Ministry going. Today we want to be better than yesterday and tomorrow we want to be better than today. This will help the



Ministry to use its financial budget at its best. The Ministry has recognized that the investment in continuous improvement is an absolute necessity. For example, investing in their people through training and coaching pays off very quickly, and brings many



financial benefits. The best proof of this are the very successful projects that have been conducted so far. If the Ministry continues its Striving for Excellence we have good reasons to believe that in 2019 the Ministry of Higher Education will be ready to receive international recognition from the European Foundation for Quality Management at even higher levels.”

Find out more about the Ministry of Higher Education of Oman’s successful start on their Journey to Excellence by contacting Dr. Zaid Zabanoot.

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