



*“Where Leaders of Higher Education Meet”*

Since 2013

# Global Challenges, Local Impact:

Higher Education's Role in Shaping  
a Resilient Future

**14-16**  
April, 2026

Kempinski Central  
Avenue, Dubai - UAE



**CLICKS**  
Center for Learning Innovations &  
Customized Knowledge Solutions

FORUM ORGANIZER





# Overview

The 7<sup>th</sup> Edition of the MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum (MENA-HELP) will be held in the vibrant city of **Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from April 14-16, 2026**. Taking place under the timely theme "**Global Challenges, Local Impact: Higher Education's Role in Shaping a Resilient Future**," this edition comes at a defining moment for the global higher education sector.

Launched in 2013 as a biennial gathering, MENA-HELP has grown into one of the most prominent international platforms dedicated to higher education leadership. With participation from over 60 countries in previous editions, the Forum provides a truly global and cross-regional space for dialogue, critical reflection, strategic collaboration, and the exchange of best practices. It is not just an event you attend—it is a platform you help shape.

The 2026 edition holds particular significance, as universities and higher education systems across the world confront a rapidly evolving landscape marked by technological disruption, changing learner expectations, sustainability imperatives, workforce realignment, and growing demands for relevance, inclusion, and resilience. Against this backdrop, MENA-HELP 2026 will serve as a strategic convening space where leaders come together to collectively reimagine the role of higher education and co-develop solutions with lasting impact both locally and globally.

This global gathering is expected to welcome **250-300 higher education leaders, senior policymakers, industry partners, and international experts representing more than 50 countries**.

Over the course of three dynamic days, the Forum will feature keynote addresses by global thought leaders, engaging panel discussions, strategic debates, and fireside chats, as well as pre-forum workshops, targeted focus groups, and institutional case studies aligned with the Forum's central theme and sub-themes. In addition, participants will have access to a dedicated exhibition space showcasing cutting-edge services, tools, and technologies from selected partners that support and enhance the higher education sector. The program also offers ample networking opportunities, designed to foster meaningful dialogue, peer exchange, and long-term collaboration.

A major highlight of the Forum will be the announcement of the **winners of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the Zairi International Awards for Excellence in Higher Education**. Open to institutions worldwide, the Awards recognize outstanding institutional innovation, leadership, and impact, reinforcing the Forum's commitment to celebrating and amplifying excellence across diverse higher education systems.

**04**  
WORKSHOPS

FOCUS GROUPS

PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES

THE ZAIRI INTERNATIONAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**40+**  
INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDIES ACROSS 6 PARALLEL TRACKS

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

FIRESIDE CHATS

**+300**  
Participants  
**+200**  
HEIs & Organizations  
**+60**  
Speakers/ Panelists  
**+50**  
Countries

# Forum Objectives



Building on the insights from previous editions and in response to the rapid transformations shaping higher education, the 7<sup>th</sup> MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum aims to

1

## Analyze Global Disruptions and Institutional Resilience

Reflect on the disruptive forces impacting higher education—including climate change, digital transformation, economic volatility, shifting workforce demands, and geopolitical instability—and identify strategies to enhance institutional agility, sustainability, and resilience.

2

## Redefine the Role of the Engaged University

Explore how universities can revisit their purpose to serve the common good, contribute to sustainability efforts, and foster meaningful community engagement through lifelong learning, social responsibility, and civic partnerships.

3

## Align Higher Education with Future Workforce Needs

Examine the skills and competencies required in the evolving job market and discuss how HEIs can redesign curricula, enhance the student experience, and integrate skilling, reskilling, and upskilling models to support knowledge-based economies.

4

## Leverage Digital Transformation and Innovation in Higher Education

Investigate how HEIs can harness AI, automation, and digital tools to enhance teaching, learning, and institutional efficiency, while promoting creativity, innovation, and problem-solving to address pressing socio-economic and environmental challenges.

5

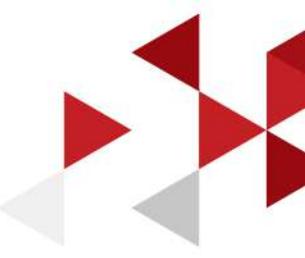
## Showcase Global Best Practices and Institutional Transformation

Provide a platform for sharing successful case studies and innovative strategies from universities worldwide, highlighting how institutions are adapting to change and driving positive transformation across governance, pedagogy, research, and engagement.

6

## Strengthen University-Industry-Government Collaboration

Examine how higher education institutions, industry leaders, and policymakers can work together to foster strategic partnerships, drive research and innovation, and contribute to national and regional socio-economic development.



# Why Join the 7<sup>th</sup> MENA-HELP(2026)?



**A Premier Leadership Platform for Higher Education:** The MENA-HELP has established itself as a leading global platform for higher education leadership in the region, bringing together university presidents, policymakers, and sector influencers from over 50 countries.



**Confront Global Challenges with Locally Grounded Solutions:** The 2026 Forum centers on the theme "*Global Challenges, Local Impact: Higher Education's Role in Shaping a Resilient Future*," offering a platform for higher education leaders to explore how institutions can translate global disruptions into contextually relevant strategies that drive resilience, equity, and long-term societal impact.



**Showcase and Learn from Global Best Practices:** Through institutional case studies, high-level panels, and strategic roundtables, the Forum offers a rich platform to share success stories, policy insights, and transformative models from around the world.



**Build Strategic Partnerships and Expand Your Network:** Connect with fellow higher education leaders, quality assurance bodies, EdTech innovators, and regional and international organizations through the multiple networking opportunities the Forum provides.



**Exhibit, Promote, and Position Your Institution or Services:** Benefit from dedicated exhibition space to showcase your university's achievements, projects, or services to a global audience. The Forum also includes branding opportunities for partners, sponsors, and exhibitors looking to increase visibility in the MENA and global higher education landscape.

## Target Audience

We invite leaders and decision makers within Higher Education from across the globe to join us, including

- Senior Administrators including Chancellors, Presidents, Rectors, Provosts, Vice Chancellors and Deans of Colleges.
- Members of governing bodies of Universities & Colleges.
- Higher Education Policy Makers.
- Representatives from Ministries of Higher Education, Accreditation Agencies, National Research Foundations, etc.
- Representatives from NGOs and IGOs concerned with Higher Education.
- Researchers.



# ORGANIZER, SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

Global Challenges, Local Impact: Higher Education's  
Role in Shaping a Resilient Future





## Some of the Confirmed 7<sup>th</sup> MENA HELF Speakers



**HE Prof. Amr Ezzat Salama**

Secretary General of the Association of Arab Universities, Jordan



**Prof. Francisco Marmolejo**

Higher Education President, Qatar Foundation, Qatar



**Dr. Fanta Aw**

Executive Director and CEO, Association of International Educators (NAFSA), USA



**Dr. Mazen Hasna**

Chairman, National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation, Qatar



**Dr. Sardor Rakhimboev**

Deputy Director, National Quality Assurance Agency for Education under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan



**Prof. Mohammed Hussein Ahmed**

Director General-Head Apparatus of Supervision and Quality Assurance, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Kurdistan, Iraq



**Dr. Diana Abdulkarim Aljahromi**

Secretary-General, Higher Education Council, Bahrain



**Dr Roberta Malee Bassett**

Global Lead for Tertiary Education, The World Bank



**Dr. Narimane Hadj-Hamou**

Chair, 7th MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum, Founder & CEO, CLICKS, UAE



**Prof. Dr. Agron Bajraktari**

Rector, University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj (USHAF), Kosovo



**Prof. Rachid Hadj-Hamou**

CEO, The Elite Academy, UAE



**Dr. Tod Laursen**

Chancellor, American University of Sharjah (AUS), UAE



**Dr. Karim Seghir**

Chancellor, Ajman university, UAE



**Prof. Ahmed Alraeesi**

Vice Chancellor, UAE University, UAE



**Prof. Ghassan Aouad**

Chancellor, Abu Dhabi University, UAE



## Some of the Confirmed 7<sup>th</sup> MENA HELF Speakers



**Dr. Havidán Rodríguez**  
President, University at Albany - State University of New York, USA



**Prof. Bassam Alameddine**  
President, American University of Ras Al Khaimah (AURAK), UAE



**Dr. Abdelaziz Hassanein Mohamed Saad Konsowa**  
President, Alexandria University, Egypt



**Dr. Turo Kilpeläinen**  
President and CEO, LAB University of Applied Sciences, Finland



**Dr. Rana Sawaya**  
President, University College of Bahrain, Bahrain



**Dr. Karim Moustaghfir**  
Associate Vice President for 21st Century Learning Innovation & Faculty Development, Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco



**Prof. Khaled Assaleh**  
Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs, Ajman University, UAE



**Prof. Ahmed Elseragy**  
Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Employability), and Dean of the Faculty of Art & Design, The British University in Egypt, Egypt



**Dr. Julie Furst-Bowe**  
Vice President for Academic Affairs, Arkansas Tech University, USA



**Dr. Nabil EL KADHI**  
Vice President, Academic Affairs and Development, Applied Science University, Bahrain



**Prof. Yusra Mouzoughi**  
Provost, University of Birmingham, UAE



**M'hamed El Aisati**  
Vice President Analytics & Data Services Elsevier



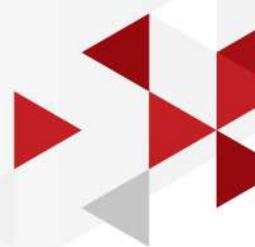
**Dr. Ryan Harnett**  
Vice President for Membership, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, USA



**Vicki Stott**  
Chief Executive Officer, The Quality Assurance Agency, UK and President of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)



**Diane Freiberger**  
Managing Director, FIBAA, Germany



## Some of the Confirmed 7<sup>th</sup> MENA HELF Speakers



**Dr. Wafa Almansoori**

Interim President and Provost, American University of Bahrain (AUBH), Bahrain



**Prof. Hassan Abdalla**

Provost, University of East London, UK



**Dr. Rima Mattar**

Provost, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), Lebanon



**Prof. Sherine Farouk**

Assistant Chancellor, Global Partnerships and Impact, Abu Dhabi University, UAE



**Dr. Elizabeth Soliday-Naui**

President, ISASS Dean, Swiss School of Management, Spain



**Prof. Salim bin Hamood Al-Harthi**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Affairs and Community Service, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman



**Prof. Maurits van Rooijen**

Chief Academic Officer, Global University Systems, UK



**Dr. Ashwin Fernandes**

Executive Director - Africa, Middle East & South Asia, QS Quacquarelli Symonds



**Dr. Kinan Bahnassi**

Sr. Adviser, Labour Market and Education Policy | Education & Human Development & Community Council, UAE



**Mervin Bakker**

Executive Director, European Association for International Education (EAIE), Netherlands



**Prof. Mubarak H. AlKhatnai**

Dean of Quality and Development, King Saud University, KSA



**Prof. Abhilasha Singh**

Dean, College of Business Administration, American University in the Emirates (AUE), UAE



**Dr. Mona Ismail**

Dean, Scientific College of Design, Oman



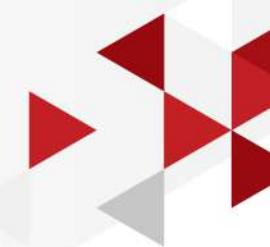
**Dr. Said Saleem Al-Kittani**

Associate Dean for Community Engagement, Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS), Oman



**Fiona Lennoxsmith**

Head of Leadership, Governance & Management, Advance HE



## Some of the Confirmed 7<sup>th</sup> MENA HELF Speakers



**Ramy Hassanien**

Regional Director for  
Middle East, Africa &  
Central Asia, Emerald  
Publishing



**Nesma Mostafa**

Head of Higher Education  
Insights and Student  
Mobility, British Council,  
Egypt



**Catriona McCarthy**

Global Head of Student  
Mobility and  
Internationalisation, British  
Council, UK



**Shizuka KATO**

Policy Analyst, Skills and  
Future Readiness Division,  
Directorate for Employment,  
Labour and Social Affairs,  
OECD



**Dr. Georgeta  
Auktor**

Head of Strategy and  
Development & University  
Development & Management  
Lead, TUM International  
(TUMint), Germany



**Amal Dimashki**

Regional Director, MENAT,  
Turnitin, UAE



**Morwenna Crago**

Sr. Director, Marketing,  
Product & Sales  
Enablement, Higher  
Education – McGraw Hill  
International



**Solveig Andres  
Nicklos**

Managing Director X.O.  
Advisory, UAE



**Madelein Meiring**

Higher Education Academic  
Excellence Advisor,  
McGraw Hill International



**Dr. Habib Fardoun**

Executive Committee  
Member IREG Observatory  
on Academic Ranking and  
Excellence, Belgium and  
Principle Consultant QS  
Quacquarelli Symonds



**Józefa Fawcett**

UK

# Be Part of the 7<sup>th</sup> MENA HELF!



## Become a Sponsor

Be part of this prestigious global gathering by becoming a sponsor of the 7th MENA-HELF. Showcase your commitment to higher education transformation and position your brand before influential decision-makers from around the world.



## Exhibit at the Forum

Limited early bird exhibition slots are now available! Don't miss the chance to showcase your innovative solutions, services, or technologies to a high-level audience of university leaders, policymakers, and partners from 50+ countries.



## Present your Institutional Case Study

We invite universities and institutions to contribute to the forum's program by submitting institutional case studies aligned with the Forum's theme or sub-themes. Take advantage of discounted presenter rates and ensure your case is submitted before the deadline.



## Actively Participate

Secure your spot! Join hundreds of global higher education leaders in shaping the future of the sector. Spaces are limited.



Center for Learning Innovations &  
Customized Knowledge Solutions

**FORUM ORGANIZER**

# Forum Structure (14<sup>th</sup> April 2026)

## Morning Pre-forum Workshops

09:00-12:30

### Workshop 1

Institutionalizing technology transfer at universities.

#### Facilitator

**Dr. Georgeta Auktor**, Head of Strategy and Development & University Development & Management Lead, TUM International (TUMint), Germany

Co-organized with:



### Workshop 2

Driving Impact and Excellence: Strategic Approaches to University Rankings and Global Visibility

#### Facilitator

- **Dr Ashwin Fernandes**, Executive Director, QS Quacquarelli Symonds
- **Dr Habib Fardoun**, Principal Consultant, QS Quacquarelli Symonds

Co-organized with:



## Afternoon Pre-forum Workshops

14:30-15:30

### Workshop 3

Futureproofing Graduates: Skills, Employability, and Industry Collaboration

#### Facilitator

**Madelein Meiring**, Higher Education Academic Excellence Advisor, McGraw Hill

Co-organized with:



### Workshop 4

Leadership Framework for MENA Higher Education: Building adaptive leadership capacity to navigate global challenges while creating meaningful local impact

#### Facilitator

**Fiona Lennoxsmith**, Head of Leadership, Governance & Management, Advance HE

Co-organized with:

My deepest gratitude to Dr. Narimane Hadj Hamou, CEO of CLICKS, for having organized the 6th MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum, an event that defied an unprecedented storm in Dubai and turned out to be a great success. The forum's theme, Towards a New Generation of Engaged Universities: The Need to Act, Adapt, and Transform, touched upon the transformation that we are witnessing in the higher education sector across constructive roundtables, keynote speeches, and spontaneous dialogues. The discussions about upskilling the workforce, embracing technology, and fostering innovation were thoughtful and inspiring. The emphasis on empowering students engagement resonated deeply with my personal academic ethos.

#### PROF. DR. BASSAM ALAMEDDINE

President and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait

## Day 2 (15<sup>th</sup> April 2026)

08:00–09:00	Welcoming and Registration					
09:00–09:45	Forum Main Opening and Awards Ceremony					
Morning Plenary Session   Chair: Solveig Andres Nicklos, Managing Director X.0 Advisory, UAE						
09:45–10:25	<b>Keynote Address 1</b> <b>Beyond Degrees: Universities as Drivers of a Resilient Future</b> <b>Prof. Francisco Marmolejo</b> , Higher Education President, Qatar Foundation, Qatar					
10:30–11:30	<b>Panel Discussion 1</b> <b>Bridging Boundaries: Building a Collaborative Ecosystem for Workforce Readiness and Social Impact</b> <b>Moderator</b> Prof. Yusra Mouzoughi, Provost, University of Birmingham, UAE <b>Panelists</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prof. Bassam Alameddine, President, American University of Ras Al Khaimah (AURAK), UAE</li> <li>Dr. Karim Seghir, Chancellor, Ajman university, UAE</li> <li>Morwenna Crago, Sr. Director, Marketing, Product &amp; Sales Enablement, Higher Education – McGraw Hill International</li> <li>Prof. Ahmed Elseragy, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Employability), and Dean of the Faculty of Art &amp; Design, The British University in Egypt, Egypt</li> <li>Dr. Kinan Bahnassi, Sr. Adviser, Labour Market and Education Policy   Education &amp; Human Development &amp; Community Council, UAE</li> </ul>					
11:30–11:50	Coffee Break and Networking					
11:50–12:30	<b>Keynote Address 2</b> <b>Dr. Roberta Malee Bassett</b> , Global Lead for Tertiary Education, The World Bank					
12:30–13:30	<b>Panel Discussion 2</b> <b>Presidential Panel   Thriving in Disruption: Ethical Leadership and Digital Innovation in Higher Education</b> <b>Moderator</b> Prof. Ghassan Aouad, Chancellor, Abu Dhabi University, UAE <b>Panelists</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prof. Dr. Agron Bajraktari, Rector, University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj (UASF), Kosovo</li> <li>Dr. Tod Laursen, Chancellor, American University of Sharjah (AUS), UAE</li> <li>Prof. Ahmed Alraeesi, Vice Chancellor, UAE University, UAE</li> <li>Dr. Havidán Rodríguez, President, University at Albany - State University of New York, USA</li> <li>Dr. Abdelaziz Hassanein Mohamed Saad Konsowa, President, Alexandria University, Egypt</li> </ul>					
13:30–14:20	Lunch Break and Networking					
Parallel Institutional Case Study Presentations						
14:30–18:00	<b>Track 1</b> <b>Embedding Sustainability and Societal Responsibility in Higher Education</b> <b>Chair:</b> <b>Prof. Abhilasha Singh</b> , Dean, College of Business Administration, American University in the Emirates (AUE), UAE	<b>Track 2</b> <b>Strengthening University-Industry-Government Partnerships for Workforce Readiness</b> <b>Chair:</b> <b>Solveig Andres Nicklos</b> , Managing Director X.0 Advisory, UAE	<b>Track 3</b> <b>Advancing Digital Transformation and AI-Driven Innovation</b> <b>Chair:</b> <b>Dr. Karim Moustaghfir</b> , Associate Vice President for 21st Century Learning Innovation & Faculty Development, Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco	<b>Track 4</b> <b>Fostering Global Engagement and Social Impact</b> <b>Chair:</b> <b>Józefa Fawcett</b> , UK	<b>Track 5</b> <b>Bridging Higher Education and Employability</b> <b>Chair:</b> <b>Dr. Mona Ismail</b> , Dean, Scientific College of Design, Oman	<b>Track 6</b> <b>Strengthening Leadership and Governance for Institutional Resilience</b> <b>Chair:</b> <b>Prof. Rachid Hadj-Hamou</b> , CEO, The Elite Academy, UAE

## Day 3 (16<sup>th</sup> April 2026)

### Morning Plenary Session | Chair: Dr. Nabil EL KADHI, Vice President, Academic Affairs and Development, Applied Science University, Bahrain

09:00-09:40	<b>Keynote Address 3</b> From Global Challenges to Local Impact - How Fourth Generation Universities Orchestrate Place-Based Innovation Ecosystems M'hamed El Aisati, Vice President Analytics & Data Services, Elsevier, Netherlands
09:40-10:10	<b>Fireside Chat</b> Shaping Resilient Futures: Rhetoric or Reality? Higher Education's Real-World Impact <b>Moderator</b> Catriona McCarthy, Global Head of Student Mobility and Internationalisation, British Council, UK <b>Panelists</b> • Dr. Fanta Aw, Executive Director and CEO, Association of International Educators (NAFSA), USA
10:10-11:10	<b>Debate</b> Are Traditional Universities Becoming Obsolete in the Face of Digital Education and AI? <b>Moderator</b> TBC <b>Panelists</b> • Prof. Maurits van Rooijen, Chief Academic Officer, Global University Systems, UK • Prof. Hassan Abdalla, Provost, University of East London, UK • Prof. Khaled Assaleh, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Ajman University, UAE • Dr. Tero Kilpeläinen, President and CEO, LAB University of Applied Sciences, Finland
11:10-11:40	<b>Coffee Break and Networking</b>
11:40-12:20	<b>Keynote Conversation</b> Governing AI in Higher Education <b>Moderator</b> TBC <b>Speakers</b> • Amal Dimashki, Regional Director, MENAT, Turnitin, UAE • Dr. Rima Mattar, Provost, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), Lebanon
12:25-13:30	<b>Panel Discussion 3</b> Accreditation as a Catalyst for Innovation and Resilience: Safeguarding Trust, Equity, and Relevance <b>Moderator</b> Dr. Narimane Hadj-Hamou, Chair, 7 <sup>th</sup> MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum, Founder & CEO, CLICKS, UAE <b>Panelists</b> • Dr. Mazen Hasna, Chairman, National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation, Qatar • Vicki Stott, Chief Executive, The Quality Assurance Agency, UK and President of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) • Sardor Rakhimboev, Deputy Director, National Quality Assurance Agency for Education under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan • Dr. Diana Abdulkarim Al Jahromi, Secretary-General, Higher Education Council, Bahrain • Dr. Ryan Harnett, Vice President for Membership, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, USA
13:30-14:20	<b>Lunch Break and Networking</b>

The MENA-HELP 2024 Conference connected leading university administrators and faculty to share their perspectives and ideas to cope with the many challenges facing the academy. The presentations, keynotes and discussions allowed for a rich exchange of ideas and sharing of valuable perspectives from around the world.

#### DR. M. NAUMAN FAROOQI

President and Vice Chancellor, St. Thomas University, Canada

## Day 3 (16<sup>th</sup> April 2026) Contd...

### Parallel Strategic Leadership Focus Groups (Requires Registration)

#### In Conversation with University Presidents and Senior Leaders:

A facilitated leadership dialogue bringing university presidents, senior leaders, and stakeholders together to co-create strategic recommendations and practical roadmaps addressing priority challenges in higher education. Each focus group is designed to generate actionable insights and roadmap elements that inform leadership decision-making and contribute to a collective vision for resilient higher education systems

<b>14:30-16:00</b>	<p><b>Focus Group (1)</b> Accelerating Research and Innovation: Strategies for Impact</p> <p><b>Moderator</b> - Prof. Abhilasha Singh, Dean, College of Business Administration, American University in the Emirates (AUE), UAE</p> <p><b>Panelists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Ramy Hassanien</b>, Regional Director for Middle East, Africa &amp; Central Asia, Emerald Publishing</li> <li>- <b>Prof. Mubarak H. AlKhatnai</b>, Dean of Quality and Development, King Saud University, KSA</li> <li>- <b>Prof. Mohammed Hussein Ahmed</b>, Director General-Head Apparatus of Supervision and Quality Assurance, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Kurdistan, Iraq</li> </ul>	<p><b>Focus Group (2)</b> Industry-Academia Partnerships for Local Development</p> <p><b>Moderator</b> - Mervin Bakker, Executive Director, European Association for International Education (EAIE), Netherlands</p> <p><b>Panelists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Dr. Rana Sawaya</b>, President, University College of Bahrain, Bahrain</li> <li>- <b>Dr. Said Saleem Al-Kittani</b>, Associate Dean for Community Engagement, Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS), Oman</li> <li>- <b>Dr. Kinan Bahnassi</b>, Sr. Adviser, Labour Market and Education Policy   Education &amp; Human Development &amp; Community Council, UAE</li> </ul>	<p><b>Focus Group (3)</b> Strengthening Higher Education Systems through Regional Collaboration</p> <p><b>Moderator</b> - Nesma Mostafa Head of Higher Education Insights and Student Mobility, British Council, Egypt</p> <p><b>Panelists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Ms. Diane Freiberger</b>, Managing Director, FIBAA, Germany</li> <li>- <b>Prof. Sherine Farouk</b>, Assistant Chancellor, Global Partnerships and Impact, Abu Dhabi University, UAE</li> <li>- <b>Catriona McCarthy</b>, Global Head of Student Mobility and Internationalisation, British Council, UK</li> </ul>
<b>16:00- 16:20</b>	<p><b>Coffee Break and Networking</b></p>		
<b>Afternoon Plenary Session   Chair: Dr. Nabil EL KADHI, Vice President, Academic Affairs and Development, Applied Science University, Bahrain</b>			
<b>16:25-16:45</b>	<p><b>Keynote Address 4</b> Higher education in a skills-first era: Adapting to changing labour market demands Shizuka KATO, Policy Analyst, Skills and Future Readiness Division, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD</p>		
<b>16:45- 17:45</b>	<p><b>Panel Discussion 4</b> Reinventing Governance: Agility, Innovation, and Institutional Resilience</p> <p><b>Moderator</b> Dr. Ashwin Fernandes, Executive Director - Africa, Middle East &amp; South Asia, QS (Quacquarelli Symonds)</p> <p><b>Panelists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Elizabeth Soliday-Naui, President, ISASS Dean, Swiss School of Management, Spain</li> <li>• Dr. Julie Furst-Bowe, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Arkansas Tech University, USA</li> <li>• Dr. Wafa Almansoori, Interim President and Provost, American University of Bahrain (AUBH), Bahrain</li> <li>• Prof. Salim bin Hamood Al-Harthi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Affairs and Community Service, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman</li> </ul>		
<b>17:45-18:00</b>	<p><b>Closing Remarks, Key Insights and Future Directions</b></p>		



# Registration Fees

## Registration Fees for the Forum (excludes workshops)

Individual Registration		Group Registration	
AMOUNT IN AED	AMOUNT IN US\$	AMOUNT IN AED	AMOUNT IN US\$
<b>Early Bird Registration</b> (Prior to 30/11/2025)		<b>Regular Registration</b>	
<b>AED 2,500*</b>	<b>USD 681*</b>	<b>AED 2,900*</b>	<b>USD 790*</b>
<b>Early Bird Registration-3 &amp; above Participants</b> (Prior to 30/11/2025)		<b>Regular Group Registration-3 &amp; above Participants</b>	
		<b>AED 2300*/Participant</b>	<b>USD 626*/ Participant</b>
		<b>AED 2500*/Participant</b>	<b>USD 681*/ Participant</b>

\*All fees are subject to 5% VAT

## Registration Fees for the Pre-Forum Workshops (14<sup>th</sup> April, 2026)

	Fee for Forum Participants	Fee for Non-Forum Participants
AMOUNT IN AED	AED 500*/Participant	AED 600*/Participant
AMOUNT IN US\$	USD 136*/Participant	USD 163*/Participant

\*All fees are subject to 5% VAT

It was my great pleasure to join the 6th MENA Higher Education Forum that has already become an efficient platform to discuss current trends and challenges of higher education. We got a chance to hear diverse perspectives of distinguished university leaders and esteemed higher education experts from different corners of the World. We discussed very important global, regional and national challenges of higher education, and we learned about the best practices to address those challenges. We did our best to contribute to the success of the Forum by presenting the perspectives of the International Association of Universities (IAU) and Mingachevir State University (Azerbaijan). Our big thanks and sincere congratulations go to all organisers, partners and sponsors of the Forum. We will be looking forward to join the next Forum in Dubai, UAE.

### DR. SHAHIN V. BAYRAMOV

Rector, Mingachevir State University, Azerbaijan Board Member, International Association of Universities (IAU)



# Venue

## Kempinski Central Avenue, Dubai, UAE

(Formerly the Address Dubai Mall)

Located at the heart of trendy Downtown Dubai, overlooking the world's tallest tower, Burj Khalifa, and attached to The Dubai Mall, one of the largest shopping and entertainment destinations in the world, Kempinski Central Avenue (Formerly the Address Dubai Mall) will be home to the upcoming MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum. Elegant and chic, this glamorous hotel offers guests a unique blend of traditional Arab hospitality in the most contemporary and cosmopolitan environment. Participants may enjoy dining in of the numerous restaurants available or just walk to the mall, Burj Khalifa, Dubai Boulevard or enjoy the beautiful musical fountains.



## Special Hotel Rates at the Dusit Thani, Dubai



**Rate in AED Single Occupancy  
(Bed & Breakfast)**

**AED 850 NETT**

**Rate in AED Double Occupancy  
(Bed & breakfast)**

**AED 920 NETT**

### Contact for Hotel Booking

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