

## **New Student Orientation Assessment**

Carnegie Mellon University Qatar

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## Purpose/Goals

The primary purpose of this research is to assess Carnegie Mellon University Qatar's New Student Orientation (orientation) process and implementation, and suggest improvements. The results of this paper will aid to create standards for the orientation that will provide suggestions to improve the application procedures of the orientation team, the planning and team work both during the summer as well as the week of orientation, and the implementation of orientation.

## Glossary of Terms

- HOC: Head Orientation Counselor. These 4 students are the lead planners of orientation and work through the summer to recruit the rest of team, plan and finalize the activities, and train the team.
- OC: Orientation counselors, constituting the largest group within the orientation team, are the students who are closest to the freshmen. They are directly in charge of small groups of freshmen and facilitate all activities among them. Please see Appendix C for hierarchy comparison between 2013 and 2014 teams.
- OL: The Orientation Leaders generally lead the OCs and act both as a liaison between the HOCs and OCs and also assist with a large part of the back end work such as logistics, assessment, evaluation, etc. generally one OL is in charge of two OC groups (each OC group comprises of the OC and the group of freshmen under that OC)
- LO: Logistics Officer is a recently added position in the orientation team. It has been experimented with – sometimes the LOs are a part of a team that comprises of OCs, OLs and HOCs while other times there are no OLs and the LOs do their work instead.
- SMC: Social Media Consultants are responsible for all the online presence of orientation during the actual event. In the past, they are not structured within the hierarchy and are treated as a separate team that works on coverage.
- Orientation Team: for the purpose of this paper, 'orientation team' refers to all the OCs and LOs, OLs and SMCs in the team. It excludes the HOCs.
- Orientation supervisors: orientation supervisors are the staff members (from Student Affairs) who oversee the orientation process. They are responsible for hiring the HOCs and also advising and overseeing the work.
- Scales from 1 – 5: for all 5 point scales in this paper, 5 is the highest value and 1 is the lowest.

## Methodology

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used to obtain information about the processes both in the backend as well as the front end of orientation. While orientation is developed for the freshmen, it is a learning experience for the organizing orientation team as well. For this reason, not only was the focus and intent of orientation explored (frontend), but also the organization and team dynamics (backend).

The first step was to find a set of standards to compare CMUQ's orientation procedures with. The CAS (Council for Advancement of Standards) Book was used to develop these standards. CAS was used to compare the CMUQ orientation with one that is of an international standard. This was a good source of information as it not only explains on a macro level about the importance of orientation, but also goes into details on a micro level to list and describe activities that must be included for a successful orientation. The Appendix A shows

the standards that are explained in the CAS booklet (Dean, 2009), adapted to the needs and culture of an American university located in Qatar. Once these standards were developed, a list of questions was developed to learn more about each one of these aspects. In addition to this, some questions were also developed to explore specific areas that had seen problems in the past.

Once the list of questions was created, it was categorized into related parts and similar questions were bunched together – these questions were going to be asked to the HOCs, orientation team, and freshmen in separate interviews and focus groups. The categories developed and their purposes for this research are in the following table.

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Learning Outcomes from Orientation	Understanding the knowledge areas of the orientation
Understanding the purpose of orientation	Finding out if there is consistency in understanding the purpose of orientation
Most and least enjoyable parts of the job or orientation	Finding specifics about what works well as well as potential areas of improvement
Accuracy of the HOC job description	Finding areas of improvement in the application process
HOC Spread of workload over the summer months	Finding areas of improvement in the payment method
Extensiveness of the orientation team application process	Finding key areas of improvements and efficient methods used to select an orientation team
Briefing and introduction	Understanding if HOCs and the orientation team are provided support and sufficient information to perform well
Involving the orientation team during planning	Understanding if the HOCs require additional support and if the team wants to be a part of the summer planning
Structure of the orientation team	Better understanding key features of the hierarchy and behavior
Developing a mission and vision of orientation	Understanding if the goals created were coherent and covered all aspects of the CAS standards
The role of the theme	Learning if the theme served the purpose, mission and vision of orientation
Introducing the Tartan Spirit	Finding out if the Tartan lifestyle, academic standard and values were well communicated to the freshmen
Communication on all levels	Discovering communication gaps and ineffective communication methods between all stakeholders
Feedback and Guidance	Finding out if the orientation team is given positive feedback as well as constructive criticism to better their skills
Convocation organization by the orientation team	Finding out if the orientation team can cope with the responsibility of organization of the convocation as well
Recommendations	Giving the orientation team an opportunity to explain how they would like to see orientation improved
Cultural Sensitivity	Understanding if enough attention was given to cultural sensitivity and an effort was made to be culturally neutral
Introduction of a contract	To understand if conflicts can be minimized and work procedures can be made more efficient through the introduction of a new contract
Final Thoughts	Providing the participants with an open session to comment on their experience.

In addition to the questions that are within each category, rubrics were also created wherever possible to attain quantitative data. This would assist in comparing impressions and experiences that the HOCs, orientation team, and the freshmen have had.

The HOCs were interviewed individually while the freshmen and the orientation team were asked to attend focus groups to provide more enriching data about their experience in their groups. The results are available in Appendix D – both the comments as well as the numerical data are included. A summary of the results is available in the next section.

Finally, the Carnegie Mellon University Qatar staff that had sessions during orientation was sent a short questionnaire that aimed to better understand the importance and key messages of their session through their perspective. This information is compared to the review the students gave about these sessions (if available).

## **Summary (Data Collected)**

In this section, a summary will be provided for the findings of each category.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Most of the learning outcomes from the HOCs and the orientation team revolved around social behavior, interpersonal skills, team dynamics, and creating goals. The importance of proper and structured communication was repeated several times. One HOC claimed that “rhetoric is very important in a team”. In combination with this, it was also important for the HOCs to be proactive and try to complete tasks rather than wait for too long for someone else to do so. “Rather than giving people the benefit of the doubt, I should have been proactive and completed the work myself.”

The orientation team claimed that team work and bonding with each other was one of the most important learning outcomes. In addition to this, some orientation team members were affected on a more personal level – “I never knew I could inspire people”, claimed one. An LO claimed that they learned about understanding the balance between interacting with the freshmen and doing their job.

Freshmen have different learning outcomes as compared to the orientation team members. While they learned about team work and interpersonal skills, they also learned about adaptability, the university and important to-dos. “I learned that it is important to try and balance between different extra-curricular activities and academics.”

### **Purpose of Orientation**

The HOCs, orientation team and freshmen gave consistent responses for this category. However, there were a few responses that were unique to the HOCs. Most of the responses revolved around providing a smooth transition for the freshmen; creating a sense of belonging to the university; providing them with the opportunity to socialize with their peers, seniors, staff and faculty; and help them understand Tartan values.

The HOCs also focused on the opportunity the orientation brings for the orientation team as well. “They get a chance to work in a team outside of the classroom”. They also get a chance to be a part of the creative process and organization of a large event. Finally, they also spoke about providing the orientation team with leadership experience.

### **Most appealing, enjoyable and memorable part of the orientation**

In this category, the three groups provided different answers. The HOCs enjoyed the responsibility of making decisions and being in charge. They also felt that the most enjoyable moment was when they stood back and

watched the orientation unfold. Some of the HOCs also believed that they “gained people’s confidence” and met new people. The design process was also enjoyable for some HOCs.

On the other hand, the OCs and LOs enjoyed socialization with the orientation team as well as with the freshmen. Most responses were focused on this while some also claimed that they enjoyed the morning briefs – these were considered essential and assistive. Finally, they appreciated that the end of day reflections were short as compared to the previous years.

Finally, the freshmen provided more specific examples of the most enjoyable parts of orientation. One freshman said that “getting to know each other before classes started was important”. In addition, they appreciated the welcoming, interactive and helping attitude of the OCs and felt that they were treated like family. Below is a list of activities in the orientation that the freshmen felt were most memorable and enjoyable:

- The Spoon and egg race
- The Frozen Tree
- The Karaoke night – dance and music
- The skits
- The theme was welcoming – the Tartan port name, decorating the rooms, the sorting hat, the outfits
- The flash mob and the Magic song
- The Team shouts
- The Scavenger Hunt (helpful)

#### **Least appealing, enjoyable and memorable part of orientation**

The three groups provided distinct responses for this category as well.

The HOCs focused on team conflicts among themselves. There seem to be issues with overlapping work and sharing information. Some miscommunication occurred about who was to complete which tasks. In addition, some HOCs claimed that the task of briefing the LOs was overtaken by another HOC and none of the information was shared with the others. This caused large amounts of information and communication gaps. “We did not have each other’s back and blamed each other.” In addition, they also spoke about the LO model and its inefficacy. More information about this is provided in the Structure of the Orientation Team Section on page 9.

The HOCs also criticized the staff supervisors for not being consistent in providing information in advance. When one HOC traveled for a long amount of time, it slowed work down. However, because of this the other HOCs were restricted for their travel time. “I spent a lot of money changing my tickets and this restriction did not even have an effect on the person it was meant for.” They claimed that all information and restrictions should be conveyed in advance.

The orientation team claimed that the HOCs gave rude remarks to the team and had inconsistent communication. This could be because the HOCs did not share information with each other as previously mentioned. “The HOCs did not follow their own hierarchy rule and gave orders to us.” The LOs and SMCs did not enjoy their experience either as they did not get to interact with the freshmen as much as they would have liked.

The training was considered too long and one of the orientation team members suggested that there should be a weekend provided between training sessions and the orientation. This would provide them with a break before orientation as the long days are very tiring. Finally, the orientation team also claimed that the sessions

done by the university staff during the orientation did not respect the schedule and went over time – this affected the rest of the day’s events as well.

The freshmen provided more specific examples of what they disliked and believed was least important during the orientation. Below is a list of the activities that they disliked:

- The IT session – it provided too much information that they believed they did not require (e.g.: the students felt that they did not need to know the definition of a VPN). They also said that the IT staff was supposed to give them link to the information for later reference – this did not happen. This session was also held for a long time and the students could not follow the IT staff for the entire session.
- The academic day – it was only lectures and no games. This was very different from the other days.
- Picking up after ourselves ( Student Majlis session) – this did not work and did not have the desired effect
- The stress session – it was not effective. It made the freshmen drowsy because of the sudden change in energy
- Scavenger hunt – it was not important because the students still had to ask about where to go later on

#### **Accuracy of the job descriptions**

All 4 HOCs claimed that they all did much more work than was written in their job descriptions. While some claimed that the extra work they did was work that was meant to be common to all the HOCs (i.e. these tasks were not on anyone’s description, they had to be shared by everyone), others claimed that all the extra work was a part of someone else’s job description. This was the primary inconsistent understanding that all the HOCs had.

The HOCs were also asked about the need to include the HOC titles in the job descriptions. Three out of four HOCs claimed that it is essential. “Job titles are needed for the selection process”. They claimed that the right skills are selected when there are job titles. However, it was also pointed out that it is important for the HOCs to know that they will be doing several tasks in addition to those mentioned in their job titles. The job titles were also important because they assisted the HOCs with appointing a point person for certain tasks.

The orientation team was not given a job description, but the questions were directed to better understand if they were given a good brief and introduction to their jobs. They claimed that there was “no formal document for briefing” them. They also felt like they had to “figure out what to do from previous orientation experience”. One potential reason for this could be because there were no orientation team retreats held before the training. They might not have understood their roles well because the orientation team met for the first time during their training, two days before orientation. In addition the LOs felt that they were given an insufficient amount of information – they completed their tasks from previous experience as OLs. Despite this, the orientation team appreciated the morning briefing session.

#### **Workload spread over the summer months**

The HOCs were asked if they believed their workload averaged out to 40 hours a month. 3 out of 4 HOCs claimed that they worked for 40 hours and potentially even more. However, one said that the workload averaged out to less than 40 hours. There were a few phases where the work was a lot.

The HOCs also claimed that it is possible for them to work on another job during the summer – the payment system does not support this, however. They suggested shifting the jobs onto the CMUQ payment system so

that they can also work on a Qatar Foundation job. One HOC claimed that it was unfair because “Georgetown is paid through their system – this means that they [the students] can be paid for more than one job”.

#### **Extensiveness of the orientation team application process**

- HOC marked 4.5 out of 5

The HOCs claimed that the group interviews helped with a lot with finding those who work well in a team and are leaders. These were the two consistent qualities they were all looking for. However, the other qualities they were looking for were not consistent. There was no documentation done beforehand to list the qualities that are essential for the team. Other skills and qualities included motivation, adaptability, communication, problem solving, and having energy.

One important flaw in the process was that the applications provided to them had the names of the students – this meant that some HOCs selected students based on their personal experiences with them rather than on their applications. They also “used their intuition” and what they knew about these people to select them. The applications were used to filter out the students who did not put in enough effort. The selected students were then sent to the group interview stage.

In order to improve the interview, some HOCs said they would also like to do individual interviews with students who were in the group interview. This would have helped them get to know the students who they were not familiar with in the group interview and could potentially forget. It also allows them to focus on the personal skills of each individual.

#### **Briefing the orientation team**

- HOCs marked: 4.25 out of 5
- Orientation team marked: 3.3 out of 5

HOCs were happy with the training and briefing they provided the orientation team. The team received 2 days of training and debriefs every morning with specific instructions on each session. In addition, the orientation team also had a reflection session at the end of the day to better understand ways to improve. One of the flaws in the system (both, according to the HOCs and the orientation team) was the attempt at flattening the hierarchy. HOCs claimed that they wanted to flatten the hierarchy, and to do this, they asked the OCs to communicate directly with them rather than the LOs. This reduced the workload for the LOs while increasing the same for the HOCs. In addition, it also caused for large amounts of miscommunication.

The LOs in the orientation team said that in the briefing, they were told that their jobs would be different from that of the previous OLs. However, they found themselves doing the same tasks. In addition, they also criticized the HOCs’ communication during the briefing – “the rules [of games in the orientation] could have been clearer.”

The orientation team was unhappy that they met for the first time during training when all decisions had been made. They also thought the briefing had miscommunication and contradicting information from the HOCs – some game rules required clarifications.

The orientation team also was unhappy about the lack of briefing – they believed they were not provided enough information because the orientation team met for the first time during their training session. There was no briefing session for the team to discuss and present their themes of interest, something that is done every year.



Another issue raised by the orientation team was the long hours of the training session and the lack of flexibility with the schedule. They said that the StrengthsQuest session went on for too long. They also felt that there needs to be an addition into the training session about communication and “how to respond to CMU stereotypes” about the majors. For instance, one student said that freshmen asked about “Computer Science being the most difficult major” and “whether business students work as much as Computer Science students do.”

#### **Involving the orientation team during planning**

- HOCs marked 2.25 out of 5
- Orientation team marked: 2.35 out of 5

The HOCs asked for assistance with videos and some activities including the flash mob, introduction videos, the lip dub and the theme revealing video but nothing else. They believe that the summer work should be solely the HOC’s responsibility but also that the orientation team is important for feedback and testing during the summer. One HOC said “we only asked for their feedback during training and for the theme. We should have practiced the games much more before the training to save time.” The orientation team retreat at the beginning of the summer, when the team discusses the theme, was not held this year mainly because of travelling related issues.

The orientation team was unhappy about not having this retreat and wanted to be a part of this process. They also wanted to be a part of the summer planning process of orientation and claimed that they should all be given an option if they are willing to help over the summer. However, they also explained that once the HOCs have been selected, they should release dates very soon – those team members who are planning travel dates can work around these to help the HOCs over the summer.

#### **Structure of the orientation team**

The HOCs were unhappy with the LO concept this orientation. They believed that the LOs did not have a wholesome experience this year and did not get to interact with the freshmen. They were also not given a good leadership experience. These issues were blamed on a poor understanding of the roles and poor communication with the LOs about these roles. The HOCs wanted to flatten the hierarchy.

The orientation team, on the other hand claimed that there is no need to flatten the hierarchy – it had negative side effects. “The HOCs were abusing the hierarchy and were not polite to the team”. LOs were not happy with their work and it limited them as they were not in charge of any of the OC teams. The OCs were also instructed not to communicate issues to the LOs. This made communication much harder and more miscommunication occurred.

Another issue that came up was that the SMCs are overworked. They need to be a more structured member of the orientation team rather than free to cover any and all events. One suggestion was that the SMCs be assigned to two OC groups. This will restrict their range of travel to cover information and it will also provide more structured content. Another suggestion was that more SMCs need to be hired to cover orientation extensively.

#### **Mission and Vision of Orientation**

- HOCs marked: 5 out of 5
- Orientation team marked: 4.05 out of 5

The mission and vision of orientation varied between the HOCs. While one claimed that the mission is to create the most successful and unforgettable orientation, another claimed that they wanted the freshmen to have a good experience. They also wanted “the orientation team to challenge themselves”. Finally one HOC claimed that the mission and vision of orientation is to provide a good design experience.

It can be seen that the messaging of the mission and vision was not consistent among the HOCs, who all provided responses that were personal rather than shared by the team. In addition, no distinction was made between the mission and vision of orientation – they gave their personal goals of orientation instead.

### **Theme was successful for the mission/vision**

The HOCs were asked if this year’s theme helped serve the mission and vision they had stated earlier. They claimed that everyone could relate to this year’s theme and the values of CMU were also added in. It was both serious and fun and the incorporation of the alumni helped get the freshmen excited about CMU. None of these arguments related to the mission and vision that were earlier stated, however they did provide an insight into the impression the theme had on the orientation team, freshmen and the HOCs as well.

The HOCs and the orientation team were then asked if a theme is necessary for orientation. There was a resounding yes. The HOCs claimed that the theme provides structure, excitement, atmosphere and participation. It shows how much the team has worked to welcome the freshmen and is also what CMUQ’s orientation is well known for. The orientation team felt the same way. In addition to the above, the orientation team also said that some students from NUQ were seen signing up for CMUQ orientation because they felt it was more fun.

On the other hand, the orientation team also claimed that some “freshmen and professors thought the theme was childish”. They felt that a simpler theme such as last years “We Are Family” theme on the main campus could also work. They claimed that not everyone could relate to or knew about this year’s theme and one orientation team member suggested that a different theme be tried for each day.

### **Incorporating a Tartan Spirit**

- HOCs marked 3.75 out of 5
- Orientation team marked:  $81/20 = 4.05$

It was clear that the HOCs had not focused on incorporating a Tartan Spirit into orientation – they claimed they could have done much more research to better embed the Tartan lifestyle and values into orientation. They incorporated the alumni as house mascots and also did some traditional CMUQ session such as flag painting and the Student Majlis session. However, this was not enough according to the HOCs.

### **Communication on all levels**

- HOCs marked 4.5 out of 5
- Orientation team marked: 3.45 out of 5

This was one of the most talked about topic. The HOCs were happy with their communication experience with the departments and the orientation team. They were not happy with communication within the HOC team itself. They emailed the freshmen and kept the OCs aware of what is going on in terms of planning. There was a whatsapp group used during orientation. In addition, the orientation team received briefs and reflections feedback during orientation. However, one HOC claimed that during the end of day reflections the team “only

spoke about the lows – this lowered the team morale.” This was done to save time and end the reflection within a set time of one hour. In addition, when one HOC took over the briefing of the LOs and did not share the information with the others, it created problems when the LOs came and asked the other HOCs about issues.

They explained that they were unhappy with the communication inconsistencies with the staff supervisors about vacation policy. They also said they did not get to communicate with the freshmen as much. Despite this, the HOCs claimed that the biggest obstacle was the improper communication among themselves. They were late to meetings, they did not respond to messages (often due to travel time) and several times they did not complete their own work.

The orientation team echoed the HOC concerns and also said that the HOC miscommunication and conflicts were visible to the team. “Every HOC gave different orders to people” and several of the rules for the games (especially the balloon tower game) were unclear.

Finally, the freshmen claimed that they were happy with the use of the Facebook page but regular emails could also work well for them. For those who do not have a Facebook account, it is important to send updates through email.

#### **Feedback and guidance**

- HOCs marked 3 out of 5
- Orientation team marked: 3.75 out of 5

The HOCs want better feedback from the staff supervisors– they want both positive and negative feedback. They said that the staff supervisors “only spoke to them when something was wrong”. They also wanted more structured and regular meetings (one-on-ones were liked).however, the HOCs were very happy with the level of guidance they received from the staff supervisors. They were happy with the space given to them to learn through experience.

The orientation team said that they only received feedback through the reflections and all the feedback was “superficial” and could not be used to improve. The reflection sessions were not given enough importance as they only looked at lows and ignored the highs. This response does is not reflected well in the numbers above as the orientation team has marked the feedback a higher than average number.

#### **Convocation organization by the orientation team**

The HOCs said that convocation can be managed by the orientation team but they will require the support of marketing for official work. “If it is communicated well in advance, it is manageable by the orientation team”. However they did explain that this will require a larger budget allocation for orientation and time will be required to get bookings, RSVPs, etc.

#### **Cultural Sensitivity**

- Freshmen marked: 4.7 out of 5

The HOCs said that they were cautious about the cultural sensitivity – especially since the theme involved magic. They focused more on the activities and less on the magic, and they also removed some activities that involved holding hands. The orientation team was also briefed before the skits about cultural sensitivity.

The orientation team said that “we should always do the skit before the freshmen prepare theirs.” This would create a good standard for the skits. They also said that the theme was handled well.

The freshmen pointed out that the Pizza and Politics session touched upon some sensitive topics, especially since the places that were mentioned made some freshmen in the audience uncomfortable. The topic discussed was ‘Can Qatar host the FIFA World Cup in 2022?’. They said that a different and more neutral topic could have been used.

### **Signed contract needed**

The HOCs said that a signed contract was needed to make sure that the HOCs stay in Doha to work. While one HOC was shocked that there was no contract, another said that “no other matter [other than the vacation duration] needs a contract. If this rule is communicated, there is no need for a contract.”

One of the concerns was that a contract could require that the HOCs have office hours – this would deter them from working outside of university at an internship, for example.

### **Students’ Recommendations for next year and final thoughts**

The recommendations and final thoughts category had a lot of redundant responses. This section will list the suggestions that are not redundant. Below is a list of all the recommendations that were provided by the HOCs, the orientation team, and the freshmen:

#### HOC

- Advice to the next HOC team: don’t hide anything from each other, you must share what you work on with the other HOCs, group interviews is a good idea, don’t bring out your HOC conflicts in front of the orientation team
- HOCs who don’t have orientation experience don’t perform as well as the others
- The HOCs wanted to know their team mates better
- There should be a system to check who is working on what. No one should take credit for something they did not do.
- It is important to know that the HOCs will only know half of what they have to do. They will figure out the rest with time.
- Introduce a confidentiality form so that HOCs can only complain to the staff supervisors and not to the orientation team.
- There should be communication training for the HOCs to communicate with the orientation team
- HOCs should not be experimented with. They MUST have previous club and team work experience. And also they must have orientation experience.
- The job description needs to clarify some details: who should work on the training schedule – the training or the scheduling HOC? Similar issues arose with the logistics schedule.

#### Orientation Team

- All 4 HOCs were girls. This is not a good idea as there was too much drama during orientation between them
- The selection of the OC’s and LO’s should be better. There must be individual interviews.
- Select LOs based on their club activities and how they work individually
- Stress relief session should be reduced in time and made more realistic – playing with toys is not realistic

- Assigning two people to come up with a skit was not a good idea. The HOCs should find out who is interested in designing the skit and meet with them to do so.
- Freshmen and orientation team did not get food during academic day – people from outside the university were eating

### Freshmen

- The career lecture was not very informative
- The academics bored the students therefore the academics sessions should be divided into different days
- There should be more of mixing of freshmen teams - like mix teams every day(e.g.: how the teams are divided into skit teams - that type of dividing should be done more often for games
- MUST ADD: explanations of the American education system and the details of it
- Maybe add more traditions that we create for every batch
- The sessions should be more related to the theme

## **CMUQ Staff Session Review**

In this session, a comparison is made between the university staff and student perspectives about the importance, impression and key messaging of their sessions. The freshmen and the orientation team were not specifically asked about specific sessions. Instead, they were asked to provide their feedback about the sessions in general.

Some of the staff members did not respond to the questionnaire. However, enough data was available to compare student and staff perspectives. The table in Appendix B shows detailed information regarding the responses.

## **CAS Review**

This section will review the above information to evaluate and compare the CMUQ orientation 2014 to the CAS standards that are available in appendix A.

### **Aim Of orientation**

According to the CAS standards (Dean, 2009) the aim of orientation is to focus on freshmen problems; respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse student and family population; provide academic advising and class registration assistance; cover matriculation, student support services and campus life; research, assess and evaluate the orientation and include the impact on student learning.

From the above list, a few aspects are clearly covered if not during orientation, then during pre-orientation or before that: matriculation, class registration (during orientation), academic advising (pre-orientation), academic advising (pre-orientation), campus life (during some orientation sessions), student support services (during some orientation), assessment of orientation (focus groups, interviews, end of day reflections, meetings and briefings). However, it is difficult to say to what extent freshmen problems are focused on. While the faculty and staff sessions such as safety session, health and wellness, etc. provide freshmen with an insight into the problems they could face, there are several more problems that can be covered. These could include social issues such as facing culture shock, the freshman 15 myth for wellness, understanding the local culture and to respect it, understanding a global culture and how to be open minded, etc. This area therefore could be expanded.

In addition, there is no specific work done to respond to the needs of a diverse student and family population. CMUQ's student body becomes more diverse every year and this would require an expansion of, and a customization of, the student services provided. This could especially be true with certain areas such as health and wellness and personal development. These points and those mentioned above must be included in the purpose, mission and vision of orientation that is developed by the HOCs in collaboration with the staff supervisors.

### **Mission and Vision**

The mission and vision development according to the CAS standards (Dean, 2009) must include providing a transition for the freshmen; preparing them for educational and student responsibilities; supporting the parents and guardians; and integrating them into the intellectual, cultural and social climate of the university.

From the list above, the mission and vision described by the orientation team and the HOCs clearly covered a few points: providing a transition for the freshmen and integrating them into the intellectual and social climate of the university (Tartan spirit, academic day, activities). The mission and vision did not focus on handing over the educational and student responsibilities in the context of being a Tartan. Some sessions during orientation did cover educational responsibilities (academic day, academic integrity, etc.) and others did cover the student responsibilities ('clean up after yourself' activity by the Student Majlis). Finally, the CMUQ orientation does not focus on the parents and guardians at all. Perhaps it would be great to start off orientation by inviting the parents and introducing them to the campus life, etc.

The CAS Standards also provide a list of areas that must be covered during orientation (Dean, 2009). These range from knowledge acquisition, integration, construction and application; cognitive complexity; intrapersonal development; interpersonal competence; humanitarianism and civic engagement; and practical competence. The areas from this list that are currently covered well during orientation are knowledge acquisition (academic day), intrapersonal development (StrengthsQuest and several of the activities), interpersonal competence (most of the activities and games), practical competence (some of the activities and several staff and faculty sessions) and some humanitarianism and civic engagement (some social responsibility through the Student Majlis session).

More work needs to be done to focus on civic engagement. One way to do this could be to introduce a community service activity, no matter how small the impact might be. In addition, more focus needs to be given to cognitive complexity in terms of critical thinking, reflection and creativity as well as proper reasoning. Some activities can be introduced to focus on this during the OC internal sessions.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the information in the summary, the CAS Review section, and personal experience as an HOC for orientation 2013, this section will provide recommendations for changes in orientation. It is important to note that the orientation this year saw large amounts of conflict both within the HOCs as well as between the HOCs and the orientation team. In addition, the rubric details were not read by the HOCs or the orientation team before they marked a numerical answer. This can be seen by their explanation of their choice after they have selected it – there were several contradictions and it seems like the rubrics were used as a likert scale rather than a descriptive rubric.

### **Purpose of Orientation**

While there were overall similar responses for this category, people still provided some unique answers. It is important to standardize the purposes of each year's orientation (and also limit them). It is therefore important to meet with the staff supervisors and develop purposes of orientation at the beginning before the theme is decided upon. This must be the first decided and documented information and it must be then relayed to the selected orientation team for their first retreat (when they suggest possible themes).

### **Least enjoyable part of orientation**

This year's HOC team seemed to dislike overlapping work and was almost surprised by it. Perhaps this should be made clear in the job descriptions and orientation briefing. The HOCs must begin orientation knowing that they will be working on each other's tasks as well as their own.

The freshmen every year complain about the sessions being either too long or not engaging. The former is a recurring problem. While the HOCs are told that they have no control over the university staff and faculty sessions, there must be limitations in place. For instance, if a session goes overtime by more than 10 minutes, the HOCs should have the authority to stop the session – this ensures that the rest of the schedule is kept in time. To tackle the issue of low engagement (and boring) faculty and staff sessions, the HOCs should encourage the entire faculty and staff to embed the theme into each session and discourage lecture style sessions. The HOCs should sit with the faculty and staff who will be presenting and help them shape their session to make it more engaging.

Finally, another problem faced was that the HOCs did not have a team retreat before the orientation. This MUST be done every year to building team bonding. The HOCs should also plan in advance and provide the team with training session dates so that the team can provide their feedback on these dates and also plan their summer accordingly. This must be done at the beginning of orientation planning within a week or two of HOC selection.

### **Accuracy of the job descriptions**

As earlier stated, the HOCs should not be surprised by work outside of their job description. This will also solve the problem that some of the HOCs stated about taking credit for work that is not their own. If the HOCs are working with a collaborative mentality, they will learn more about all 4 fields rather than just their own.

Another issue with the job description was the ambiguity about who should be working on the training and logistics schedule. Would the training and logistics HOCs respectively work on these tasks or the scheduling HOC? This issue has arisen mainly because of the mentality that the HOCs in the 2014 orientation have worked with. There was no collaborative environment and such problems were considered conflicts. It should be clarified that the HOCs should be working on these tasks together.

The ability to drive and have independence in terms of transportation is essential for the HOC job. This should be well divided among the group members because the ones who can drive do a large amount of work. The logistics HOC must be able to drive and also have the independence to drive.

### **Work spread over the summer**

To allow students to take more than one job and be paid for them, the HOC jobs should be moved to CMU system. The students can work on more than one job till June as the bulk of the workload starts after this. A signed contract (or equivalent) should state that the HOCs cannot work on more than one job after June.

### **The HOC application process**

One important issue that arose is the need for HOCs to have cars and the independence to drive for logistics. The marketing HOC claimed that she had covered a very large part of the logistics HOC's work because she was the only one with a car. "The logistics HOC MUST have a car" – otherwise someone else will be overworked. It is essential then, that while interviewing the HOCs, this must be discussed.

In addition to this, HOCs who do not have previous orientation experience do not perform as well. This was the response of some of the HOCs from the orientation. One also claimed that the HOC must have CMUQ club experience at least. This is mainly because at such a high level of the orientation hierarchy, with several important responsibilities, the HOCs should not be concerned with poor team dynamics and poor communication. The HOCs' decisions are potentially the most impactful decisions each HOC has made in their professional career – their time should be spent on these rather than solving team dynamic issues. Both of these qualities are essential as the HOCs who are selected must truly know the CMUQ community, its level of collaboration, its level of cultural sensitivity, etc. This should be on the criteria when a student is selected for the top position in the orientation planning committee.

The selection of the HOCs was criticized by the orientation team as they were all girls. This creates an imbalance in the kinds of perspectives that work together to solve problems. The HOC team should not be all of the same gender and should use a mix.

#### **Extensiveness of the orientation team application process**

The HOCs did not have documented expectations from the orientation team members before the group interview was conducted. They were all looking for an inconsistent and very wide list of qualities. The qualities must be documented so that the information is consistent between the HOCs.

All applications provided to the HOCs must be anonymous. This is needed so that the HOCs do not have favoritism or prejudice while selecting the team.

The group interview helped the HOCs find qualities that were not considered in earlier orientations. It was a good way to separate the leaders from the followers and also spot the problem solvers. However, individual interviews must be taken to understand people on an individual level. Therefore, the interview process must be standardized as follows: the applications should filter out people who do not show a dedication and genuine interest in the orientation; then individual interviews should be conducted to understand people's personal thoughts on orientation and to better understand how skilled they are; finally a group interview should be done to eliminate people who dominate, create conflict, avoid participation, don't facilitate conversation.

#### **Briefing the orientation team**

A contradiction was seen: The LOs claim they worked a lot because there were few of them while the HOCs say that the LOs did not work much because they were not given the OL leadership role. Since there have been fewer complaints about the OL system in the past, the orientation team structure should be standardized to OCs, OLs, HOCs and SMCs. The hierarchy is needed for better communication and organization.

#### **Involving the orientation team during orientation planning**

The orientation team retreat where the theme is discussed MUST be conducted even if the HOCs don't end up using their insights – it is essential to bring the team together.



### **Structure of the orientation team**

As earlier stated, the OC, OL, HOC, SMC structure must be kept. Each OL must be in charge of two OC groups for better communication.

In addition, one of the problems that arose is that the SMCs were required to cover too much information. The SMC team should therefore be made larger so that each SMC is assigned to an OL group as well (and cover the activities of two OC groups).

### **Mission and vision**

The mission and vision needs more work. They were not consistent or even defined as separate concepts. There was no distinction made between the mission and vision. The mission and vision should also be standardized as one of the first documented information along with the purpose of orientation. It should be approved by the staff supervisors that the HOCs know that they are on the right track. The mission and vision must be both orientation team and freshmen focused.

### **Theme successful for the mission and vision**

Once the mission and vision are created, the theme should be picked with the help of the orientation team suggestions (at the first team retreat).

Another important point is that the CMU theme system for orientation is important and must be kept. It serves much more than just a visual purpose – it provides each class with an identity and also creates and underlying structure and tone of voice for the entire orientation. However, when picking a theme it is important to consider the age connotation and how relatable it is.

### **Incorporating a Tartan spirit**

The Tartan spirit needs to be better understood and researched. The staff supervisors should assist the HOCs to better understand Tartan spirit and the values that should be covered in all orientation activities. It is also important to consider Tartan traditions, both in Qatar and Pittsburgh. Pizza and politics, Student Majlis and other such activities are great to introduce students to activities in the Qatar campus; however we should also be connected to the Tartan roots. More research should be done on simple traditions on the Tartan activities on the main campus and these should be incorporated into the CMUQ orientation.

The orientation team explained that the LOs selected must also have previous experience with clubs and some level of leadership. This will help make training smooth. This could be because some of the LOs selected were freshmen with no orientation organization experience. It was important to the orientation team that the LOs selected know the orientation thoroughly so that the OCs could rely on them.

### **Communication on all levels**

Some limitations and decisions need to be given to the HOCs at the beginning of orientation rather than during planning. These include limitations on the kind of food that is to be ordered, any limitations on design budgeting (so that the HOC team does not overspend on the decorations), etc. the HOCs and the staff supervisors should sit together in the first meeting and work on budgeting for all costs. Similar decisions should be done about vacation days allowed for the HOCs. The contract section on page 18 provides another possibility for vacation days.

Another important aspect is that all information should be shared among the 4 HOCs (and the orientation team, if possible). The HOCs must train everyone together and in front of the entire team. This ensures uniform information knowledge. The HOCs should also consider their job descriptions as a guideline. Too many miscommunications have happened because they considered their job descriptions as extensive and exhaustive.

Activity and game testing need to be more extensive so that there is no miscommunication about the rules during orientation. For instance, the balloon activity seems to have these problems every year. During training the team must try to find all information gaps and solve them.

### **Feedback and guidance**

Both feedback for the HOCs (from the staff) and feedback for the orientation team (through end of day reflections) MUST cover both highs and lows every time. For the HOCs, this should also be done through one-on-one meetings so that personal accomplishments, work, and struggle is communicated without any hesitance.

### **Convocation by the orientation team**

The team can take the pressure of organizing convocation. However, to make convocation as authentic, organization must be overseen by MPR. To-do lists and meetings should be done well in advance with MPR to ensure that all work areas are covered. Everything that can be communicated to the HOCs should be done as soon as they are selected. All communication material should be provided by MPR.

### **Cultural sensitivity**

Each HOC team considers cultural sensitivity well. The only potential problem that could be seen was that the freshmen skits could be unfiltered. The HOCs should make sure that the orientation team shows a skit before the freshmen plan theirs. The respective OCs should also oversee the planning of each skit.

In addition, the aim of the Pizza and Politics session during orientation should be to facilitate discussion – not discuss a controversial topic. The freshmen will not be used to this and it might also offend them.

### **Contract**

A signed contract must be introduced for the HOC job position. It should cover two primary areas: firstly, it should cover the limitations on vacation days and also the policy about working for more than one job (including internship, and other QF jobs).

### **Miscellaneous**

Traffic Control during meals: One recurring problem during orientation is traffic control when the food is arranged. Be it staff, faculty, the orientation team or people who are not affiliated with CMUQ, there are almost always people who eat before the freshmen do, leaving insufficient food for the freshmen. This issue needs to be tackled by a higher authority, preferably the staff. Staff will have a more prominent effect when they control the traffic rather than students.

HOC confidentiality form: the HOCs have been known to reveal internal conflicts to specific members of the orientation team. This is detrimental to team dynamics and must be avoided. For this reason, the HOCs could be made to sign a confidentiality form where they are only allowed to discuss conflict with the staff supervisor.

Involving the Staff during orientation: some staff members suggested that they be introduced to the freshmen during morning breakfast time. In addition, they also wanted to be cued into the orientation team earlier so that they could use it for their sessions. If the budget allows for this, it is important for the students not only to meet the faculty and mingle with them, but also the staff during morning breakfast.

Low engagement staff sessions: students have expressed that some staff sessions were low in engagement (refer to Appendix B). While it is important that each session deliver the message in a suitable way, it is also important to consider that the students come in for orientation for 5 days and for long, continuous hours. They are asked to sit in a schedule that has been made for them. In addition to this, an effort needs to be made to gain the attention of several students. For this reason, one of the aims of each session should also be to energize the students and engage with them. A great way to do this would be to incorporate the theme – it is the one thing the students are familiar with during orientation.

Academic Day: the students claimed that the academic day was a sudden change and was only lectures. This was very different from the other days. One solution could be to break up the academic day session into smaller sessions that are spread over the 5 days. This will reduce the intensity of the lecture – filled sessions and will also encourage the students to meet with (potentially) new faculty every day. In addition to this, professors should always avoid lecture style sessions – they should work to incorporate the theme in their session and plan activities with the students as well. Orientation is not only a time to introduce the students to the academic atmosphere but it is also a time for the students to start a relationship with the professors. This balance should be visible in the sessions as well.

Civic Engagement: the HOCs should consider adding a session for civic engagement. This can be small scale such as working with the cleaning staff at CMUQ or larger scale such as spending a day at a beach cleaning. This would help incorporate a Tartan spirit as well.

Engaging with the parents: according to the CAS international standards (Dean, 2009), the orientation is also about supporting the parents and guardians of the students. For this reason, it could be a great way to start orientation by inviting the parents for the first breakfast to meet the staff and faculty. In addition to this, the parents could also be invited to meet the staff and faculty on their own 'booths' at the end of orientation. The parents will then know about all the departments available for the students and will also understand the resources available.

Describing the work of each department: It is unfair to departments when their work is undermined or wrongly described to the freshmen. For this reason, the messaging used to introduce each staff and faculty session MUST be approved by the respective staff member or members. In addition, it will be great to give examples of the services that the department provides – from the most simple to the most complex services. For example, examples for the Health and Wellness could be as follows: "this department cares for all our health and wellness needs. Everything from small physical injuries, to getting advice on a healthy diet, to checking the health of your heart can be done here." The example might not be accurate to the actual services provided but it shows the simplest (treating minor injuries) to more complex (checking the health of your heart) tasks.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### CAS International Standards of Orientation

Aim of Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on freshman problems</li> <li>• Respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse student and family population</li> <li>• Academic advising and registration for classes</li> <li>• Cover matriculation, student support services and campus life</li> <li>• Research, assess and evaluate the orientation – include evidence of impact on student learning and developmental outcomes</li> </ul>
Creating a mission for orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include facilitating freshman transition</li> <li>• Preparation for educational responsibilities</li> <li>• Preparation for student responsibilities</li> <li>• Integrating them into the intellectual cultural and social climate</li> <li>• Supporting parents and guardians</li> </ul>
Areas that must be covered during orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge acquisition, integration, construction and application</li> <li>• Cognitive complexity: critical thinking, reflection, creativity and reasoning</li> <li>• Intrapersonal development: self-appraisal, understanding and respect, spiritual awareness, identity development, commitment to ethics and integrity</li> <li>• Interpersonal competence: meaningful relationships, interdependence, collaboration, effective leadership</li> <li>• Humanitarianism and Civic engagement: appreciation of cultural and human differences, social responsibility, global perspective, civic responsibility</li> <li>• Practical competence: communication, goals, technical competence, personal affairs, career, professionalism, health and wellness, satisfying life.</li> </ul>

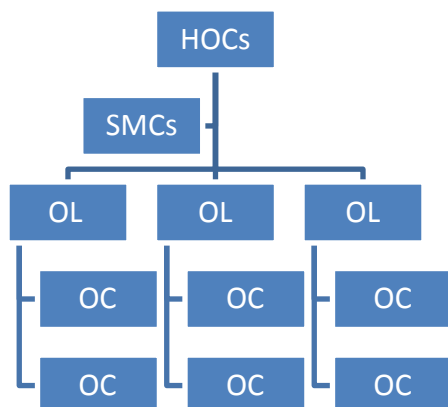
### Appendix B

Session and Key messages	Student Perspective	Suggestions and Thoughts
<u>Get Involved CMUQ</u> Key messages: different ways to get involved Why during orientation: it is important that the freshmen know about engagement early	No information available	Not enough information
<u>Navigating Academics</u> Key messages: acquainting the freshmen with important education related policies such as the academic calendar and dates, concept of units and credits, other course related procedures such as withdrawing, mini-courses, waitlists etc.	The freshmen said that they wanted an introduction to the US college curriculum	Since the students asked for this session even though it had happened, some of the information was not retained. This is possibly because the session was not engaging and due to the time of the day (as explained by the staff member).
<u>Library Orientation</u> Key messages: introduction to the resources available (which will later be involved in the Carnegie skills workshop), introduction to the physical space and its uses	No comments available	This session had some engaging activities as opposed to previous years (as mentioned by the staff)

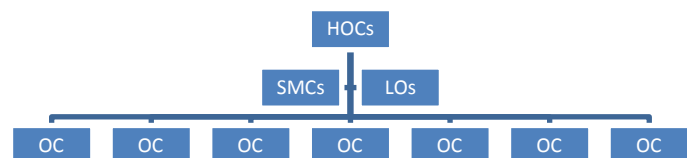
<u>A journey to Success Begins with Me</u> Key message: where to seek resources for counseling, mental well-being, personal growth and women's initiatives	The students claimed that this session was too long and low in engagement	While the staff members worked on engagement through trivia activities and other interactive activities, the students felt like the sudden change in energy made the session seem low in engagement. For this session, one of two things can be done: (1) the messaging of this session is very relaxing and also engaging. It could be made a relaxing, yoga like session, at the end of the day. This is when students are in a calm and relaxed mood this session would complement the student mood well and (2) the session can be made more energetic (the 'butterfly activity' was criticized for low energy) so that the students are actively involved in attaining more information from the staff. One key issue is that the orientation team itself does not know how to phrase the jobs of each student affairs section properly. Inaccurate descriptions of the work of each department undermine the work that is done and the services that are provided. Students should always get approved messaging from each depart along with examples.
<u>We're All a Part of the Tartan Community</u> Key message: Consequences related to bullying or harassing others, policies related to these topics, responsibility of a Tartan.	No comments available	The staff explained that timing is important however the HOCs must not blame the staff if the session is completed early. Especially if the staff completed the task as advised by the team itself. Instead, it is important for the HOCs and the orientation team to find small activities to do when sessions finish early or late.
<u>Fire And Safety</u> Key message: essential safety procedures, messages, policies, actions and why it is important to know these.	No comments available	This session received no comments from the students but is of utmost importance for student safety.
<u>Your Career Development</u> Key messages: start career development as a first year, it is okay to be unsure about a career; how to seek help and who can help.	Students stated that this session was not effective.	This session was moved and cut short due to last minute changes. Due to this, it is possible that the session was not considered effective. In addition to this, it is also possible that the session was considered ineffective because it was not very engaging due to the time of the day. Since the staff member prefers smaller groups, this could be a better fit for the rotation structure where small groups of students rotate between sessions.
<u>Intro to Academic Resource Center</u> Key Messages: Everyone uses the Arc, introduction to the workshops provided, introduction to the staff and student workers, procedures, scheduling, employment prospects	No comments available	It is important for the HOCs to ask if the allotted time is sufficient for basic information. During rotation, due to the travel time, giving 15 minutes to each session might not be effective enough for them to retain information. However, since every session cannot be provided as much time as they would like

		ideally, it is essential that the staff deliver messages that are absolutely essential. The advantage of orientation is having the entire class in one place – this should be used to deliver important messages in an engaging way. This does not necessarily require more time. A balance needs to be found.
<u>OIE's Chamber of Secrets</u> Key Messages: open mindedness towards other cultures, adjustment when interacting with new communities, cultural diversity, identity, getting involved with OIS	No comments available	No improvements specified
<u>IT Session</u> – no response from the staff	The freshmen claimed that this session was very long. The orientation team echoed this and also was unhappy that the session timing affected the rest of the schedule. In addition, there was an information overload. Finally, there was no reference to the information later.	The staff must respect the time limit they are given – there could be other sessions that are just as important afterwards. They should also boil down the information to what is truly important – this will help reduce the time of the session and also will avoid the information overload. In addition, students claimed that the staff was supposed to give them a reference for the information later on – this is essential as a lot of the information was technology related. Through the focus group, students said that some of the information was not relevant/important and they did not retain the information given to them.
<u>History of CMU</u>	Talk was exciting	This talk was engaging and the students enjoyed it a lot.
<u>General Education at CMU</u>	No information available	Not enough information

## Appendix C



Orientation Hierarchy 2014



Orientation Hierarchy 2014



## Appendix D

	HOC	Orientation Team	Freshmen
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can avoid conflicts. I can step back and let others step in if everyone is a strong personality</li> <li>• I am detail oriented</li> <li>• I get things done</li> <li>• I hate being late</li> <li>• I work well in a team (this is one of the few opportunities where I got to learn in a team)</li> <li>• I don't like it when others don't do their work</li> <li>• Rhetoric is very important in a team</li> <li>• Maintaining a positive attitude is important</li> <li>• It is important to gain peoples' confidence</li> <li>• Being proactive is important (more important than giving people the benefit of the doubt)</li> <li>• When people lag behind, giving them a chance is good. But not every time – it affects everyone else's work</li> <li>• I have a lot of patience (it was a bad experience at the end, unfortunately)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great experience</li> <li>• Bonded with the team</li> <li>• Wanted that the freshmen love the orientation</li> <li>• I have a short temper</li> <li>• I need to make equal time between meeting the freshmen and doing the job</li> <li>• Team work</li> <li>• I never knew I could inspire people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I adapt easily to people and where they are</li> <li>• I get along with people due to games and ice breakers</li> <li>• Getting to know people while playing games is fun as opposed to being in a formal setting</li> <li>• It is important to try and balance between different activities and academics</li> <li>• Also important try to join more clubs</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose of Orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting freshmen ready for their time in CMU, giving them info about resources</li> <li>• Instilling a tartan spirit</li> <li>• Making them feel like they belong here</li> <li>• Making the transition easy</li> <li>• We get to see how the freshmen see CMU</li> <li>• Get the freshmen to socialize with their batch mates</li> <li>• Get them to see the professors, people and life at CMU</li> <li>• Giving the freshmen an idea of where to go and who to ask for info</li> <li>• The freshmen will meet other majors</li> <li>• The orientation team gets a chance to work in a team outside of the course and test their strengths</li> <li>• They were being a part of the creative process and organization of a large event</li> <li>• Convincing the freshmen that they should go to CMU</li> <li>• Giving some team members a leadership experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the freshmen blend in</li> <li>• Teach tartan values</li> <li>• Transition to university life</li> <li>• Make the freshmen friendly with their peers</li> <li>• Support the freshmen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcoming the new students to tartan life</li> <li>• Speed transition into university life</li> <li>• After orientation; the first day of school got overwhelmed with studies and homework</li> </ul>
<b>Most appealing, enjoyable, memorable part of</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being in charge and making the decisions</li> <li>• When you stand back and look at it happen, it is rewarding</li> <li>• Loved the job – meeting vendors and decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know the team and interacting with them</li> <li>• Morning briefs were great and the team was</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spoon game, circling the tree game since they were good ice breakers</li> </ul>



<b>the job / orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loved being at the back end</li> <li>• Gained people's confidence</li> <li>• Loved working on the theme</li> <li>• Meeting people</li> <li>• Designing was fun</li> </ul>	briefed well <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflections were short</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karaoke was great</li> <li>• Skits were fun</li> <li>• The tartan port room will always be remembered</li> <li>• Decorating the room</li> <li>• Sorting hats</li> <li>• Meeting OCs flash mob</li> <li>• The magic song was inspirational</li> <li>• Team shouts.</li> <li>• Getting to know each other before classes start is important</li> <li>• Scavenger hunt is important since it gave info what each area is responsible for what</li> <li>• Cool outfits - whole theme as nice and welcoming</li> <li>• The organization</li> <li>• OCs were welcoming, interactive, helped in every aspect, treated the freshmen as family and were responsible</li> <li>• The balance between academics and fun(for one day)</li> </ul>
<b>Least appealing, enjoyable, memorable part of the job/ orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts when roles overlap and people start working on overlapping things, working with everyone became frustrating</li> <li>• Conflicts with the supervisors</li> <li>• LO model did not work – it is a good model, but is not ready to be used</li> <li>• One person took over and worked separately on a task and no one else knew what was happening</li> <li>• We did not have each other's' back and blamed each other</li> <li>• Communication about rules (vacation) was not communicated and not consistent for everyone. I spent a lot of money changing my tickets. It did not have an effect on the person it was targeted towards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some OCs were just doing this for the PSP points and did not contribute enough for their team</li> <li>• HOC's sometimes yelled at the team</li> <li>• HOC's NOT following the hierarchy rule and were giving orders</li> <li>• LO's had to do a lot of work since they were small in numbers due to which others thought they were not doing their work perfectly</li> <li>• IT and stress relief sessions went way out of time</li> <li>• LO's and SMC's did not get to interact a lot with the freshmen</li> <li>• A weekend should have been provided after the team training days for the orientation team to rest</li> <li>• Training was too long</li> <li>• Since no catering the LO's had to do a lot of work(only 2 LO's getting from the dock for 150 people)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Least enjoyable was the IT session since there was too much information and the students were not able to follow</li> <li>• The academic day since it was all lectures and no games,</li> <li>• Picking garbage from majlis game – it did not work</li> <li>• Stress session was not effective. It made them drowsy because it was a sudden change in energy.</li> <li>• IT session – least memorable. Don't remember much from it</li> <li>• Scavenger hunt was not important since the students still had to ask where to go and only focused on the competition</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long hours</li> <li>• Sessions went overtime</li> <li>• HOC's did not have enough information about the events</li> </ul>	
<b>Accuracy of the job descriptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Francine: I did everything written. Others helped me and I helped with other work as well. The HOC job titles should be there to select point people for everything BUT it is important to know that you will work on everything else as well.</li> <li>• Lana: I did everything written. I also did other people's job. Titles are needed for the selection process. You need those skills and people should be selected on that</li> <li>• Lamana: I took the lead in all work related to my title (others helped). I also worked on the things that were common to everyone or not on any specific description. The titles should be there so that you can select the right people.</li> <li>• Noshin: I did everything written and also much more because I was the only one with a car at one point. There is no need for HOC titles. The only specific skill needed is for marketing with the software. Everyone else should be working on everything. Logistics person MUST have a car, so remove the titles and make sure someone has a car.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal/physical document for briefing</li> <li>• Had to figure out what to do from previous orientation experience</li> <li>• No say in the theme of orientation</li> <li>• Did not know how the preparation was going</li> <li>• The morning club suite sessions were very good where the team was briefed about the day</li> <li>• Not everyone understood exactly what their role was</li> <li>• For LO's there was no formal description – same description as OL</li> <li>• SMC should be a paid job since it's not a learning experience(indefinite work)</li> <li>• Briefing was done only on the same day</li> <li>• Training was the only briefing before the orientation</li> </ul>	-NA-
<b>Workload spread over the months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Averages out to more than 40 hours. GU is paid through the GU system – this means they can be paid for more than 1 job.</li> <li>• Averages out to 40 hours. But there are times when the workload is less. We should be allowed to work on other jobs then. Change to CMU system.</li> <li>• Averages out to less than 40 hours. We had a few phases where we worked a lot. We should be given the flexibility to work on other jobs.</li> <li>• 40 hours is fine. But different job positions have different work load.</li> </ul>	-NA-	-NA-
<b>Extensiveness of the application process</b>	<p>Marks: 5,5,4,4 Average: 4.5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filtered, looked for diversity, looked for leaders, problem solvers, people who would step on someone else's shoes, form cohesive opinions. Looked for people who could back and give space, lead, facilitate discussion. Would like to do individual and group interviews BOTH (we don't remember</li> </ul>	-NA-	-NA-

	<p>names of some people in the group interviews)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid attention to every person during group interview, we looked for team players, energetic, motivated and people who think on their feet.</li> <li>• Weeded out people who put no effort in application. <u>Used our intuition</u>, what we know about people to select. Group interview was good to find out who should be OC and who LO and the pairings. We selected team workers and people who were flexible with structural changes. We also tested strategy, dominance and quietness.</li> <li>• We looked for team players, adaptability to changing situations. We marked according to a rubric created. Looked for leaders, and people who delegate well. We also looked for followers. We should do individual interviews as well. Applications were given with names so we selected based on what we knew about them and this is not professional. The jobs should be standardized: HOC, OC, OL, SMC</li> </ul>		
<b>Briefing orientation team</b>	<p>Marked: 5+5+4+3 Average: 4.25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 days of training, expectations given, specific instructions on each session, debrief every morning and evening and meetings during the day when needed.</li> <li>• Separate trainings, descriptions given in their own time. Problem: those who were more free during the week asked to be part of my work and I was not comfortable with it. This was not dealt with professionally from the student affairs as well. Showed favoritism.</li> <li>• Briefed every morning what to do. PROBLEM: to flatten hierarchy, OCs were told to communicate with HOC not LO. This made los wait for work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add to training – how to respond to CMU stereotypes about courses</li> <li>• Strengths quest was too long during the training session</li> <li>• Said LO's have different duties but found themselves doing the same duty of an OL</li> <li>• A little more context about the games</li> <li>• They were not very flexible with the schedules and did not let them leave</li> <li>• A little more context about the games - the rules could have been more clear</li> <li>• There was NO OC retreat and the team met each other for the first time during training session</li> <li>• If there are experienced people they should have been used for helping during training rather than playing the games again. Those who wants to refresh or play can play and the others who are experienced can help the HOC's</li> </ul>	-NA-
<b>Involving the team during planning</b>	<p>Marked: 2, 4, 2, 1 Average: 2.25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We asked for help for flashmob, and lipdub. They should be given the retreat for theme selection for sure. Summer work is only for HOC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was no brainstorming session about the theme</li> <li>• The team never got as a whole before the orientation</li> <li>• Make the orientation team part of the summer</li> </ul>	-NA-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Google doc was created and the team was asked to send suggestions for the theme. Asked for the feedback on the theme as well. We made videos and decorations, and took team help. The team should be given incentives if they have to work over the summer with the HOCs.</li> <li>• We only asked for their feedback during training and for the theme. We should have just practiced the games much before training to save time.</li> <li>• Travelling issues meant no input from the team for the theme. Only input was from the training. They need the theme retreat. We also need their feedback if we are experimenting over the summer. We should ask them.</li> </ul>	<p>planning process, give an option if willing to help then</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The whole orientation was disorganized</li> <li>• The way they selected the team was very bad and disorganized</li> <li>• Once the HOCs have been selected they should speed up the panning and team selection – we don't know when to book our tickets</li> </ul>	
<b>Structure of the team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LOs was not a good idea – they did not get full exposure to the freshmen</li> <li>• LOs did not have a wholesome experience – no interaction with freshmen or leadership either. Need better understanding of their role and need to communicate that they should be interacting. Wanted to flatten the hierarchy but it limited their work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchy is needed and should be there – communication is easier and people know what to do. It does not offend anyone.</li> <li>• HOCs were abusing the hierarchy and were not polite to the team</li> <li>• One SMC should be with two OL groups for better bonding</li> <li>• Have more SMCs</li> <li>• Distribute the SMC's among different stuff(marketing, etc) -</li> </ul>	-NA-
<b>Mission and Vision of orientation</b>	<p>Marked: 5,5,5,5 Average: 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanted the orientation to be most successful and unforgettable one.</li> <li>• Made a document for the theme but was only shared with the staff. We should have shared with the team. Wanted to create a smooth transition into uni; we wanted to show that we were fun and work, and we wanted to show Tartan life.</li> <li>• We wanted the freshmen to have a good experience. We wanted the team to challenge themselves.</li> <li>• We were also reminded of the mission and vision and importance by the student affairs. I wanted the freshmen to have a good design experience</li> </ul>	-NA-	-NA-
<b>Theme was successful for the mission/ vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone could relate to the theme, and values of CMU were added as well. Theme is not necessary but it gives structure, excitement, it is what CMU is known for</li> <li>• It was serious – the alumni and houses required research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helped shape orientation</li> <li>• Brings people together</li> <li>• But some people have no idea what the theme was</li> </ul>	-NA-

	<p>and was also fun – wand making session. A theme is not required but it is needed to make orientation successful. It brings an atmosphere and encourages participation and cooperation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission was to create excitement and get to know CMU. We incorporated the alumni here. Themes are required. It shows the effort put in to welcome the freshmen; it is student focused, and also is fun for the team.</li> <li>• The theme was about playing for points – reflected the mission and vision. There was more engagement during lectures, more team commitment because of points. PROBLEM: OCs got too attached to their teams and the points. Theme is important and required. It binds everyone together and makes you think a lot. Without a theme you have nothing to take back. People from other unis came to see CMU.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestion: make different themes for each day to involve more people</li> <li>• Maybe used a theme that everyone knows about</li> <li>• Freshmen and professors thought it was childish</li> <li>• A simple theme like “We Are Family” seems like it would be enough</li> </ul>	
<b>Incorporating a tartan spirit</b>	<p>Marked: 4, 4,4,3 Average: 3.75</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not much research. Incorporated student majlis, and spoke to them about the tartan spirit.</li> <li>• Incorporated the alum for a tartan spirit. Could have done better.</li> <li>• We thought it would have inherently been there. But it needs work.</li> <li>• Majlis day, flag painting, team spirit, but more research is needed. Session to talk about the workers in CMU by the majlis was also done.</li> </ul>	-NA-	-NA-
<b>Communication with everyone</b>	<p>Marked: 5,5, 5, 3 Average: 4.5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emailing students and others, keeping OCs aware of what is going on, Whatsapp, and good assistance from student affairs</li> <li>• Communications with other HOCs is horrible. (late to meetings, no response, not finishing their own work) Everything else was good. Facebook page for freshmen, departments got forms with expectations, good communication with team during iftar. Miscommunication with the staff about vacations.</li> <li>• Team: briefing, games, instructions. Departments: briefed them before their sessions.</li> <li>• No real one to one connection with the freshmen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication with the freshmen for certain events and games was misleading</li> <li>• The whatsapp group is not a good idea – only HOCs should be allowed to post on it</li> <li>• But whatsapp group also helped the Los know where everyone was</li> <li>• Major miscommunication between the team and the HOC’s – every HOC gave different orders to people</li> <li>• Reflection timings were not communicated well</li> <li>• Whatsapp was god idea but HOCs need to talk with themselves before telling people what to do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook worked well</li> <li>• Regular email could also have worked since not everyone has Facebook</li> <li>• Facebook was effective only because it was summer and the hash tags were organized well</li> </ul>

	<p>Communication with the team during reflection was not right – we only spoke about the lows – this lowered the morale. Highs encourage you to come in the next day. Only one HOC spoke and took over the LOs. Spoke to them separately and no one else was allowed to know what it was about. When Los came to ask us about something, we didn't know what to say. Departments had low communication with us. Mostly it was good but facilities were not good – didn't come for meetings and didn't let us use the printers in the pantry. Marketing was on top of everything.</p>		
<b>Feedback and guidance</b>	<p>Marked: 5,2,3,2 Average: 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with flexibility, regular one on ones, and weekly team meetings. They asked what my weakness is and I worked on it. They reminded us of our work on the meetings. They gave us the space to be creative. And they gave us basic outlines. Guidance was good.</li> <li>• They only spoke to us when something is wrong. Want more one on one meetings. Good feedback is also important. Got appropriate assistance – they gave us pointers and we felt like we were in the lead.</li> <li>• Need more meetings closer to orientation.</li> <li>• Staff should speak to all the HOCs separately and give anonymous feedback to us individually. The staff gave good feedback. They gave good support. We had space and they helped us with problems. The application process should be more professional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback was very superficial and couldn't be used</li> <li>• Reflections were messed up</li> </ul>	-NA-
<b>Convocation organization by the orientation team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convocation was already a confusion this time – we didn't know we were helping with the robing and the organization was not very good because of that. But the orientation team can handle organization of the convocation as well. OCs could help with robing; official emails and design will be from the HOCs; logistics will be from the LOs. All with the support of the marketing.</li> <li>• Convocation needs bookings; it should not be a problem. If it is communicated well in advance, it is manageable by the orientation team.</li> <li>• The cards should be printed out and all that. It can be done by the orientation team. But when the MPR does it, it is a different vibe and experience. Only the HOCs will be able to do it. All the other team members barely lasted for the</li> </ul>	-NA-	-NA-

	<p>entire orientation. They have no incentive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will require more budget; we will delegate tasks to the team.</li> </ul>		
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice to the next team: communicate, avoid conflict, don't hide anything from the team, establish a mission and vision, training is important, you must share what you work on with the other team members, test the games, group interviews is a good idea, it is not separate work – it is collaborative, don't bring out your HOC conflicts in front of the team, don't be personal</li> <li>• Issues that came up: interpersonal issues came up; I could have done a better job if I could detect LO work; HOCs who don't have orientation experience don't perform as well as they could; must meet up with the team once they are selected.</li> <li>• I wish I knew my team mates better</li> <li>• There should be a system to check who is working on what. Should not take credit for something you did not do.</li> <li>• It is important to know that you will only know half of what you have to do. The rest you will figure out as you go.</li> <li>• Confidentiality form: HOCs should only complain to Kevin/ Paul. Not to the team.</li> <li>• There should be communication training for the HOCs to communicate with the team</li> <li>• HOCs should not be experimented with. They MUST have previous club and team work experience. And also they must have orientation experience.</li> <li>• CHANGE IN JOB DESCRIPTION: Training schedule – who should work on it: the training or schedule HOC? Similar problem with logistics schedule.</li> <li>• Commitment issues: people backed out 2 days before orientation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 girl HOCs not a good idea – too much drama during orientation between them</li> <li>• The selection of the OC's and LO's should be better – have individual interviews with the applicants</li> <li>• During selection of LO's do not see how they work in team but also their club activities and how they work individually</li> <li>• Every HOC should share the responsibilities( example : Noshin designed everything)</li> <li>• Only include activities if their rules are crystal clear (balloon activity)</li> <li>• Stress relieve session should be reduced in time and made more realistic instead of playing with toys</li> <li>• In Pizza and politics, the topic should be picked with care. Not a controversial one for their first time – they might not know how to talk. In addition, keep the upper classmen as a part of pizza and politics so that the freshmen can see the conversation from them as well.</li> <li>• INCLUDE frozen tree – it was a great activity</li> <li>• Assigning two people to come up with a skit was not a good idea – ask who are interested in designing the skit and meet with HOC to do so</li> <li>• Freshmen should be told what are tartan values so that they could incorporate within their skits</li> <li>• Freshmen and team did not get food during academic day</li> <li>• The HOC's should have at least one guy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The career lecture was not very informative</li> <li>• The food was not good</li> <li>• IT session had too much content and students were not able to follow. There was no link sent as promised to the students for reference</li> <li>• The academics bored the students therefore the academics sessions should be divided into different days</li> <li>• There should be more of mixing of teams - like mix teams every day(eg: how they teams are divided into skit teams - that type of dividing should be done more often for games</li> <li>• MUST ADD: explanations of the American education system and the details of it</li> <li>• Maybe add more traditions that we create for every batch?</li> <li>• The sessions should be more related to the theme</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Sensitivity maintained</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had double thoughts on a lot of our activities. We removed some activities that involved holding hands, we briefed everyone before the skits</li> <li>• With a magic theme it was important to consider. We looked at the previous year's focus group and made decisions.</li> <li>• Focused less on the magic and more on the activities and values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell the freshmen what is culturally appropriate before the skits - the orientation team should always do the skit before the freshmen do</li> <li>• The theme was not the best choice but it was handled well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pizza and politics had touched upon some sensitive regions since the places that were talked about made some people uncomfortable</li> <li>• Photograph consent forms were a good idea</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students should be open minded about it. They are coming from school, and they should be used to different cultures as well. This was among the most successful orientations – this proves that students coming in are open minded.</li> </ul>		
<b>Signed contract needed?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It will ensure that we stay here and work</li> <li>But if it has office hours, it will stop us from having internships</li> <li>It is very important and needs to be implemented</li> <li>No other matter needs a contract – only the vacation days were the problem. If this is communicated, there is no need for a contract.</li> <li>I was shocked that there was no contract.</li> </ul>	-NA-	-NA-
<b>Final thoughts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driving and logistics need to be linked. Other HOCs should not have to spend their time driving if they are not in charge of logistics.</li> <li>Match HOC personalities well. Find out from the professors how they are before you select them.</li> <li>Communicate earlier if there are limitations on food: lunch catered or not? Dinner outside or in CMU? Make these decisions in the beginning</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 days is perfect! It needs to be longer!</li> <li>Expected to just do ice breakers and leave – this was much more intense and fun</li> <li>The 6-8 timing was too much and people thought it might be too boring but only after they came they realized it was fun</li> <li>Thought it would all focus on academics with a formal intro of CMU. But this was a complete turnover</li> </ul>



## **Bibliography**

The Role of Orientation Programs. (2009). In L. Dean (Ed.), *CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education* (7th ed., pp. 322-323). Washington: Library of Congress.