



*"Where Leaders of Higher Education Meet"*  
Since 2013

# Global Challenges, Local Impact:

## Higher Education's Role in Shaping a Resilient Future

**28-30  
SEPT, 2026**

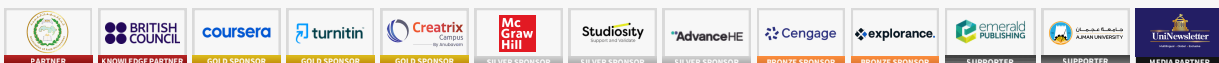
Kempinski Central  
Avenue, Dubai - UAE



**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-HELFF)** will be held in the vibrant city of **Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from September 28–30, 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-HELFF 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-HELFF 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.



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

**04**  
**WORKSHOPS**



**FOCUS  
GROUPS**



**PANEL  
DISCUSSIONS  
AND DEBATES**



**THE ZAIRI  
INTERNATIONAL AWARDS  
FOR EXCELLENCE IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION**



**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

## Navigate Global Disruptions and Strengthen Institutional Agility and 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. Particular attention will be given to how institutions can strengthen their capacity to anticipate, adapt, and thrive amid uncertainty and disruption.

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. The Forum will also examine how institutions can reinforce trust, social cohesion, and societal well-being in times of increasing complexity and change.

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. Special emphasis will be placed on preparing graduates with the adaptability and lifelong learning capabilities required to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

4

## Leverage Digital Transformation and Innovation

Investigate how HEIs can harness AI, automation, and digital tools to enhance teaching, learning, research, and institutional effectiveness, while promoting creativity, innovation, and problem-solving to address pressing socio-economic and environmental challenges. The Forum will further explore how institutions can responsibly integrate emerging technologies while preserving their human and social mission.

5

## Showcase Global 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. Particular attention will be given to examples demonstrating strategic agility, innovation, and sustainable institutional renewal.

6

## Strengthen University-Industry-Government Collaboration

Examine how higher education institutions, industry leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders can work together to foster strategic partnerships, drive research and innovation, and contribute to national and regional socio-economic development. The Forum will also explore new models of collaboration needed to address increasingly complex and interconnected challenges.



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



**A Premier Leadership Platform for Higher Education:** The MENA-HELF 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



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



**H.E. Prof. Amr Ezzat Salama**

Secretary General of the Association of Arab Universities, Jordan



**H.E. Prof. Ebrahim Al Hajri**

President, Khalifa University of Science and Technology, Abu Dhabi, UAE



**Prof. Francisco Marmolejo**

Higher Education President, Qatar Foundation, Qatar



**Dr. Mazen Hasna**

Chairman, National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation, Qatar



**Mr. Nodirbek Ergashev**

First Deputy Director, National Quality Assurance Agency for Education, 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. Nitesh Sughnani**

Expert of Policies, Research & Programs, Knowledge & Human Development Authority, UAE



**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. Ghassan Aouad**

Chancellor, Abu Dhabi University, UAE



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



**Prof. Ahmed Alraeesi**

Vice Chancellor, UAE University, UAE



**Dr. Javier Cevallos**

President, American Academic Leadership Institute, USA



**Prof. Bassam Alameddine**

President, American University of Ras Al Khaimah (AURAK), UAE



**Prof. Dr. Mohamed Sami Abdel Sadek**

President, Cairo University, Egypt



**Mr. Rob Stroud**

Executive Director, Quality Assurance and Enhancement, QAA, UK



**Dr. Rana Sawaya**

President, University College of Bahrain, Bahrain



**Dr. Boushra Rahal Alameh**

President, Kurdistan Accrediting Association for Education (KAAE), Iraq



**Dr. Çiğdem Canbay Türkyılmaz**

Rector, Samarkand State Architecture and Construction University, Uzbekistan



**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



**Prof. Nader Elbokle**

President, October University for Modern Sciences and Arts (MSA), Cairo, Egypt.



**Dr. Nabil EL KADHI**

Vice President, Academic Affairs and Development, Applied Science University, Bahrain



**Prof. Yusra Mouzughy**

Provost, University of Birmingham, UAE



**Dr. Ryan Hartnett**

Vice President for Membership, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, USA

## 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. Vidya Yeravdekar**

Principal Director, Symbiosis Pro Chancellor, Symbiosis International University, Pune, India



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

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



**Prof. Momna Hejmadi**

Pro Vice Chancellor (Education), University of Bath, UK



**Dr. Ashwin Fernandes**

Chair, QS India and Vice President, Strategic and International Engagement, QS Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd, UK



**Dr. Kinan Bahnassi**

Senior Adviser, Policy Development, Education, Human Development, and Community Council.



**Mervin Bakker**

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



**Prof. Francois Therin**

Director General, ICN Business School, France



**Dr. Julie Furst-Bowe**

Vice President for Academic Affairs, Arkansas Tech University, USA



**Pedro Moura**

Director, Strategic Partnerships, Coursera



**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



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



**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



**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**  
Director Education, 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



**Rawan Yasmin**  
Head of Higher Education  
Portfolio, Abdulla Al Ghurair  
Foundation for Education,  
UAE



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



**Solveig Andres Nicklos**  
Managing Director X.0  
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 (28<sup>th</sup> September 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:  TUM International GmbH  
The University Company

**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 (29<sup>th</sup> September 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.O Advisory, UAE |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 09:45–10:25                                                                                  | <b>Keynote Address 1</b><br>Beyond Degrees: Universities as Drivers of a Resilient Future<br>Prof. Francisco Marmolejo, Higher Education President, Qatar Foundation, Qatar                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 10:30–11:30                                                                                  | <b>Panel Discussion 1</b><br>Bridging Boundaries: Building a Collaborative Ecosystem for Workforce Readiness and Social Impact<br><b>Moderator</b> Prof. Yusra Mouzugh, Provost, University of Birmingham, UAE<br><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>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, Senior Adviser, Policy Development, Education, Human Development, and Community Council, UAE</li><li>Morwenna Crago, Sr. Director, Marketing, Product &amp; Sales Enablement, Higher Education – McGraw Hill International</li></ul>  |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 11:30–11:50                                                                                  | Coffee Break and Networking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 11:50–12:30                                                                                  | <b>Keynote Address 2</b><br>Embedding Vocational Considerations into the Curriculum: Putting Tertiary Education to Work<br>Dr. Roberta Malee Bassett , Global Lead for Tertiary Education, The World Bank                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 12:30–13:30                                                                                  | <b>Panel Discussion 2</b><br>Presidential Panel   University Leadership in an Era of Uncertainty: Balancing Innovation, Values, and Resilience<br><b>Moderator</b> Prof. Ghassan Aouad, Chancellor, Abu Dhabi University, UAE<br><b>Panelists</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>H.E Prof. Ebrahim Al Hajri, President, Khalifa University of Science and Technology, Abu Dhabi, UAE</li><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>Prof. Dr. Mohamed Sami Abdel Sadek, President, Cairo University, Egypt</li><li>Dr. Çiğdem Canbay Türkyılmaz, Rector, Samarkand State Architecture and Construction University, Uzbekistan</li></ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 13:30–14:20                                                                                  | Lunch Break and Networking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Parallel Institutional Case Study Presentations                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 14:30–18:00                                                                                  | <b>Track 1</b><br>Embedding Sustainability and Societal Responsibility in Higher Education<br><br><b>Chair:</b><br>Dr. Nabil EL KADHI, Vice President, Academic Affairs and Development, Applied Science University, Bahrain                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Track 2</b><br>Strengthening University-Industry-Government Partnerships for Workforce Readiness<br><br><b>Chair:</b><br>Solveig Andres Nicklos, Managing Director X.O Advisory, UAE | <b>Track 3</b><br>Advancing Digital Transformation and AI- Driven Innovation<br><br><b>Chair:</b><br>Dr. Karim Moustaghfir, Associate Vice President for 21st Century Learning Innovation & Faculty Development, Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco | <b>Track 4</b><br>Fostering Global Engagement and Social Impact<br><br><b>Chair:</b><br>Józefa Fawcett, UK | <b>Track 5</b><br>Bridging Higher Education and Employability<br><br><b>Chair:</b><br>Dr. Mona Ismail, Dean, Scientific College of Design, Oman | <b>Track 6</b><br>Strengthening Leadership and Governance for Institutional Resilience<br><br><b>Chair:</b><br>Prof. Rachid Hadj-Hamou, CEO, The Elite Academy, UAE |



## Day 3 (30<sup>th</sup> September 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><br><b>All the World is a Stage: Global Challenges, Regional Disruptions and the Future of Higher Education</b><br><b>Dr. Javier Cevallos</b> , President, American Academic Leadership Institute, USA                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 09:40–10:10                                                                                                                                | <b>Fireside Chat</b><br><b>Shaping Resilient Futures: Rhetoric or Reality? Higher Education's Real-World Impact</b><br><b>Moderator</b> Catriona McCarthy, Director Education, British Council, UK<br><b>Panelists</b> • HE Prof. Amr Ezzat Salamat, Secretary General of the Association of Arab Universities, Jordan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 10:10–11:10                                                                                                                                | <b>Debate</b><br><b>Are Traditional Universities Becoming Obsolete in the Face of Digital Education and AI?</b><br><b>Moderator</b> Pedro Moura, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Coursera<br><b>Panelists</b> • Prof. Hassan Abdalla, Provost, University of East London, UK<br>• Prof. Khaled Assaleh, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Ajman University, UAE<br>• Prof. Momna Hejmadi, Pro Vice Chancellor (Education), University of Bath, UK                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 11:10–11:40                                                                                                                                | Coffee Break and Networking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 11:40–12:20                                                                                                                                | <b>Keynote Conversation</b><br><b>Governing AI in Higher Education</b><br><b>Moderator</b> Rawan Yasmin, Head of Higher Education Portfolio, Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education<br><b>Speakers</b> • Amal Dimashki, Regional Director, MENAT, Turnitin, UAE<br>• Dr. Rima Mattar, Provost, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), Lebanon                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 12:25–13:30                                                                                                                                | <b>Panel Discussion 3</b><br><b>Accreditation as a Catalyst for Innovation and Resilience: Safeguarding Trust, Equity, and Relevance</b><br><b>Moderator</b> Dr. Narimane Hadj-Hamou, Chair, 7 <sup>th</sup> MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum, Founder & CEO, CLICKS, UAE<br><b>Panelists</b> • Dr. Mazen Hasna, Chairman, National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation, Qatar<br>• Mr. Rob Stroud, Executive Director, Quality Assurance and Enhancement, QAA, UK<br>• Mr. Nodirbek Ergashev, First Deputy Director, National Quality Assurance Agency for Education, Uzbekistan<br>• Dr. Diana Abdulkarim Al Jahromi, Secretary-General, Higher Education Council, Bahrain<br>• Dr. Ryan Hartnett, Vice President for Membership, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, USA<br>• Dr. Boushra Rahal Alameh, President, Kurdistan Accrediting Association for Education (KAAE), Iraq |
| 13:30–14:20                                                                                                                                | Lunch Break and Networking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

The MENA-HELF 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 (30<sup>th</sup> September 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

|                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14:30–16:00                                                                                                                                  | <p><b>Focus Group (1)</b><br/><b>Accelerating Research and Innovation: Strategies for Impact</b></p> <p><b>Moderator</b><br/>- <b>Prof. Abhilasha Singh</b>, Dean, College of Business Administration, American University in the Emirates (AUE), UAE</p> <p><b>Panelists</b><br/>- <b>Ramy Hassanien</b>, Regional Director for Middle East, Africa &amp; Central Asia, Emerald Publishing<br/>- <b>Prof. Mubarak H. AlKhatnai</b>, Dean of Quality and Development , King Saud University , KSA<br/>- <b>Prof. Mohammed Hussein Ahmed</b>, Director General-Head Apparatus of Supervision and Quality Assurance, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Kurdistan, Iraq</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p><b>Focus Group (2)</b><br/><b>Industry-Academia Partnerships for Local Development</b></p> <p><b>Moderator</b><br/>- <b>Mervin Bakker</b>, Executive Director, European Association for International Education (EAIE), Netherlands</p> <p><b>Panelists</b><br/>- <b>Dr. Rana Sawaya</b>, President, University College of Bahrain, Bahrain<br/>- <b>Dr. Said Saleem Al-Kittani</b>, Associate Dean for Community Engagement, Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS), Oman<br/>- <b>Dr. Kinan Bahnassi</b>, Sr. Adviser, Labour Market and Education Policy   Education &amp; Human Development &amp; Community Council, UAE</p> | <p><b>Focus Group (3)</b><br/><b>Strengthening Higher Education Systems through Regional Collaboration</b></p> <p><b>Moderator</b><br/>- <b>Nesma Mostafa</b>, Head of Higher Education Insights and Student Mobility, British Council, Egypt</p> <p><b>Panelists</b><br/>- <b>Prof. Francois Therin</b>, Director General, ICN Business School, France<br/>- <b>Prof. Sherine Farouk</b>, Assistant Chancellor, Global Partnerships and Impact, Abu Dhabi University, UAE<br/>- <b>Catriona McCarthy</b>, Director Education, British Council, UK</p> |
| 16:00- 16:20                                                                                                                                 | Coffee Break and Networking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Afternoon Plenary Session   Chair: Dr. Nabil EL KADHI, Vice President, Academic Affairs and Development, Applied Science University, Bahrain |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 16:25-16:45                                                                                                                                  | <p><b>Keynote Address 4</b><br/><b>Higher education in a skills-first era: Adapting to changing labour market demands</b><br/><b>Shizuka KATO</b>, Policy Analyst, Skills and Future Readiness Division, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 16:45- 17:45                                                                                                                                 | <p><b>Panel Discussion 4</b><br/><b>Reinventing Governance: Agility, Innovation, and Institutional Resilience</b></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>• <b>Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar</b>, Principal Director. Symbiosis, Pro Chancellor, Symbiosis International University, Pune, India</li><li>• <b>Prof. Nader Elbokle</b>, President, October University for Modern Sciences and Arts (MSA),Cairo, Egypt</li><li>• <b>Dr. Julie Furst-Bowe</b>, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Arkansas Tech University, USA</li><li>• <b>Dr. Wafa Almansoori</b>, Interim President and Provost, American University of Bahrain (AUBH), Bahrain</li><li>• <b>Prof. Salim bin Hamood Al-Harathi</b>, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Affairs and Community Service, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman</li><li>• <b>Dr. Nitesh Sughnani</b>, Expert of Policies, Research &amp; Programs, Knowledge &amp; Human Development Authority, UAE</li></ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 17:45-18:00                                                                                                                                  | <p><b>Closing Remarks, Key Insights and Future Directions</b><br/><b>Dr. Narimane Hadj-Hamou</b>, Chair, 7<sup>th</sup> MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum, Founder &amp; CEO, CLICKS, UAE</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

# Institutional case studies presented from leading Higher Education Institutions

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br><b>LAU</b><br>اللبنانية الأمريكية<br>Lebanese American University<br>                            | <br><b>جامعة أبوظبي</b><br>Abu Dhabi University<br>                                                                    | <br><b>THE AMERICAN</b><br>UNIVERSITY OF KURDISTAN<br>                                                     | <br><b>University of Reading</b><br>                                                                                              |
| <br><b>جامعة عجمان</b><br>AJMAN UNIVERSITY<br>                                                       | <br><b>AUBH</b><br>الجامعة الأمريكية بالبحرين<br>AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BAHRAIN<br>                                    | <br><b>كلية الشرق الاوسط</b><br>Middle East College<br>                                                    | <br><b>الجامعة الخليجية</b><br>GULF UNIVERSITY<br>                                                                                |
| <br><b>City University</b><br>Qatar<br>                                                              | <br><b>جامعة زايد</b><br>ZAYED UNIVERSITY<br>                                                                          | <br><b>جامعة اليمامة</b><br>Al Yamamah University<br>                                                      | <br><b>جامعة الأمير محمد بن فهد</b><br>PRINCE MOHAMMAD BIN FAHD UNIVERSITY<br>                                                    |
| <br><b>The British University</b><br>in Dubai<br>                                                | <br><b>IUL</b><br>Islamic University Of Lebanon<br>Université Islamique Du Liban<br>الجامعة الإسلامية في لبنان<br> | <br><b>CEU Universidad</b><br>San Pablo<br>                                                            | <br><b>جامعة الحسين التقنية</b><br>Al Hussein Technical University<br>                                                        |
| <br><b>NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY</b><br>                                                             | <br><b>جامعة الامير سلطان</b><br>PRINCE SULTAN UNIVERSITY<br>                                                      | <br><b>الجامعة الأهلية</b><br>AHLIA UNIVERSITY<br>BAHRAIN<br>                                          | <br><b>UNIVERSIAPOLIS</b><br>Université Internationale d'Agadir<br>الجامعة الدولية لشاغير<br>ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE D'AGADIR<br> |
| <br><b>AURAK</b><br>الجامعة الأمريكية في رأس الخيمة<br>AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF RAS AL KHAIMAH<br> | <br><b>UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY</b><br>STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK<br>                                                | <br><b>جامعة صحر</b><br>Sohar University<br>                                                          | <br><b>أكاديمية قطر للمال والأعمال</b><br>Qatar Finance and Business Academy<br>                                              |
| <br><b>QFBA</b><br>                                                                              | <br><b>جامعة خليفة</b><br>Khalifa University<br>                                                                   | <br><b>ISSAI</b><br>NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY   Institute of Smart Systems and Artificial Intelligence<br> | <br><b>الكلية الذكية الجامعية للتعليم الحديث</b><br>Smart University College for Modern Education<br>                         |
| <br><b>PRINCE MOHAMMAD BIN FAHD UNIVERSITY</b><br>CREATIVE MINDS. TRANSFORM THE WORLD<br>        | <br><b>جامعة الأميرة سمّة للتكنولوجيا</b><br>Princess Sumaya University for Technology<br>                         | <br><b>LIU</b><br>                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



# Registration Fees

## Registration Fees for the Forum (excludes workshops)

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

\*All fees are subject to 5% VAT

## Registration Fees for the Pre-Forum Workshops (28<sup>th</sup> September, 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)

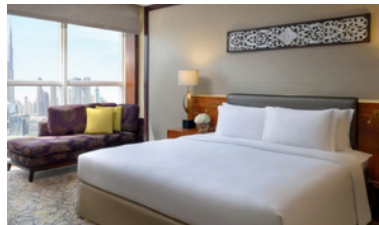
## Venue

### 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 320 NETT**

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

**AED 420 NETT**

### Contact for Hotel Booking

**Mr. Hany Taha**

 hany.taha@dusit.com



[inquiries@menahelf.com](mailto:inquiries@menahelf.com)



[www.menahelf.com](http://www.menahelf.com)

## Main Organizer



Center for Learning Innovations &  
Customized Knowledge Solutions

Your Partner for Innovation and Excellence



[inquiries@cli-cks.com](mailto:inquiries@cli-cks.com)



[www.cli-cks.com](http://www.cli-cks.com)