

# College of the North Atlantic- Qatar

## Advanced Writing Centre



*Helping you develop  
the processes and skills  
to be a better and  
more independent writer...*



# **“Strategies to Encourage Student Use of Writing Centers: The College of the North Atlantic- Qatar Experience”**

**By**

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**College of the North Atlantic-Qatar**

# Alternative Title



# You Have Built it, But Will They Come?



# The CNA-Q Project - Background



- Opened in September 2002 through an agreement between the State of Qatar and College of the North Atlantic, Canada
- One of Qatar's largest post-secondary institutions
  - 400+ faculty
  - 2300+ students
  - 400+ alumni
  - \$1.3 billion budget (to date)
  - 21 building campus

# The CNA-Q Project - Background

- Canadian *community college* model (3 year technology diplomas)
- offers industry expertise in 6 program areas
  - Health Sciences
  - Information Technology
  - Engineering Technology
  - Business Studies
  - Security
  - TPP



# The CNA-Q Project - Background



# The CNA-Q Project - Background

- Corporate Services and Continuing Education
  - Offer specialized courses for corporate clients
  - Offer nighttime/weekend courses for individuals



# The CNA-Q Project - Background

Corporate Partners include

Qatar Petroleum

Exxon Mobil

Q-Chem

Maersk

HMC

Shell

Qatar National Bank

Dolphin Energy

Qatar Armed Forces

Occidental



# Student Profile



## Direct Entry

- 550 TOEFL
- (7.5 IELTS)
- Program course work begins immediately
- 24.5%

## EFL Stream

- FL 1050
- FL 1060
- FL 1070
- FL 1080
- FL 1090
- Then program coursework begins.
- 74.5% requiring EFL instruction

## CNA-Q's Advanced Writing Centre



- Given that number of students requiring language and writing assistance, advocated for WC for years.
- AWC started 2007-8
- One staff
- Mentoring sessions: 533
- AWC orientation sessions: 79
- Gender Stats: Female (62%) Male (38%)

# AWC Overview (Fall 2008)

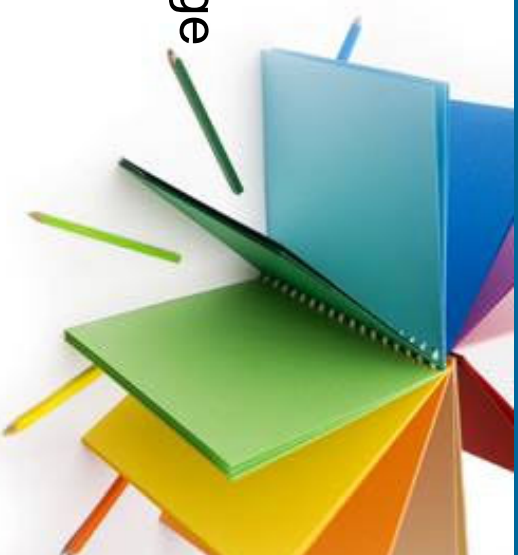
- One coordinator
- Three mentors
- All disciplines and community outreach
- 380 mentoring sessions
- 51 workshops
- 33 Orientation Sessions
- 37 Presentation Previews (Engineering and Case Study Comp.)



# Barriers to Visiting WCs

## Cultural

- Admission of weakness
- Likelihood to seek help in their first language (even with an English writing issue)
- Gender issues
- Low value placed on written communication skills vs oral communication skills
- Institutional culture of a western campus
- Interpersonal (ME student meets western mentor)



# Barriers to Visiting WCs



## Physical

- Location (distance from student hub – 15 minute walk)
- Uninviting space
  - » Plants, art work, posters, large tables, comfortable chairs, front of house (TAMUQ), absence of public or private spaces
- Poor signage
- Hours of operation (Esp. understaffed WCs)

# Strategies to Encourage WC Visits

- Learning Commons' Role
- Build Relationships
  - Faculty
  - Students
- Awareness Campaign
  - Faculty
  - Students
  - Community



# Learning Commons



## Background

- Multiple Help centers scattered across campus
- Underutilization of library resources
- Desire to foster independent learning
- Willingness to adopt alternative teaching strategies

**Result:** Innovative and Centralized Student Resource Service

# Learning Commons Concept



- **The Learning Commons** is a multifunctional, open-concept learning space dedicated to supporting and enhancing the student's academic experience. Through collaboration with academic and support services, the Commons provides one-on-one assistance to students in the areas of Math, Language, Writing, Career Counseling and Information Technology, as well as an Independent Learning Centre to strengthen English reading skills. Central to this model is the library's information and research function, supporting both students and departmental partners.

# Strategies to Encourage WC Visits



## Learning Commons

- The Learning Commons is a dynamic, energetic **formal and informal learning space** where **information, content, technology and teaching converge**.
- It is built on the ideas that:
  - the space and architecture define the type of learning and behaviour that occurs (**built pedagogy**);
  - that learning can take place outside the classroom, that it is a social activity, that students learn by creating content and that learning requires an integrated approach (**constructivist learning**);
  - and that **technology and digital access** has greatly influenced the way students learn, communicate and interact as a community.

# Learning Commons

- PHOTO



# Learning Commons

- PHOTO

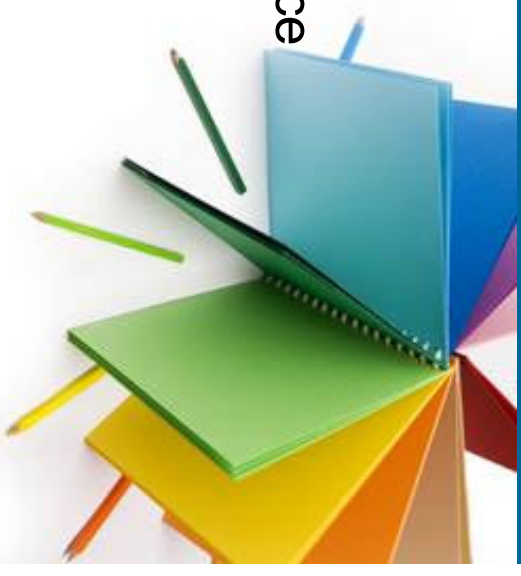


# Learning Commons

- PHOTO



# Learning Commons and the AWC



## Benefits of Locating AWC in LC

- Immediate accessibility to high traffic student space
- Dramatic increase in drop-in sessions
- Improved interaction with students
- Increase in non-CM inquiries
- Greater collaboration with
  - Library (searches, library resources)
  - IT (MS Word design/layout, Gantt Chart, etc)
  - Career Counseling (cvs and cover letters)

## Strategies to Encourage WC Visits



### Building Relationships

nebulous phrase

Before targeting students, faculty must be supportive and fully aware of the initiative

**Action:** Developed a separate AWC

Orientation Presentation to ALL new faculty (high growth, so partnered with HR and TLC to give presentation each semester)

# Strategies to Encourage WC Visits



## Action

Offer AWC Orientation presentation to each faculty at the beginning of each semester

## Purpose

- Remind of AWC services
- Solicit collaborative projects
- Get requests for AWC presentations for individual classes
- Narrate student success stories from each faculty as a result of AWC use
- Build and maintain positive working relationships

# Strategies to Encourage WC Visits

## Faculty Collaboration

AWC provides in-class writing workshops customized to individual assignments thereby developing partnerships with particular classes

EN 2470 – Environmental Engineering and Lab Reports



# Strategies to Encourage WC Visits

## Faculty Collaboration

- Work with faculty a the design stage of lectures and assignments to insure clarity and limit misunderstandings (Industry professionals can lack pedagogical sensitivity)
  - Note-taking
  - General Comprehension
  - Organization



# Strategies to Encourage WC Visits

## Bonus Marks

Highly contentious

- perceived as arm of faculty
- considered remedial or punitive
- motivated by fear
- creates paperwork

But ...



# Strategies to Encourage WC Visits

## Bonus Marks

End justifies the means

- fosters future visits
- Introduced to a positive experience
- Counters low motivational levels and encourages high
- Begets praise from faculty
- Requires minimal work
- Regarded not as tool of but collaborator with faculty

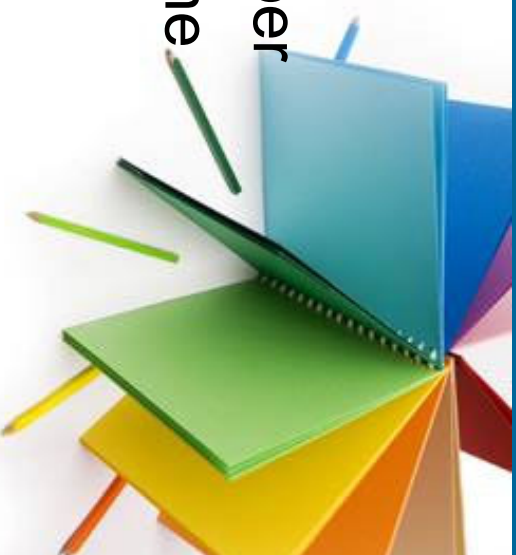


# Strategies to Encourage WC Visits

## Mentoring Session Reports

After each mentoring session, faculty member and student receive a short report from the AWC.

- universally welcomed and highly regarded by faculty
- informs faculty of positive student activity
- strengthens AWC-Faculty relationship



Date of Visit: 12/02/09

Course: CM 2300

Instructor: **K Pittman**

Assignment: Project

AWC Mentor: M Long

### Student Concerns/Questions

#### General Information

|                   |   |                      |   |  |
|-------------------|---|----------------------|---|--|
| Appointment Visit |   | Student was punctual |   |  |
| Drop-in Visit     | X | Student was prepared | X |  |
| External Inquiry  |   | Student participated | X |  |

#### General Writing Concerns

|                      |   |                   |  |                         |   |
|----------------------|---|-------------------|--|-------------------------|---|
| Brainstorming        | X | Purpose           |  | Topic Sentences         |   |
| Considering Audience |   | Spelling          |  | Understanding Questions |   |
| Diction              |   | Thesis Statements |  | Word Form               |   |
| Organization         |   |                   |  | Focusing Topic          | X |

#### Grammatical / Mechanical Concerns

|                    |  |                   |  |                        |  |
|--------------------|--|-------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| Articles           |  | Phrasing          |  | Semi-colons            |  |
| Colons             |  | Pluralizing       |  | Sentence Clarity       |  |
| Commas             |  | Pronoun Agreement |  | Sentence Structure     |  |
| Parallel Structure |  | Quotation Marks   |  | Subject/Verb Agreement |  |
| Periods            |  |                   |  | Verb Tense             |  |
|                    |  |                   |  |                        |  |
|                    |  |                   |  |                        |  |

#### Research and Documentation / Formatting Concerns

|               |  |                    |  |                      |  |
|---------------|--|--------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| APA           |  | PowerPoint Slides  |  | Table of Contents    |  |
| Appendices    |  | Primary Research   |  | Technical Thesis     |  |
| Cover Letters |  | Resume             |  | Visuals              |  |
| Paraphrasing  |  | Secondary Research |  | Tech Thesis Proposal |  |
|               |  |                    |  |                      |  |
|               |  |                    |  |                      |  |

# Student Targeted Campaigns

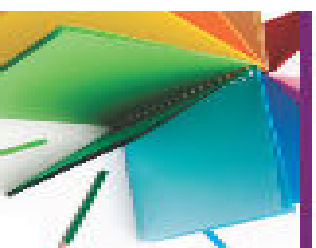
Mentoring Sessions reports sent to both faculty and students

- Creates feeling of inclusion in process
- Very positive feedback from students
- Transparency



## Sticky Notes

*Please visit  
the AWC for  
assistance with  
your writing.*



The  
**AWC** CNA-Q's Advanced  
Writing Centre

Open weekdays 8:00am - 4:30pm  
Learning Commons  
[www.cna-qatar.com/writingcentre](http://www.cna-qatar.com/writingcentre)

# Student Targeted Campaigns

## Quality Writing Resources

### Tip Sheets

- culturally sensitive
- discipline specific
- focus on recurring writing issues

### AWC Website

- broad range of links
- interactive exercises



# Student Targeted Campaigns

## Registration Periods

- Establish a booth or table during student registration to get word out to students about WC location, services and activities.
- Staff with WC faculty or peer tutors



# Student Targeted Campaigns



## Come Visit Us at the CNA-Q's Advanced Writing Centre

- ✓ Are you having problems writing your assignments?
- ✓ Do you have trouble starting your written projects?
- ✓ Are grammar problems bringing your grades down?
- ✓ Do you have questions about choosing a topic for an essay?
- ✓ Are you unclear about organizing your reports?
- ✓ Would you like help with your technical thesis?
- ✓ Are you a poet or story writer who would like to share your work with someone?

If yes, then you should drop by to CNA-Q's

## Advanced Writing Centre

located in the *Learning Resource Center* in *Building 3*  
for one-on-one sessions with our friendly and expert writing tutors.



# Student Targeted Campaigns

- Advertise in local newspapers (Community Outreach)
- Expensive!

**College of the North Atlantic - Qatar**  
Advanced Writing Centre

**Personal Interest Courses**

**Release the Writer in You!**  
Using a Journal as Inspiration  
Date: February 1 and 4  
(Sunday and Wednesday)  
Schedule: 6:00-9:00pm each night  
Cost: No fee  
Materials: Bring a journal notebook and pen  
Keeping a journal is a great way to reflect, reflect, and discover yourself. In this session to rediscover the joy of writing. A series of writing exercises and discussion will help get you started! New and experienced journal writers welcome!

**Write Me a Story!**  
The Short Story and You  
Date: February 8 and 11  
(Sunday and Wednesday)  
Schedule: 6:00-9:00pm each night  
Cost: No fee  
Materials: Bring writing paper and pen or laptop  
Write me a story! is a session for writers who want to improve their story writing ability. The session will combine discussions of the basic elements of fiction: plot, character, point of view, with short, timed writing exercises. Participants will also be in the opportunity to share and critique each other's work. New and experienced writers welcome.

**Get the Edge on Admissions: Writing the University Entrance Essay**  
Date: February 15 and 18  
(Sunday and Wednesday)  
Schedule: 6:00-9:00pm  
Cost: No fee  
Materials: Bring writing paper and pen or laptop  
You've worked hard. You have the drive and the grades that prove you're a good student, and you've chosen the university you want to attend. Help the admissions officers get to know the real you and all you have to offer by writing a killer entrance essay. This session offers tips and techniques for writing that may help you stand out from the crowd and get into the high school students you desire.  
High school students/pupils welcome.


**Your Bid for Business: The Art of Writing an Effective Proposal**  
Date: February 22 and 25  
(Sunday and Wednesday)  
Schedule: 6:00-9:00pm  
Cost: No fee  
Materials: Bring writing paper and pen or laptop  
You have a great idea, now you have to sell it. Learn how to format and organize your business proposal so you make the connection you need and win the contract you want.

**It's the Thought that Counts: Writing as Gift Art**  
Date: March 15 and 18  
(Sunday and Wednesday)  
Schedule: 6:00-9:00pm  
Cost: No fee  
Materials: Bring writing paper and pen or laptop  
The best gifts come from the heart. Join this session to learn how you use your writing talent to create a gift for someone special. Whether it's a poem, a letter, a song, or a wedding, a written gift is a lasting memory.

**Using Words to Create Effect: Discovering Your Poetic Voice**  
Date: March 22 and 25  
(Sunday and Wednesday)  
Schedule: 6:00-9:00pm  
Cost: No fee  
Materials: Bring writing paper and pen or laptop  
Writing meaningful poetry requires an understanding of words and form. Learn basic poetic devices. Play with words and poetic forms to create images, express thoughts, and inspire others.

**\*\*Please note that there is limited capacity for these sessions – 15 participants - and registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis.**

To register, contact the Advanced Writing Centre directly:  
Tel: 563-9118 or  
paula.hayden@cna-qatar.edu.qa







# Student Targeted Campaigns

- Launch
- Reception
- Open House
- Appreciation Lunch



The **AWC** CNA-Q's Advanced Writing Center

## You're Invited...

Please join us for **brief reception** in appreciation for your attendance at our recent writing workshop.

**Date:** Tuesday November 25, 2008

**Time:** 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

**Refreshments:** Cinnamon and coffee/tea

**Location:** Learning Commons at CNA-Q

Please RSVP by email: [paula.hayden@cna-qatar.edu.qa](mailto:paula.hayden@cna-qatar.edu.qa)

**Hope to see you there!**



# Student Targeted Campaigns

- Banners and posters advertising WC services, location, hours of operation.
- Helps to **“brand”** your WCI!



# Student Targeted Campaigns

## *Improve Your Writing and Improve Your Marks*

### Writing Workshops for Students

This semester the **Advanced Writing Centre** is offering a number of workshops for students. All of them are designed to make you a more successful student, so come along and join us for these helpful and enjoyable workshops.

Offer workshops during a time convenient to all students (common lunch hour, lab period or break in their schedule.)

October 14 – Less Can Be More: Learning to Paraphrase

October 21 – Note-taking for Success

October 28 – Word Power: Using the Dictionary and Thesaurus to Improve Your Vocabulary

November 4 – Cite It Right: An Introduction to APA

November 11 – Keep It Simple: Using Bullets to Improve Your Writing

November 18 – How to Design an Effective Survey

November 25 – Voice Choice: Using Passive and Active Voice for Your Reports

**Time:** Tuesdays at 11:30am

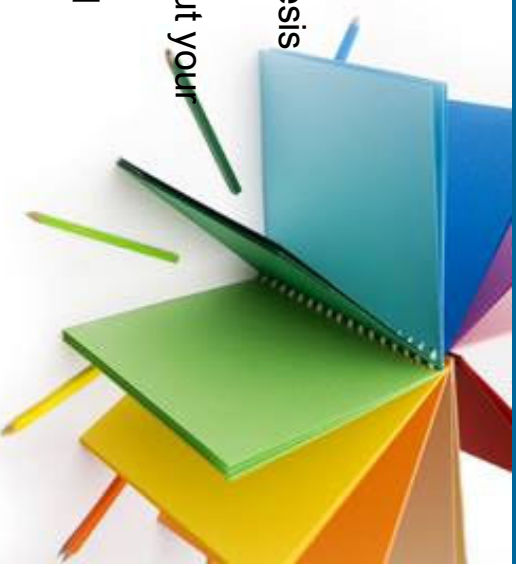
**Location:** Building 5 - 261



# Student Targeted Campaigns

## Workshops for Engineering Technical Thesis Students

- “What Do I Promise to Do?”: Writing the Proposal for the Technical Thesis (Mike Long)
- “What Do I Know about the Problem?”: How to Develop and Think about your Thesis (Mike Long)
- “How Do I Put All this Information Together?”: Organizing the Technical Thesis (Mike Long)
- “Keep It Simple”: Using Bullets in Engineering Reports (Mike Long)
- “Am I Plagiarizing?”: How to Use Information and Record It Properly for the Technical Thesis (Mike Long)
- Using Your Logbook Effectively (Bruce Barbour)
- How to Write a Progress Report (Bruce Barbour)
- How to Productively Use Technical Meetings (Bruce Barbour)
- Effective Technical Presentation Skills (Mike Long and Bruce Barbour)



# Student Targeted Campaigns

**Sticky notes** distributed  
to faculty which can be  
attached to individual  
student assignments



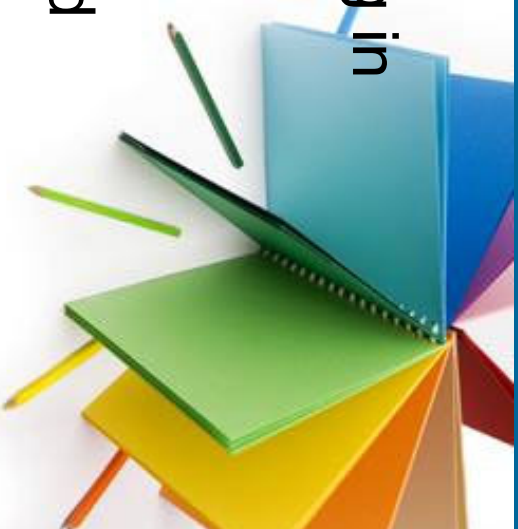
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# Building Relationships

Work outside the formal WC by mentoring in labs, machine shops, during case study meetings.

**Result:** faculty and students know you and you know them and their projects. EX: Tech Thesis and Engineering



# Building Relationships

- Use small talk at the beginning of a tutoring session to break the ice.
- Have a personable and amiable staff
- Advocate for students
- Be non-evaluative and non-judgmental



# Questions



# College of the North Atlantic- Qatar

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the processes and skills  
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