

## **QATAR FOUNDATION'S AWSAJ ACADEMY STUDENTS WIN PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS FOR PIONEERING RESEARCH**

### ***Organisation's Unique Education Cycle Continues To Produce Scientists Of The Future***

**Doha, 7 July 2015:** Shrewd eighth grade students from Awsaj Academy in Doha have beaten off staunch competition from 199 competing schools in Qatar to claim third prize at a prestigious national research contest.

Sponsored by the Supreme Education Council (SEC), the Seventh National Student Scientific Research Competition recently provided a unique opportunity for the 199 schools to showcase the independent research and creative innovation abilities of their young students in Qatar. Only 40 entries were selected at the initial stage, with eight teams then being shortlisted at the final stage.

Conscious of food security issues in Qatar, three students from Awsaj Academy, a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), impressed the judges with their research project entitled 'The Effect of LED Lighting on Lettuce Growth'.

The success of the Awsaj students is the latest in a long list of accomplishments for the hundreds of bright young minds enrolled in QF schools, many of whom have participated at both local and international scientific competition throughout the last academic year.

Commenting, Mr Peter Corcoran, Executive Director of Qatar Foundation Schools, stressed how "the educational and research programmes at QF schools aim to nurture a student's curiosity about the world, prompt them to think independently and ask critical questions about why things work in relation to other things. The main objective is to encourage students to generate new thoughts, rather than just recite knowledge, and those are the skills that are going to serve them well as they head off to university and pursue their lives as adults."

“These are also skills that we are committed to developing in our students from a very early age,” Mr Corcoran added. “Even at primary school level, we encourage our students to develop their critical thinking by engaging them in research projects, which is in keeping with the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme that we offer in a variety of our schools. One of the most important values of IB is enquiry-based learning. So what we are looking to do is develop enquiring minds, confidence in our students to take risks, and individuals who are not only knowledgeable, but reflective of the world they live in.”

Encouraging students from an early age to engage in scientific research is part of QF’s commitment to promoting the culture of research and innovation at all educational levels. QF’s research initiatives are aligned with the Qatar National Research Strategy, which is based on five pillars addressing priority areas, including health and biomedicine; energy and the environment; computing and technology research; social science, arts and humanities; in addition to basic research and development.

Amongst the students who appear to have benefitted from this holistic approach to education are Abdulla Al-Subaiey, Mohamed Khalid Al-Thani, and Abdulla Saad Al-Kaabi – the three participants from Awsaj who successfully claimed third prize for their research at the Seventh National Student Scientific Research Competition.

As part of the group’s preparations for the competition, the three students experimented with various levels of lighting to produce the largest amount of lettuce day and night over the course of the academic year. They then presented their research findings at Awsaj Academy’s annual Environmental Fair and afterwards, participated in the Seventh National Student Scientific Research Competition.

Delighted with his team’s recognition, Al-Kaabi explained that “this research started as a school project and I did not expect to win this prize because I thought that the project had already been done in Doha. It turned out that our research was the first of its kind in using LED lighting in agriculture. Of course, winning this prize has encouraged me to conduct more research in the future. I highly encourage other young people to focus on scientific research and to dedicate their time to learning.”

Awsaj Academy is the only school of its kind in Qatar. Proving that education is a journey for everyone, Awsaj Academy focuses on getting the best out of children with learning challenges

by focusing on their areas of aptitude. In the academic year 2013-2014, Qataris constituted 92 per cent of the 338 students.

In recent times, Awsaj has looked to further develop its students' love of research and learning by hosting an honorary awards ceremony, in conjunction with ORYX GTL, to celebrate the impressive academic achievements of seven of its students in appreciation of their commitment and academic success.

Dr. Donald Francis, High School Principal at Awsaj Academy, commented on the Academy's partnership with Oryx GTL by saying: "We have a partnership with Oryx GTL and they sponsor scientific research at Awsaj Academy. So, all the students in the high school and middle school have the opportunity to put together research projects where they have the opportunity to find solutions for environmental challenges facing the State of Qatar and the environment. We have put on important competitions for a couple of years and brought in high-profile judges."

"Our aim is to get our students to learn problem solving and engineering solutions for some of the challenges that we might face in the present and the future. Students with learning challenges respond very well to hands-on learning. Through this, we aim to get our students to believe in themselves enough to compete and think with the best students in Doha," he said.

In 2013, Awsaj Academy achieved accreditation from both the US Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the Council of International Schools.

The school is one of eight various academies and educational programmes in the pre-university education stages. The other centres include five Qatar Academy Schools, Qatar Leadership Academy and the Academic Bridge Programme, designed to prepare high school students for university life.

Of the 2,977 students to make up the Qatar Academy schools during the academic year 2013-2014, 70 per cent were Qatari. The same year, 70 per cent of Qatari students made up the Qatar Leadership Academy.

### **Image Caption**

**Image 1:** Eighth grade students from Awsaj Academy (from right to left), Abdulla Saad Al-Kaabi, Abdulla Al-Subaiey and Mohammed Khalid Al-Thani claiming third prize at the Seventh National Student Scientific Research Competition for their research project entitled 'The Effect of LED Lighting on Lettuce Growth'

**Image 2:** Five of the seven Awsaj Academy students being honoured by ORYX GTL (from right to left), Fahad Abdulla Al-Thani, Rimoh Jacob, Abdulla Al-Ansari, Hamad Fakhri and Nadia Al-Majid holding their certificates

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### **Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential**

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organisation that is supporting Qatar on its journey from carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential, for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world.

Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercialising solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>