

Dear Members of the OGTech Community,

As the fourth week of classes at OGTech unfolds, our students and lecturers have settled into a focussed routine of lectures, group work and tutorials. The past couple of weeks have seen many highlights, and I would like to address two of them in more details. They are the setting up of OGTech's *interim* Student Council and the Creative Design classes of Prof Heiner Hoffmann and his wife, Ms Myriam.

A call for interest to participate in OGTech's *interim* Student Council was issued in the last Newsletter and we were very pleased to receive a strong and enthusiastic feedback from our students. I would like to congratulate the following students for being part of the *interim* Student Council: Khalid Al Wardi (chairperson), Ghadeer Al-Ghazali (secretary), Noora Al Balushi, Azamat Arif, Kinan Marei, Hamda Al Hajri, Ahmed Al Amri, Rumana Al Othmani, Abdullah Al Barwani and Hamed Al Busaidi.

Initially, the *interim* Student Council will act as a channel of communication between OGTech's students and staff. The *interim* Student Council will also take a leading role in proposing and organising extra-curricular activities. As such, it has already identified four different categories of events: social activities, community service, sports and arts. OGTech is very proud that the first event to be organized by our students is a participation in the Cancer Awareness Walkathon, of which you will read more in this Newsletter.

Over the coming semester, the *interim* Student Council will also work with the staff at OGTech to develop the framework in which future student representatives will be elected and will operate. We are looking forward to a constructive and fruitful interaction.

On another topic, many students wondered in the past weeks why a university of technology offers Creative Design as a compulsory course. To answer this question, Prof Hoffmann recently drew my attention to the funny yet profound speech of Sir Ken Robinson at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbtY>.

In his speech, Sir Ken Robinson, an educational advisor to numerous public and private organizations (including the European Commission and the governments of Hong Kong and Singapore) makes a convincing statement for the importance of Creativity in education. In his words: "*Creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status.*"

Creativity is not only limited to the Arts. A geologist at PDO who is able to model the interior of the Earth, without having ever seen it with her own eyes, shows high levels of creativity. An engineer at Nawras, who finds a smart solution to increase the efficiency of the telecommunication network displays creativity. A negotiator who is able to get two hostile parties (whether people, companies or countries) to agree on a common way ahead, shows creativity. Our society is in need of original thinkers, who are able to view the challenges that we are facing in a holistic and systemic manner and have the courage to propose conceptually new solutions. Such solutions are not necessarily "right" or "wrong", as we are often taught, but different and worth exploring, worth developing further.

Indeed, it is the combination of creativity and literacy that leads to innovation and it is in this context, that OGTech's mission can be best understood: To foster creative and critical thinking among its students, with the aim of advancing research and development, and transferring research results for the benefit of the society, industry and the region.

Dr. Barbara Stäuble
Project Advisor and Academic Director

From our students

Read next how our students experienced their first week of classes at OGTech:

Saturday 20 October, 2007. I woke up in the morning and said: "here comes the day". I was excited, self-confident, proud to be accepted by a university like OGTech. I drove to the University ready to meet my new friends and some old ones and my new teachers. *Kinan Marei*

The classes began almost immediately and gently gathered speed as the week wore on. The professors were amazingly patient, interactive and friendly. Though we did not have a proper cafeteria yet, we had a lot of fun spending a lunch hour lounging on the stairs, nibbling sandwiches and sipping drinks. [...] We also have an excellent Students Affairs Department who deserve special mention for all their work. *Azmat Arif*

The first week at OGTech has ended faster than expected. The students are now familiar with the names of all the teachers, though there are some doubts about the teachers knowing all the students' names. I, myself, have been called by two other names, which is actually quite funny. It would be a challenge to memorise more than 50 names in one week – let us see who wins! *Nora Al Belushi*

The teachers were friendly, they all welcomed us with a smile, although it seems like we are going to work hard due to the homeworks and the assignments we have been given during the very first week. I liked the fact that the campus is not big as it is much easier to move around one class to the another and the common rooms are a very nice place to discuss with others and have a little “chit chat” between lessons and in breaks. *Eman Al Ajmi*

From our English lecturers

I am finding my two groups of English Foundation students to be enthusiastic and very cooperative. Of course, occasionally, there have been some unexplained absences, a few tardy students and a few mishaps in assignment preparation along the way which we are viewing as learning experiences. However, all in all, I am very pleased with the progress of the two groups. I want to tell you about something that happened in one of my groups during week one. It's really quite amusing. We were having a discussion about the value of group work. I was focusing on the concept of sharing ideas in a classroom. As a lecturer who fully believes in and promotes group work/interaction with my students, I was strongly encouraging them to get on board with this idea. I gave many examples of situations where sharing information is beneficial to students and they were all agreeing with me... well, all except for one student in the front row (who shall remain nameless for now) who said “Teacher, I know a situation where sharing information would not be good.” “Really”, I asked, ready to defend my position, “what's that?” “During an exam!” he said with a smile.

Geraldine Walsh
English Lecturer

From our PR and Marketing Department

Last week, OGTech was invited to hold a presentation for students and parents at the Muscat International School. Panel speakers were, next to Dr. Barbara, a lady from the Australian Academic Student Exchange Agency IDP and the academic advisor of the American embassy. A lot of students were interested in studying abroad, but quite a number of students appreciated the possibility to enjoy international education in Oman through OGTech as well. The audience asked Dr. Barbara questions about student dormitory facilities and about the difference between the OGTech fees and the cost of study in Germany including cost of living. The event ended with a relaxed get together between panel speakers and audience and cookies were served. We are looking forward to a close cooperation with the Muscat International School and are planning to invite students from Muscat International School to our campus in the near future.

Sousann Al Heureithi
Marketing Executive

A business delegation of the Southern Federal State of Baden-Wuerttemberg visited OGTech on Monday. The delegation, comprising 24 businessmen from small and medium sized companies in the construction sector, is currently on a three day fact-finding trip to the Sultanate. Some of the businessmen already have links with companies in the Gulf, especially in Dubai. The trip was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Affairs of Baden-Wuerttemberg, the Chamber of Commerce and the Euro Info Centre Stuttgart, a department of the Stuttgart Chamber of Craft Industries.

“We would like to organize internships for some students,” said Gabriele Hanisch, Assistant Director of the Euro Info Center after listening to short speeches by Haitham Al Rawahy and Noora Al Baloushi. “In future we would like to sponsor one or two OGTech students,” said Klaus Engesser, Market Director Export of Roto Frank AG, Hardware Technology for Windows and Doors, a construction industry supplier for windows, doors and facades. Alike Peter Fischer, Managing Director of Knauf Integral KG. “We are looking forward to train one or two Omani students from OGTech in our company,” said Fisher. His company is searching to expand its contacts in the Gulf region and especially in the Sultanate.

Baden-Wuerttemberg is one of the biggest and economical most powerful federal states in Germany. Car manufacturers like Mercedes-Benz are located in Baden-Wuerttemberg. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Economic Affairs in Baden-Wuerttemberg, the federal states turnover for manufacturing exceeded in 2006 136.542 million Euros, 48 per cent of which came from exports. Last year 38.2 per cent of the employees worked in the industrial sector, most of these in engineering and automobile construction.

Manuela Gutberlet
Public Relation Executive

From our Library

The OGTech Library is now open daily from 1pm to 6pm. If you have suggestions for new books, magazines or multimedia resources, please let our librarian know. Students are welcome to stop at the reading corner in front of the library (accessible around the clock), where they can read daily newspapers.

From our interim Student Council Cancer Awareness Walkathon

Cancer Awareness Walkathon

The Cancer Awareness Walkathon is organised by the National Association for Cancer Awareness and will be held under the motto “Maintain the smile on our children’s faces”. Please contact Khalid Al Wardi or Ghadeer Al Ghazali from OGTech’s *interim* Student Council if you wish to register for the walk. Students and staff are welcome to participate. Buses will leave the OGTech premises at 3pm. The walk will be from the Ministry of Housing to the Ministry of Health and back to the Ministry of Housing (approximately 4km). Buses will then return to the OGTech premises. A big thank you to our *interim* Student Council for encouraging OGTech’s participation in this event!

National Day Celebrations

Our *interim* Student Council is organising a range of activities for the upcoming National Day Celebrations on 18 November 2007. The day will culminate with a BBQ on the beach in front of the OGTech Campus. The *interim* Student Council has also chosen this auspicious day as the official launch of the Student Council. More information will be forwarded to you in the coming days.