

Education Middle East

VOL 5 ISSUE 1 | January 2026

www.educationmiddleeast.com

VIEWPOINT

How to prepare graduates for jobs that don't exist yet? University heads explain **PG 26**



 [@Education Middle East](https://www.linkedin.com/company/education-middle-east)



UPHOLDING LEARNING INTEGRITY IN THE AGE OF AI

Amal Dimashki, Regional Director, MENAT at Turnitin shares insights on how universities can adapt to the evolving assessment landscape **PG 12**

MARKET OUTLOOK

Driven by inbound student mobility and national visions, the GCC higher education market is set to grow at 10-13% **PG 05**

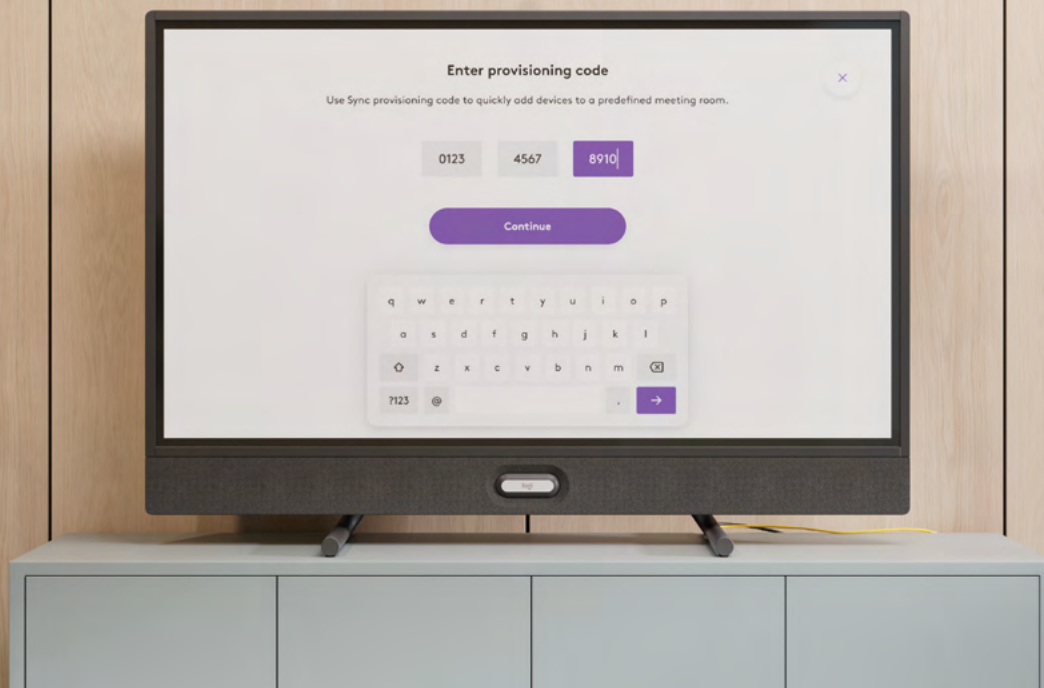
DIGITAL ADOPTION

National digital agendas and workforce priorities push universities to make EdTech central to academic delivery **PG 13**

MEDICAL EDUCATION

Medical colleges are reimagining how healthcare professionals are trained for data-driven and community-focused care **PG 19**

logitech® for business



RALLY BOARD 65

Simple all-in-one solution

Everything you need to quickly add video to meeting rooms and open spaces. Experience all-in-one video conferencing that combines crystal clear video, powerful audio, and AI-driven features, all integrated into a single 65-inch touchscreen.



Scan for more info



The forces shaping higher education in the GCC

We are starting 2026 with our annual Higher Education Special, an edition dedicated to understanding the profound shifts reshaping universities across the GCC. We see a great appetite for matching global standards among universities in the region, which is evident from the policy reforms, regulatory evolution and strategic investments. In this edition, we examine these currents in-depth: the market dynamics, emerging trends and growth trajectories that are positioning GCC institutions as global players in an increasingly competitive world.

We've also dedicated a special section for medical education in the GCC, a sector experiencing major changes. From evolving curricula and

accreditation standards to faculty development and student preparation, medical universities are navigating rapid change, making this an essential read for all stakeholders within the eco-system. We also find out how technology integration is reshaping both learning and assessments, even as universities explore new partnership structures with brands and med-tech firms.

The Viewpoint offers a rare window into institutional leadership, as university heads share their views on a question that defines our era: How do we prepare graduates for jobs that don't exist yet?

Joseph George
Editor



Editor
Joseph George
editor@educationmiddleeast.com

Editorial Team
Ritika, Amitha R

Design & Layout
Vahju P C

Advertising
Mathew, Cecelia M
info@educationmiddleeast.com
T: +971 58 5277050/+971 54 3916932

Published by:
Edu Middle East LLC
License No 2113278.01

COPYRIGHT: All material appearing in Education Middle East is copyright unless otherwise stated or it may rest with the provider of the supplied material. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission from the publisher. Education Middle East takes all care to ensure information is correct at time of publishing but the publisher accepts no responsibility or liability for the accuracy of any information contained in the text or advertisements. Points of view expressed may not necessarily represent those of Education Middle East.

CONTENTS



LAB INFRASTRUCTURE

The rise of new age labs

No longer confined to static spaces, university laboratories are evolving into dynamic hubs that adapt to curriculum needs and tech advancements

MARKET OUTLOOK

GCC market poised for growth

Driven by rising tertiary participation, inbound student mobility and national visions, the higher education market is set to grow at a 10-13% CAGR

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

Building academic excellence through global collaboration

International partnerships are becoming central to how UAE universities create globally relevant, industry-aligned learning

PRODUCT SHOWCASE

Latest launches from Logitech

Rally Board 65, Signature Slim Solar+ K980 Keyboard and MX Master 4

INTERVIEW

Upholding learning integrity in the age of AI

Amal Dimashki, Regional Director, MENAT at Turnitin shares insights on how universities can adapt to the evolving assessment landscape

TECH TRENDS

Why EdTech is now strategic

National digital agendas and workforce priorities are pushing universities to make EdTech central to academic delivery

MEDICAL EDUCATION TRENDS

GCC healthcare training at a crossroads

Medical colleges are reimagining how healthcare professionals are trained for complex, data-driven and community-focused care

PRODUCT FEATURE

Assessment with integrity: The bedrock of education in the age of AI

ExamSoft by Turnitin supports institutions with secure, controlled exam environments designed to preserve the credibility of assessments

MEDTECH TRENDS

From procurement to partnership

Across the GCC, collaboration between medical colleges and MedTech companies is evolving into long-term partnerships

VIEWPOINT

Preparing graduates for jobs that don't exist yet

Universities are rethinking curricula, industry engagement and learning models to equip graduates for the jobs of tomorrow



The UAE leads the GCC higher education market with a valuation of \$10–11 billion, followed by Saudi Arabia at \$5.5–6.0 billion

GCC market poised for growth

The higher education sector in the region is projected to grow at a 10–13% CAGR, driven by rising tertiary participation, strong inbound student mobility and government-led diversification strategies linking education with workforce localisation

By **Joseph George**

Thanks to policy reforms, substantial infrastructure investments and evolving demographic trends, the higher education landscape is undergoing unprecedented transformation across the GCC.

While foreign universities are establishing a stronger presence across the region, governments are increasing investment to strengthen

and enhance public and higher education programmes in the region.

Several policy initiatives have laid a strong emphasis on education as a cornerstone for economic diversification, transitioning to knowledge-based economies and enhancing global competitiveness.

Be it the Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to rank at least five universities in the world's top 200 by 2030, or the

UAE's National Strategy for Higher Education 2030, which aims to build and achieve the highest scientific and professional education standards, the governments across the region are prioritising education as a cornerstone of economic diversification.

Market size

According to data made available by Ken Research, the GCC higher education market has established itself as a formidable force, with current

valuations reaching approximately \$18-20 billion annually.

This substantial market is heavily concentrated within two key economies, with the UAE and Saudi Arabia commanding approximately 85% of total regional revenue and capacity. The UAE leads with a market valuation of \$10-11 billion, while Saudi Arabia follows with \$5.5-6.0 billion.

The GCC higher education sector is expected to grow at 10-13% compound annual growth rate (CAGR), driven by rising tertiary participation, strong inbound student mobility into the UAE and government-led diversification agendas linking education with workforce localisation.

UAE saw total higher education enrolments grow by 20% year-on-year, with international student enrollment going up by 29% year-on-year.

Projections by Alpen Capital indicate steady expansion ahead, with the sector anticipated to achieve a CAGR of approximately 2.1% from 2024 to 2029. This trajectory is expected to culminate in total regional enrolment reaching 2,617,504 students by 2029, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE contributing 80% of this anticipated growth.

Foreign universities too are establishing a stronger presence across the region while governments are actively



Attracting and retaining skilled teaching talent remains an ongoing challenge, exacerbated by increasing international competition.

— **Namit Goel**,
Partner & Co-Founder, Ken Research

fostering global collaboration to enhance institutional quality.

Hameed Noor Mohamed, Managing Director of Alpen Capital, emphasises the sector's robust foundation. "This growth has been largely driven by the establishment of international universities, rising expatriate

population and governments leveraging public-private partnership [PPP] models to fund and operate educational facilities," he says.

This growth, he points out, reflects a growing preference for private and high-quality education, especially among the rising expatriate population.

Policy shifts

The regulatory environment across GCC nations has undergone substantial evolution, with governments implementing strategic reforms designed to enhance educational quality and international competitiveness.

The UAE has undertaken significant regulatory reforms in higher education to foster a more competitive, quality-driven and market-aligned system. In 2025 the country announced one of the most transformative regulatory change through a decree, which establishes a comprehensive federal framework for governing higher education, scientific research and technical/vocational training. This law marks a shift from input-focused to outcomes-based regulation, promoting flexibility, innovation and global competitiveness. It established a Unified National Frameworks, a standardised system for licensing, institutional classification, quality performance oversight, scientific research and vocational training.



The UAE recorded 20% year-on-year growth in higher education enrolments, including a 29% rise in international students



The GCC higher education sector faces an estimated 20–25% shortage in critical faculty areas, particularly in AI and advanced engineering

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative has started formally approving international branch campuses and creating pathways for global universities to establish operations within the Kingdom.

Qatar too has introduced new initiatives driven by the Qatar National Vision 2030, with the aim of developing the country as a knowledge-based economy.

Growth markets

The regional growth story is dominated by the UAE and Qatar, which have achieved impressive CAGRs of 6.9% and 6.6%, respectively, from 2018 to 2023. The UAE's strategy of encouraging private sector participation has proven particularly effective, while Qatar's substantial investments in educational infrastructure, exemplified by the Education City project, have established the nation as a regional education hub.

Namit Goel, Partner & Co-Founder, Ken Research highlights the strategic nature of these developments: "Strategic investments are driving higher education infrastructure, aligning educational offerings with future workforce needs."

Key challenges

Meanwhile, despite offering competitive compensation packages and state-of-the-art infrastructure, GCC institutions face persistent challenges



This growth [higher education in the GCC] has been largely driven by the establishment of international universities, rising expatriate population and governments leveraging public-private partnership models to fund and operate educational facilities.

— **Hameed Noor Mohamed**,
Managing Director, Alpen Capital

in attracting and retaining high-calibre academic talent. The sector currently experiences an estimated shortage of 20-25% in critical faculty

areas, particularly in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced engineering.

Goel, speaking about the complexity of this challenge, says, "Attracting and retaining skilled teaching talent remains an ongoing challenge, exacerbated by increasing international competition."

Although institutions are responding by enhancing remuneration packages and expanding professional development opportunities, the demand-supply imbalance continues to pose operational challenges and cost pressures for educational providers across the region.

Meanwhile, despite the expansion of local higher education offerings and an increase in international admissions into UAE universities, the region continues to experience significant outbound student mobility. Many students, particularly from expatriate communities, continue to seek international academic exposure and globally recognised qualifications. This trend reflects both the persistent appeal of established international universities and the ongoing demand for diverse educational experiences.

The challenge for local institutions lies in balancing international recognition with regional relevance, creating programmes that satisfy both local workforce needs and global academic standards. ■



UAE universities are building purposeful global partnerships to strengthen teaching, expand research and prepare graduates for an interconnected world

Building academic excellence through global collaboration



Embedding global standards into the student experience ensures programmes remain academically rigorous, industry-aligned and relevant to the needs of a globally connected workforce.

— **Prof Mohammad Meraj**,
Deputy Director – Academic Professional
Services and Quality, Middlesex
University Dubai

International partnerships are becoming central to how UAE universities create globally relevant, industry-aligned learning

By **Keziah Mariam Suresh**

In an era defined by global mobility, digital connectivity and rapidly evolving industry demands, higher education institutions are recognising that knowledge cannot thrive in isolation. Instead, it grows through collaboration across borders, disciplines and cultures. Across the UAE, universities are responding to this reality by forging purposeful global alliances that strengthen teaching quality, deepen research capacity and ensure graduates are prepared for a world that is both competitive and interconnected.

Global partnership initiatives

At Middlesex University Dubai, global partnerships are shaped by the city's identity as a crossroads for international business, innovation and talent, and by a clear institutional commitment to professional relevance. Professor Mohammad Meraj, Deputy

Director of Academic Professional Services and Quality explains that the university has built “a robust network of strategic partnerships with global and regional universities; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; research organisations; centres of excellence; and industry leaders.”

Many undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at Middlesex University Dubai are accredited or recognised by leading professional bodies, ensuring that academic learning is aligned with international professional standards. Beyond formal accreditation, these partnerships translate into co-developed curricula, industry-led training, applied research projects and professional certifications offered alongside academic degrees. The result is an education model that balances academic rigour with workplace relevance, enabling students to move confidently across international labour markets. As

Prof Meraj notes, embedding global standards into the student experience ensures programmes remain “academically rigorous, industry-aligned and relevant to the needs of a globally connected workforce.”

A similarly strategic and outcomes-driven approach defines the partnership ecosystem at the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG), where collaboration is closely tied to its mission of advancing public policy education, research and executive development.

Dr Arthur King, Acting Dean and Director of Academic Affairs at MBRSG highlights partnerships with international institutions such as Saint Petersburg State University, HSE University and the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, alongside regional collaborators including the University of Sharjah, the University of Dubai’s Centre for Executive Development and the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy. “These partnerships aim to strengthen knowledge exchange, applied policy research, student and faculty engagement, and executive education, thereby fostering globally informed yet regionally relevant public policy capacity,” adds Prof King.

Flexible collaboration frameworks allow for joint research initiatives, academic exchange, internships and professional development programmes. Even when initiatives are still in development or at an early planning stage, Dr King observes that such partnerships expand access to international academic networks and policy expertise, reinforcing the School’s role



Middlesex University Dubai has built a robust network of strategic partnerships with global and regional universities; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; research organisations; centres of excellence; and industry leaders

as a platform for globally informed, practice-oriented public policy education and research within the wider ecosystem of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives.

At Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, global partnerships are pursued with deliberate focus and long-term intent rather than symbolic affiliations. Chancellor Prof Nathalie Martial-Braz emphasises that the institution’s foundation rests on its deep integration with its mother institution, Sorbonne University in Paris, and its partnership with Université Paris Cité, ensuring academic excellence, international degree recognition and full participation in one of Europe’s leading research ecosystems.

Building on this cornerstone, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi has developed carefully selected collaborations with institutions such as Columbia University, Sciences Po, Tsinghua University, Khalifa University and MBZUAI. These partnerships are driven by three priorities: academic depth, strategic relevance aligned with UAE national priorities and global connectivity.

Through co-delivered programmes, co-supervised doctoral research,



Global partnerships are less about competition and imitation than about strategic collaboration and differentiation.

— **Prof Nathalie Martial-Braz,**
Chancellor, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi



Partnerships expand access to international academic networks and policy expertise, reinforcing the School’s role as a platform for globally informed, practice-oriented public policy education and research...

— **Dr Arthur King,**
Acting Dean and Director of Academic Affairs, Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

thematic research clusters and sustained faculty mobility schemes, these alliances enable genuine knowledge exchange at Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi while preserving academic autonomy. “Global partnerships are less about competition and imitation,” Prof Martial-Braz explains, “and more about strategic collaboration and differentiation,” allowing the university to act as a bridge between European academic traditions and the evolving knowledge ambitions of the GCC.

The importance of purposeful global engagement is also strongly reflected in the hospitality education sector at Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy – Les Roches, where international partnerships are integral to preparing graduates for a truly global industry. Academic Dean Prof Scott Richardson highlights strategic collaborations with Macau University of Science and Technology and the University of Macau, pursued because of Macau’s global significance as one of the world’s most tourism-intensive economies.

Hospitality and tourism form a major share of Macau’s GDP, making it a living laboratory for education and research. “These partnerships focus on joint research initiatives, visiting professorships, research seminars and knowledge exchange, particularly in areas such as hospitality management, service innovation, tourism policy, sustainability and workforce development,” says Prof Richardson.

Visiting faculty engagements include research seminars, doctoral workshops and industry networking, offering rich opportunities for knowledge exchange. Exposure to hospitality



These partnerships [with Macau University of Science and Technology and the University of Macau] focus on joint research initiatives, visiting professorships, research seminars and knowledge exchange...

— Prof Scott Richardson,
Academic Dean, Abu Dhabi Hospitality
Academy – Les Roches

ecosystems such as luxury resort operations provides applied insights that feed directly into teaching and research. Through curriculum benchmarking and co-development, the Academy aligns learning outcomes with global best practices while incorporating Asian and Middle Eastern hospitality contexts, and future student mobility initiatives aim to offer postgraduate learners immersive international experiences in high-growth tourism markets.

Faculty development

Global partnerships play a central role in faculty development and academic renewal across these institutions. Faculty benefit from international mobility, collaborative research and exposure to different teaching approaches, strengthening research quality and teaching practice.

“These engagements enable staff remain connected to global developments in their disciplines, adopt innovative teaching practices and contribute to internationally relevant research,” says Prof Meraj.

Engagement with global peers and industry experts also facilitates knowledge transfer in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, digital transformation, smart tourism systems, sustainability and service innovation, aligning academic work with broader national innovation agendas. At the same time, UAE institutions contribute actively to these partnerships by offering regional perspectives, access to dynamic industry environments and engagement with policy contexts that are shaping the future of education, governance and the knowledge economy.

Navigating challenges

Leaders across the sector are also candid about the challenges involved in forming and sustaining global partnerships. Differences in institutional priorities, regulatory frameworks, academic cultures and governance systems can slow collaboration, while partnerships that rely heavily on individual champions risk losing momentum over time.

Addressing these challenges requires clearly defined, outcome-driven agreements; strong governance structures; dedicated partnership coordination; and recognition of collaboration within academic workloads and performance frameworks. Hybrid models that combine digital collaboration with periodic in-person engagement are increasingly seen as essential for maintaining strong, productive relationships across time zones and regions, says Prof Richardson.

Global partnerships are no longer about prestige alone, but about purpose, impact and sustainability. They allow universities to benchmark against world-class standards while remaining locally responsive.

As the UAE continues to position itself as a global knowledge hub connecting East and West, the strength of its universities lies increasingly in their ability to collaborate with intention, transforming partnerships into engines of academic excellence, innovation and long-term value. ■



As part of the student exchange programme between Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi and France’s Sciences Po, up to 10 students from each university have the opportunity to study abroad every academic year

Rally Board 65 for smart collaboration

The Rally Board 65 is an all-in-one portable video conferencing solution and an interactive whiteboard that combines intelligent audio and video with a large 65" touchscreen display. It lets teachers and students interact directly with content, turning it into a digital hub for classroom instruction and group work.

The Rally Board 65 also enables hybrid learning, connecting in-class students with remote learners in real time. With a built-in 4K camera and advanced audio system, Rally Board 65 supports video conferencing with major platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Google Meet.

Supporting super-sharp 4K video, Logitech's Rally Board 65 is loaded with AI-powered RightSight 2 and RightSound 2, which are hallmarks of Logitech's video bars. It includes features like Camera Zone that limits visual framing, Mic Zone that minimises sound pick up and Depth Blur that obscures surroundings similar to background blur.

Built-in sensors on the Rally Board 65 help detect the presence of people in a room. The sensors can also analyse other data like humidity, temperature

and CO2 levels, which will be used to give recommendations on improving the meeting space. Made to be easily transported into any room, the screen can flip 180 degrees and use the camera above or below the screen. In settings where tables and chairs are arranged horizontally and the teacher presents from the front, positioning the camera above the display ensures clear capture of both the instructor and seated students, supporting hybrid teaching, remote participation and lesson recording. Where there isn't a need to use the whiteboard functionality, positioning the camera below the screen provides an eye-

level view that works well for fully seated sessions.

The Rally Board 65 is engineered to minimise its environmental impact, using next-life plastics, low-carbon aluminum, recycled fabrics and FSC-certified packaging. The device's radar system also automatically switches to a low power state when no one is in the space, a simple function that can significantly reduce power consumption.

The Rally Board can be set up within a couple of minutes in Android, PC or BYOD mode.



Simplify tasks with Signature Slim Solar+ K980 Keyboard and MX Master 4

Logitech's latest solutions, like the Signature Slim Solar+ K980 Keyboard and the MX Master 4, offer innovative features without sacrificing comfort and usability.

With the ability to be charged using any light (sunlight or artificial light), the Logitech Signature Slim Solar+ K980 Keyboard is a wireless keyboard designed for modern use with its full-size layout, laptop-style typing and smart customisations that simplify tasks. It can even run up to four months without charging.

Made for ultimate control and efficiency, the Logitech MX Master



4 features customisable haptic feedback, delivering subtle vibrations for scrolling, navigation and selection. The MX Master 4 also features the Actions Ring, a digital overlay powered by Logi Options+, which offers app-specific shortcuts and controls to enhance productivity.



Upholding learning integrity in the age of AI

From redesigning assessments and embedding integrity by design, to fostering ethical AI usage aligned with regional values and global standards, Amal Dimashki, Regional Director, MENAT at Turnitin shares insights on how universities can adapt to the evolving assessment landscape



Amal Dimashki, Regional Director, MENAT at Turnitin

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping how learning is delivered, assessed and evaluated across higher education institutions worldwide. The rapid integration of AI into education in the GCC presents both opportunities and challenges for academic leaders. For universities, the challenge is no longer whether AI will be used, but how its use can be guided responsibly without undermining the core purpose of learning.

In an interview with Education Middle East, Amal Dimashki, Regional Director, MENAT at Turnitin outlines practical tips on how universities can adapt to this evolving environment, from redesigning assessments to fostering a culture of learning integrity that aligns with regional values and global standards.

What is the impact of unrestricted use of AI in academic institutions?

The unrestricted use of AI in academic institutions risks turning technology into a substitute for critical thinking rather than a tool for learning. When students rely heavily on AI-generated answers, they miss the chance to develop their own problem-solving skills and truly understand the content.

It's essential to approach AI adoption with clear boundaries. By ensuring students engage authentically with the material and use AI as a supportive tool, we can avoid shortcuts that undermine education. For the UAE, where education is foundational to Vision 2030 and Vision 2071, prioritising meaningful learning is critical for preparing a tech-savvy workforce that upholds academic and professional integrity.

Do the positives outweigh the negatives of AI adoption and use in education?

When guided by ethical frameworks, the benefits of AI in education can far outweigh the risks. AI offers tailored learning experiences, provides real-time feedback and gives students modern workforce skills. These advancements align with the UAE's goal of enhancing future readiness

across all industries. Misuse is a concern, as students might use AI to avoid learning. This can be addressed with thoughtful assessments and policies. By embedding academic integrity into AI usage, we can ensure innovation and ethics coexist. AI should enhance human potential, not replace the effort and creativity that make education transformative.

How prepared are universities and higher education institutions in the GCC to identify the (mis)use of AI in student assessments?

Institutions in the region have been remarkably proactive. Governments and school systems across the region are also taking early, structured steps. For example, the UAE's Ministry of Education introducing an AI curriculum for 2025-2026 and Saudi Arabia's push to embed AI education within school curricula are examples of proactive planning. At the higher education level, universities are going a step further. Besides deploying advanced tools for similarity checking, many institutions are also updating the curriculum to emphasise responsible use of AI.

Are universities in the region open to the idea of redesigning assessments?

Regional universities are increasingly willing to innovate their assessment methods, shifting from standard assessment formats to approaches that track the learning journey, not just the final output. This could include oral evaluations, in-course writing and practical projects that measure the skills that AI cannot replicate. This willingness to experiment signals an understanding that education must evolve alongside technology to maintain its relevance and uphold integrity.

How effective are current strategies that institutions in the region are adopting to regulate the use of AI-assisted misconduct, and what improvements are needed?

The approach to academic integrity is evolving rapidly. Many institutions are embedding 'integrity by design' principles into their curricula, ensuring

that AI literacy and ethics are taught alongside technical skills.

However, one area of growth is faculty training. Educators need robust support and training on how to guide students towards using AI ethically. Clear institutional policies, informed by regional data protection laws and best practices, can provide the framework for this guidance. Shifting from enforcement to education creates a culture of integrity where ethical choices are second nature.

What role should educators play in teaching students the ethical use of AI tools?

Educators are central to this mission. By acting as role models and integrating AI literacy into their lessons, they can teach students how to use these tools responsibly. This means providing clear boundaries, showing the value of ethical practices in professional settings and emphasising that learning integrity is critical in a globalised, tech-driven workforce. By using AI as an aid rather than a crutch, educators can empower students with both the technical competencies and critical thinking skills needed for long-term success.

How can technology providers and academic institutions collaborate?

Collaboration is key to success. Technology providers must deliver more than software; they need to offer data-driven insights and help institutions customise their approach to ethical AI. At Turnitin, we partner with academic institutions to provide actionable insights through analytics and open conversations. By working hand in hand, universities and technology providers can ensure that education's core purpose, to transform lives through learning, is preserved, even as the tools for delivering this transformation evolve.

If you'd like to find out more about how Turnitin can support secure assessment in the age of AI within your institution, visit the [website](#).



EdTech adoption across universities is driven by national priorities, institutional strategy and evolving learner expectations

Why EdTech is now strategic

National digital agendas and workforce priorities are pushing universities to move beyond experimentation, making EdTech central to academic delivery and institutional planning

By **Joseph George**

National and regional policies in the GCC have almost compelled the universities to continuously evolve pedagogical approaches. Universities here are at the forefront of digital transformation, integrating educational technology (EdTech) to prepare students for a dynamic global workforce. This shift is propelled by a blend of institutional ambitions, national policies and technological advancements.

While today's learners expect real-time access, hands-on experience and digital fluency, universities are also

being driven by industry expectations, a focus on graduate employability and a pressing need to ensure teaching remains relevant to the rapidly changing nature of work.

Primary drivers

The adoption of EdTech in GCC universities is fundamentally tied to enhancing academic excellence, student outcomes and institutional resilience. EdTech adoption is being driven by a combination of national priorities, institutional strategy and evolving learner expectations.

The momentum is being driven by learners, who increasingly expect



Digital transformation is not developed in isolation at CUD; it is shaped in collaboration with industry, technology providers, research institutions and public-sector stakeholders.

— **Karim Chelli**,
Professor and Vice Chancellor, President,
Canadian University Dubai

digitally enabled, applied and industry-connected education. This to a large extent is also driving universities to continuously integrate advanced tools, platforms and methodologies across teaching, research and administration.

As Dr Nkqubela Ruxwana, Assistant Professor, School of Computer Science at University of Wollongong in Dubai (UOWD) points out, the main drivers include enhancing the student learning experience through blended, hybrid and online learning models that offer flexible, anytime-anywhere access, personalised learning, collaboration and real-time feedback.

“Central to this approach is the development of future-ready graduates, equipping students with critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration skills. We also adopt EdTech towards strengthening our institutional efficiency and global competitiveness,” says Ruxwana. Digital adoption according to her, is also reinforced by the rapid digital transformation in the UAE.

As Dr Yousef Al Assaf, President, RIT Dubai notes, “Institutionally, digital transformation has been embedded as a strategic pillar, ensuring that technology enhances both academic delivery and operational effectiveness.” According to him, at a national level, the UAE’s focus on future readiness, digital economies and smart systems necessitates universities that can educate, experiment and innovate at pace.

Karim Chelli, Vice Chancellor and President, Canadian University Dubai (CUD) says Edtech is driven by




AI, immersive media and learning analytics are top priorities for MAHE Dubai in the coming years.

— Dr Praveen Gupta,
Chair, Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (CIS), MAHE Dubai and
Chairperson, Manipal Business School for Education Middle East

purpose and not by trends, and quality and resilience are key drivers. “Agility institutions need to remain relevant in a rapidly changing global education landscape,” says Chelli.

Dr Praveen Gupta, Chair of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (CIS) at MAHE Dubai says the Centre’s EdTech adoption is driven by the belief that technology is central to delivering quality education and shaping future-ready graduates.

These drivers align with regional economic imperatives, ensuring

graduates possess the digital fluency demanded by industries undergoing their own transformations, such as AI integration and smart infrastructure development.

Regional policies

National policies have been playing a key role in steering university digital agendas, providing frameworks that encourage innovation and alignment with long-term visions.

As Professor Fehmida Hussain, Head of Computer Engineering and Informatics and Deputy Director Engagement and Student Experience at Middlesex University Dubai (MDX) says, the university’s digital strategy is “shaped by national priorities and our institutional mission to deliver future-ready education. In alignment with the UAE’s digital transformation agenda, including Dubai’s D33 strategy, we aim to ensure our graduates possess the digital skills and adaptive mindsets required by the industries driving the region’s innovation economy.”

Amina Abdulrahim, Executive Director of ICT and IT Security at American University of Sharjah highlights how policies such as the UAE Digital Government Strategy 2025, the AI Strategy 2031 and the GCC Digital Government Guiding Strategy (2024-2030), have significantly influenced priorities at AUS.

This policy alignment extends across the GCC, influencing curricula and operations to produce graduates equipped for post-graduation challenges. Dr Ruxwana elaborates on this synergy, noting that the university’s initiatives align with national strategies such as UAE Vision 2031 and the Centennial 2071 initiative.

According to her, in support of the UAE National AI Strategy 2031, UOWD joined hands with technology partners to establish the Gulf region’s first AI Centre of Excellence, focused on local talent development and sovereign AI capabilities. “This ensures that the institution remains responsive, future-focused and aligned with emerging digital opportunities,” says Ruxwana.

According to Dr Al Assaf, RIT Dubai actively aligns its academic offerings, research focus and operational practices with government strategies related to digital government, sustainability and innovation. “This alignment has directly influenced the development of specialised graduate programmes in areas such as smart cities, digital transformation and future foresight,” he says, adding that although some policy priorities are clearly defined and actionable, others continue to evolve. “The university proactively works to interpret and



The Centre for Innovation in Human Experience (CIHx) at Middlesex University Dubai brings together 3 specialised labs, Insightsx Lab, RoboTechx Lab and Immersive VRx Lab



The collaboration with industry and research partners ensures that programmes remain cutting-edge.

— **Dr Nkqubela Ruxwana,**
Assistant Professor, School of Computer
Science, University of Wollongong in
Dubai (UOWD)

align with these directions through close collaboration with government stakeholders,” he adds.

Key digital initiatives

GCC universities have rolled out ambitious digital initiatives to streamline operations and elevate learning experiences. At AUS, Abdulrahim details efforts including the modernisation of enterprise systems and the implementation of a modern Learning Management System (LMS), upgrading campus-wide infrastructure, expansion of cloud infrastructure and establishment of an AI Hub. “Collectively, these initiatives have strengthened operational efficiency, elevated the student, faculty and staff experience,” she affirms.

MAHE Dubai has similarly advanced its infrastructure, with Gupta pointing to the rollout of a next-generation LMS and investments in immersive learning environments like AR/VR lab and a FinTech trading studio. “Our objective is to create a technology-enriched ecosystem that empowers students academically while equipping them with practical, industry-relevant digital skills,” explains Gupta.

Listing initiatives at MDX, Prof Hussain points to The MDX Innovation Hub (MIH) - an entrepreneurship ecosystem, The Digital Twins Lab for simulation-based learning, Centre for Innovation and Human Experience (CIHx) for integration of AI, automation, robotics and human-centred design, and facilities such as the RoboTechX Lab, VR Lab and Data Science Lab. According to Hussain, these facilities “expand our capabilities in robotics, autonomous



VR-enabled BIM learning in a second-year civil engineering project at UOWD

systems, cybersecurity, machine learning and advanced analytics.”

UOWD, during the past two to three years, witnessed a wide range of digital initiatives such as the launch of the region’s first Master of Digital Transformation; the establishment of

an AI Centre of Excellence; hosting of programmes such as the ‘AI in My Classroom Teacher Incubator’; the securing of Dubai RDI grants for projects including generative AI for electric vehicle optimisation; and the development of specialised labs in blockchain, IoT and sensor

technologies, alongside collaborative international and industry projects for practical learning.

“Collectively, these initiatives position our university as a digitally advanced university, driving academic excellence, research innovation and operational efficiency in line with national and regional digital transformation priorities,” says Ruxwana.

According to Prof Chelli, CUD has launched two degrees: a Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence and a Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence.

At other institutions, comparable projects focus on integrating tools like AI-enhanced analytics and mobile learning apps, ensuring seamless transitions between virtual and physical classrooms.

Emerging technologies

Emerging technologies prioritised across most universities include Artificial Intelligence (AI) and learning analytics, mainly for their transformative potential in personalising education; AR/VR to enrich experiential learning; and robotics, autonomous systems and drone technologies, as they are enablers of industrial and societal transformation.



The focus at MDX is robotics, autonomous systems and drone technologies. In parallel, immersive technologies such as AR and VR are integrated through the VR Lab to promote simulation-based learning, 3D visualisation and interactive prototyping.

— **Professor Fehmida Hussain**,
Head of Computer Engineering and
Informatics and Deputy Director
Engagement and Student Experience,
Middlesex University Dubai



We value partners who demonstrate commitment to innovation, transparency and collaborative engagement.

— **Amina Abdulrahim**,
Executive Director of ICT and IT Security,
American University of Sharjah

Dr Gupta says AI, immersive media and learning analytics are top priorities for MAHE Dubai in the coming years.

According to Abdulrahim, AI and learning analytics are immediate priorities at AUS. “Our approach is value-driven, prioritising technologies that directly support learning outcomes, research advancement and operational effectiveness,” she adds.

Dr Fehmida Hussain, highlighting AI and robotics as critical for modern applications, says, “These technologies underpin advancements in smart cities and environmental monitoring.” These technologies enable adaptive platforms that tailor content to individual learners, immersive simulations via virtual reality, and predictive analytics for student success.

For Prof Hussain, the focus at MDX is robotics, autonomous systems and drone technologies. “These technologies underpin advancements in smart cities, environmental monitoring, logistics, infrastructure and advanced manufacturing,” he explains, adding that in parallel, immersive technologies such as AR and VR are integrated through the VR Lab to promote simulation-based learning, 3D visualisation and interactive prototyping, enriching experiential learning across disciplines.

For RIT Dubai, key priorities have been digital twins, robotics and sustainability-driven technologies. Digital twins serve as an integrative

platform that brings together sensors, IoT, simulation, data analytics and generative AI, while robotics research focuses on human-robot interaction and intelligent mobility. As Dr Al Assaf notes, “Sustainability is a major focus area, where digital transformation and AI are applied to address environmental challenges, including projects that combine technology, data and ecological impact in the local context.”

Roadmaps for future

Universities have set themselves three- to five-year roadmaps to position themselves as regional leaders in innovation-driven, technology-enabled academic excellence.

As Dr Gupta notes, at MAHE Dubai faculty development will continue to remain a core pillar as it aims to continuously train and upskill educators to harness the latest tech advancements. “The plan also includes deepening industry partnerships to ensure all tech deployments align with evolving workforce needs,” he adds.

Dr Ruxwana, explaining UOWD’s roadmap for digital transformation, says, “Key priorities include deepening the integration of AI and learning analytics and expanding hybrid and online education through virtual classrooms and interactive content.”

UOWD also aims to launch programmes such as the Master of Digital Transformation in partnership with IBM, and foster research and innovation via the Centre for Digital Transformation in areas, including digital health, smart applications and e-learning.

“The collaboration with industry and research partners ensures that programmes remain cutting-edge,” says Dr Ruxwana.

External partnerships

While setting aggressive digital transformation roadmap, universities have also prioritised external partnerships and collaborations, in an effort to bring specialised expertise, international best practices and innovation capacity.

“External partnerships are indispensable for amplifying internal capabilities and bridging academia with industry,” says Abdulrahim.

Dr Al Assaf says RIT Dubai’s digital strategy includes both partnerships with government as well as private sector. “Government entities provide strategic direction and real-world challenges aligned with national priorities, while public-sector partners collaborate with the university through applied innovation labs to co-develop solutions,” he says.



Sustainability is a major focus area, where digital transformation and AI are applied to address environmental challenges.

— Dr Yousef Al Assaf,
President, RIT Dubai

RIT Dubai hosts the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA) Innovation Lab on campus, and is in active discussions with Dubai Municipality to establish a dedicated lab at the university, focused on tackling real operational and urban challenges through digital transformation initiatives.

External partners and vendors are essential to UOWD's digital strategy, says Ruxwana. The university has partnered with the likes of IBM to co-develop programmes and provide resources, while technology providers such as Microsoft, Google and AWS supply cloud infrastructure and digital learning platforms. Collaborations with EdTech companies, research organisations and consulting firms support LMS, virtual classrooms, innovation hubs and research initiatives at UOWD.

At CUS, external partners play a strategic, co-creation role. "Digital transformation is not developed in isolation at CUD; it is shaped in collaboration with industry, technology providers, research institutions and public-sector stakeholders," says Dr Chelli.

These partnerships, Dr Chelli notes, accelerate innovation within the startup incubator and provide a reality check to ensure that digital investments remain relevant, scalable and aligned with workforce needs.

Vendor partner evaluation

Rigorous evaluation processes ensure vendor partnerships deliver value and align with institutional ethos. Abdulrahim outlines AUS's approach, governed by procurement frameworks



Picture Courtesy: UOWD

Emerging technologies prioritised across most universities include AI, learning analytics, AR/VR, robotics, autonomous systems and drone technologies

emphasising academic alignment, data security and innovation. "We value partners who demonstrate commitment to innovation, transparency and collaborative engagement," she says.

Chelli describes CUD's strategy as mission-reflective, prioritising "vendors that demonstrate responsible environmental practices, efficient use of digital infrastructure and a clear commitment to ESG principles." Criteria often include compliance with cybersecurity standards, scalability and integration capabilities, mirroring best practices in cloud and AI adoption.

These selections mitigate risks while maximising benefits such as agile DevOps pipelines and shared services that reduce duplication and enhance resilience. By prioritising transparency and sustainability, universities safeguard their digital journeys.

The journey of EdTech adoption within GCC universities represents far more than a superficial technological upgrade. It is a mix of a harmonious fusion of policy, technology and collaboration and extends beyond classrooms, empowering graduates for AI-driven economies while honouring cultural contexts through localised innovations. ■

A MEDICAL EDUCATION SPECIAL

Trends in medical education, assessment in the age of AI, collaboration between medical colleges and MedTech companies and more



GCC healthcare training at a crossroads

Medical education in the region is at a turning point. Driven by demographic changes, workforce priorities and digital innovation, universities are reimagining how healthcare professionals are taught and trained

By **Joseph George**

Medical education in the GCC stands at a pivotal moment, where traditional teaching methodologies are giving way to innovative, technology-driven approaches that address both regional healthcare demands and global medical standards.

As educational institutions are fundamentally reshaping how they prepare the next generation of medical professionals, the emphasis is on producing adaptable, technologically proficient and globally competent graduates.

Universities are re-designing curriculum to adapt to new advancements and revisiting both teaching methods and assessments where learning is shaped by actual performance in hospitals. Success is defined not merely by performance in examinations but a series of knowledge demonstrations over time, and where actions speak louder than test scores.

Demand and its drivers

Healthcare expenditure in the GCC is projected to rise from approximately \$109.1 billion in 2024 to \$159 billion by 2029, at a CAGR of 7.8%, enhancing the demand for more trained professionals to support new facilities and services.

According to Ken Research, demand is outpacing the availability of medical facilities in the region. Yet workforce and infrastructure growth remain constrained, placing unprecedented pressure on clinical capacity and exposing structural gaps in the healthcare system.

The report further indicates that workforce shortages are particularly in specialties that require advanced training, and demand for critical specialties such as oncology, cardiology, orthopaedics, and rehabilitation continues to outpace recruitment cycles.

The surge in demand for medical education across the GCC reflects deeper societal and demographic transformations taking place throughout the region. Prof Remy Rikers, Head and Professor of Health



Picture Courtesy: Mohammed Bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health Sciences

Medical curricula across GCC institutions are being reshaped to deliver a more practice-oriented learning experience



The growing demand is not just due to population growth but because of the sophisticated healthcare infrastructure investments being made across all GCC nations.

— **Prof Ismail Matalka**,
President, RAK Medical and Health Sciences University

Professions Education at Gulf Medical University (GMU) points to a growing youth population, which defines the Gulf's profile, even as disease patterns move towards long-term, non-communicable conditions tied

to daily habits. "Such illnesses call for sustained treatment involving multiple specialists, pushing upward the requirement for doctors, nurses and support staff alike," says Prof Rikers.

Countries across the region are investing heavily into capacity building. In the UAE alone, more than 700 healthcare projects valued at \$60.9 billion are under development.

Prof Ismail Matalka, President of RAK Medical and Health Sciences University says the growing demand is not just due to population growth but because of the sophisticated healthcare infrastructure investments being made across all GCC nations.

Elaborating on the multifaceted nature of the growth, he points out, "We're seeing the establishment of specialised medical cities, research centres and tertiary care facilities that require highly trained professionals who can operate at the cutting edge of medical practice. The Vision 2030 initiatives across various Gulf states have placed healthcare transformation at their core, creating unprecedented opportunities for medical graduates who are prepared to work in these advanced environments."

Aligning with global trends

A series of dynamic changes are being witnessed across medical education

institutions worldwide, starting with the adoption of AI, which is impacting both teaching as well as learning methods and forcing institutions to reassess the mode of assessments.

Dr Preman Rajalingam, Chair of Health Professions Education and Associate Professor at Mohammed Bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health Sciences (MBRU), identifying some major trends shaping medical education in the GCC points out, “We are moving from producing individually competent graduates to producing professionals who can function safely in complex health systems, which differ significantly across countries in financing, governance, digital maturity, workforce mix and patient pathways.”

According to him, in higher education the post COVID story is often told as a shift in delivery mode. “In health professions education, the bigger shift is what we are preparing people for,” says Dr Rajalingam.

The shift towards competency-based medical education in the GCC mirrors broader international movements in healthcare training. Dr Farah Ahzar, MHPE Program Coordinator, Gulf Medical University (GMU) says there is a fundamental philosophical shift from input-based education to outcome-based learning.

“Instead of measuring time in school, educators look at what skills trainees show and whether those abilities hold up under real-world conditions. We’re now asking not ‘How long has this student studied?’ but rather ‘What can this student actually do when faced with a medical challenge?’” According to her, this approach allows examiners to customise learning pathways for individual students while maintaining consistent standards for graduation.



Medical education in the region is evolving to prepare graduates for real clinical settings and teamwork



Instead of simply covering material, courses now link knowledge directly to tasks future doctors must perform without supervision. Learning is shaped by actual performance in hospitals and clinics, where actions speak louder than test scores.

— Prof Remy Rikers,
Head and Professor of Health Professions
Education, Gulf Medical University

As artificial intelligence grows in areas like diagnosis and remote care, how medicine works is shifting across countries. “Because of this shift, knowing how to navigate digital tools moves from extra skill to essential training. Doctors must grasp not only what algorithms can do, but where they fall short. Only then can their use be safe, grounded in real understanding,” she adds.

The scope of traditional medical education, as Prof Matalka notes, has expanded from physician-only, to embrace Health Professions Education (HPE), a multidisciplinary paradigm that includes medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, allied health and also all professionals engaged in healthcare delivery, education and research. “This holistic approach fosters interprofessional collaboration, competency-based development and team-oriented practice, ensuring a cohesive, adaptable health workforce poised to meet complex global and regional health challenges for the best practices.”

Changes in curriculum

The transformation of medical curricula across GCC institutions represents one of the most significant shifts in regional higher education. Moving away from traditional lecture-based models, universities

are embracing competency-based frameworks that emphasise practical skills and real-world application.

The United Arab Emirates Competency Framework for Medical Education has laid the framework in the UAE, ensuring graduates acquire regionally relevant competencies while meeting international standards.

Describing this evolving process in detail, Prof Rikers says, “Instead of simply covering material, courses now link knowledge directly to tasks future doctors must perform without supervision. Learning is shaped by actual performance in hospitals and clinics, where actions speak louder than test scores.” According to him, this approach has dramatically improved student engagement and retention, while also producing graduates who are immediately productive in clinical settings.

Arina Ziganshina, Head of Examination and Assessment Unit, Dubai Medical University says in an effort to accommodate general-education requirements such as cultural skills, communication, teamwork, medical technologies and even foundations of entrepreneurship, the MD curriculum at the Dubai Medical University went through significant improvement. “The duration increased from five to six years. Interprofessional education has expanded in line with modern healthcare needs. Clinical exposure was increased, and basic clinical courses were introduced earlier as bedside learning is highly effective and contributes significantly to building professionalism. Finally, we strengthened the research component, enabling students to engage in supervised research from their first year,” says Ziganshina.

The assignment system and the University’s assessment system, according to her, is highly dynamic due to continuous evaluation and response to student feedback. “This year, the student portfolio was revised to emphasise reflection, helping future doctors analyse their progress, identify strengths and weaknesses and develop self-improvement plans aligned with professional goals,” adds Ziganshina.

As Prof Rikes points out, a key shift involves adopting programmatic assessment, where testing becomes an ongoing thread woven through education instead of occasional stand-alone exams. “At GMU, this shift is being institutionally formalised through the University Assessment Committee, which meets once every two months and is mandated to develop and monitor a university-wide programmatic assessment system aligned with national standards and



Artificial intelligence is being progressively integrated to support clinical reasoning, data interpretation and future-ready medical practice, while maintaining alignment with global standards and clinical relevance.

— **Dr Mohamed Hassan Taha**,
Director, Medical Education Centre,
University of Sharjah

relevant international accreditation expectations,” he says.

Navigating contemporary challenges

Despite the positive momentum in medical education transformation, GCC institutions face significant challenges such as balancing global accreditation



We are moving from producing individually competent graduates to producing professionals who can function safely in complex health systems, which differ significantly across countries in financing, governance, digital maturity, workforce mix and patient pathways.

— **Dr Preman Rajalingam**,
Chair of Health Professions Education
and Associate Professor, Mohammed Bin
Rashid University of Medicine and Health
Sciences (MBRU)



standards, finding enough practice locations and premature rollout of technology solutions.

Taking about a few key areas of concern, Professor Matalka says balancing global accreditation standards with region-specific health priorities shaped by lifestyle trends and climate-related risks could be one of the concerns. “The Gulf region faces unique health challenges, including high rates of diabetes and metabolic disorders, emerging infectious diseases, and the health impacts of extreme heat and changing environmental conditions.”

According to him, the curricula at local universities must address these regional health priorities while maintaining the international standards necessary for graduates to practice globally. “This requires continuous dialogue with healthcare stakeholders, ongoing curriculum revision and substantial investment in faculty development.”

Professor Rikers addresses the practical challenges of scaling quality education, “With rising enrolments, keeping education standards steady becomes tougher. Finding enough practice locations while making sure those settings offer rich, hands-on experience requires careful coordination.”

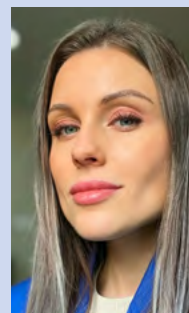
As Dr Taha notes, the coming years will require careful balance. Apart from maintaining international accreditation standards, he points out that “recruiting and retaining experienced clinician-educators, adapting to rapid technological change in healthcare and aligning graduate outcomes with GCC workforce needs will require sustained institutional focus and strong partnerships with healthcare providers.”

Tech integration

The integration of advanced technology in medical education has emerged as a defining characteristic of addressing some of the challenges.

Describing the comprehensive technological transformation at Gulf Medical University, Prof Rikers says, “Starting with big investments, we bring fresh tech into training through lifelike practice settings. At the heart of how we teach now stands the Thumbay Institute of Clinical Simulation (TICS), where learners face tough medical tasks, crisis responses and team coordination under controlled yet authentic conditions,” he says, adding that students can practice high-risk procedures, experience rare medical emergencies and develop critical thinking skills without putting actual patients at risk.

The simulation centre also includes



This year, the student portfolio was revised to emphasise reflection, helping future doctors analyse their progress, identify strengths and weaknesses and develop self-improvement plans aligned with professional goals.

— **Dr Arina Ziganshina**,
Head of Examination and Assessment
Unit, Dubai Medical University

virtual reality components, robotic patient simulators and standardised patient programmes that create an immersive learning environment.

Dr Taha, elaborating on the strategic approach to technology integration, says, “Technology has been integrated as an enabler of learning rather than an end in itself. Artificial intelligence is being progressively integrated to support clinical reasoning, data interpretation and future-ready medical practice, while maintaining alignment with global standards and clinical relevance,” he says, adding that they are however careful to ensure that technology enhances rather than replaces the fundamental human skills that define excellent medical practice.

Preparing for future

Meanwhile, the universities are also focussing on looking beyond current healthcare needs to anticipate future challenges and opportunities.

Prof Rikers encapsulates this forward-looking perspective, “The healthcare environment our current students will practice in ten years from now will likely include technologies and treatment modalities that don’t exist today,” he says, adding that it is therefore important to teach students how to critically evaluate new technologies, integrate emerging research into practice, and maintain professional competence throughout their careers. ■



Traditional assessment methods are increasingly challenged by AI-assisted answer generation

Assessment with integrity: The bedrock of education in the age of AI

ExamSoft by Turnitin supports institutions with secure, controlled exam environments designed to preserve the credibility of assessments

Is it possible to uphold academic integrity when generative AI can produce answers in seconds? This critical question faces educators today. With AI's role in education

rapidly shifting from novelty to norm (research shows 79.6% of university students in the UAE already use AI tools), a re-evaluation of how student knowledge is measured becomes

essential. The challenge isn't just about detecting AI-generated content, it's about preserving the foundation of learning: assessment with integrity.

Assessment is far more than a measurement tool, it is a core principle that underpins all learning and growth. When conducted securely and fairly, it provides an authentic snapshot of a student's understanding. However, the rise of sophisticated AI has changed the economics of cheating overnight.

"Exams delivered on platforms requiring an internet connection can be vulnerable. The so-called 'locked browsers' that need the internet to function may create an illusion of control, while potentially leaving a back door open for AI tools," explains Amal Dimashki, Regional Director, MENAT at Turnitin.

This reality forces institutions to confront a difficult truth: many current assessment methods no longer measure what a student knows, but rather their ability to generate answers with AI during a test. To safeguard the value of academic qualifications, institutions must move beyond simple monitoring and foster a culture of integrity by design. "This requires a renewed partnership between institutions and technology providers—one focused on enabling educators to assess learning their way while helping students embrace new technologies ethically," says Dimashki.

In high-stakes fields like healthcare and law, comprehensive assessments are even more important. Secure exams can help ensure that graduates have the foundational knowledge and skills needed to meet professional standards and support public well-being. Certifying professionals without ensuring their full competence can impact public trust in both academic institutions and the essential professions that support society. Assessment integrity isn't a one-time fix; it's an ongoing journey of adaptation to meet the evolving needs of students and society.

So, how can institutions ensure the authenticity of their assessments in this new landscape? "The answer lies in creating controlled exam environments that are able to shut down outside interference," she says.

This is where secure, offline assessment platforms like [ExamSoft by Turnitin](#) become essential. Using a dedicated application for exams, which can manage a student's device environment and limit internet access during testing, can significantly reduce certain vulnerabilities. This controlled environment may help assess a student's understanding by minimising access to external resources such as AI tools. Educators might find this approach supports more reliable data, potentially leading to clearer insights into student



Protecting the value of academic qualifications requires institutions to move beyond monitoring and embed integrity into assessment design




Exams delivered on platforms requiring an internet connection can be vulnerable.

— Amal Dimashki,
Regional Director,
MENAT at Turnitin

performance and more effective curriculum development. This approach allows educators to have confidence in their data, which in turn can lead to more accurate insights

into student performance and better-informed curricular improvements.

For more than 25 years, Turnitin has supported academic institutions in fostering authentic student work. As this new chapter unfolds, Turnitin's commitment is to empower educators. By providing tools that help ensure exam security, instructors are given the freedom to focus on what they do best: teaching. This includes offering real-time insights that help map curriculum to learning objectives and provide a comprehensive overview of student progress.

The integration of AI into education is inevitable and offers transformative potential for learning. But to harness its benefits responsibly, the assessment process must first be secured. By creating environments where students can demonstrate their genuine skills, the credibility of qualifications is upheld and a culture of academic integrity is reinforced, which will serve them throughout their professional lives. The future of education depends on it.

— **Partner Content**



A growing trend across the GCC sees institutions and business partners working together to develop solutions aligned with clinical, educational and regional needs



MedTech and life sciences companies, throughout the GCC, are progressively shifting from transactional supplier relationships to long-term, strategic partnerships with medical schools and academic institutions.

— **Dr Ramin Fazel**,
CEO, Sartomax Biopharma



From procurement to partnership

Across the GCC, collaboration between medical colleges and MedTech companies is evolving into long-term partnerships that support curriculum integration, faculty development, clinical relevance and measurable educational outcomes

By **Joseph George**

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in medical education, and institutions across the GCC are no exception. Advancements such as AI are beginning to dominate key aspects of medical education, particularly for personalised tutoring, virtual patient simulations and predictive diagnostics.

AR/VR immersive tech is being adopted for training via surgical simulations, anatomy exploration and skill-building. Virtual and hybrid clinical training, and interoperable education platforms are reshaping collaborations in medical education.

These changes are driving demand for partners who can integrate technologies that can demonstrate measurable educational outcomes.

Long-term engagements

Within the GCC, medical technology (MedTech) companies are forging strategic partnerships with universities early in procurement cycles, and these alliances extend beyond traditional vendor relationships, integrating joint clinical training programmes, simulation technologies, digital platforms and applied research to enhance educational outcomes and align with national outcome-based education frameworks.

Prof Hesham Marei, Vice Chancellor Academics and Dean at Gulf Medical University (GMU), explains, “Across the GCC, collaboration between brands and medical education institutions has evolved from transactional procurement into long-term strategic partnerships.”

These partnerships now embed technologies into curricular and

assessment strategies, supporting innovations like AI across health sciences disciplines, ensuring institutions remain agile in meeting evolving educational needs.

Within the UAE, this direction, he says has been further reinforced by the introduction of the national Outcome-Based Framework as the primary quality evaluation model for medical education.

“Within this framework, partnerships are most effective when brands engage early with academic leadership to ensure their solutions are meaningfully embedded within curricula, assessment strategies and competency frameworks, rather than positioned as standalone or purely technical products,” says Prof Marei.

Reemphasising a similar view, Dr Ramin Fazel, CEO, Sartomax Biopharma points out that MedTech and life sciences companies throughout the GCC are “progressively shifting from transactional supplier relationships to long-term, strategic partnerships with medical schools and academic institutions.”

Examples of common models, he says, are joint research and development projects, shared training and capacity-building programmes, technology transfer initiatives and academic labs or centres of excellence supported by industry.

According to Fazel, there is a growing trend of co-creation, “where institutions and business partners collaborate to develop solutions that are clinically relevant, educationally aligned and regionally applicable.”

Collaborations that promote national goals related to workforce development, localisation of manufacturing and healthcare innovation are also gaining popularity, he adds.

Vendor selection challenges

While the GCC market is relatively mature, medical universities do sometimes face challenges in identifying regional suppliers who combine advanced technology with strong local support and academic understanding. “The main difficulty is not access to products, but in identifying partners who truly understand the academic environment,” says Prof Marei.

According to him, reliable after-sales service, structured faculty training, comprehensive compliance documentation and long-term technical support are critical in educational settings. “Yet these requirements are sometimes underestimated by vendors whose



There is a growing trend of co-creation, bringing institutions and business partners to collaborate

operating models are primarily business-driven rather than education-driven,” says Prof Marei, who adds that vendors and partners should demonstrate a clear understanding of academic timelines that are governed by semester structures, assessment cycles, accreditation reviews and clinical training requirements that cannot tolerate disruption.

Selecting the right MedTech partner remains a key hurdle due to varying institutional infrastructures and research maturity levels. Fazel identifies a primary issue, “Ensuring strategic alignment is one of the main challenges.” Misalignments often arise around deadlines and intellectual property expectations, underscoring the importance of intermediaries to bridge industry and academia effectively.

Supply chain vulnerabilities

Supply chain constraints in the region is particularly for specialised MedTech, simulation systems and proprietary consumables that depend on international manufacturing and complex regulatory approvals.

These vulnerabilities can be further intensified by external factors such as geopolitical instability, global trade disruptions, pandemics, or sudden changes in international logistics and regulatory environments. “Such delays can directly affect teaching schedules, clinical training and assessment continuity,” says Prof Marei.

Dr Fazel outlines proactive measures such as “early demand forecasting, regional warehousing, strategic supplier partnerships and close coordination with regulatory bodies.” Such strategies enable universities to sustain clinical education continuity amid global disruptions.



The main difficulty is not access to products, but in identifying partners who truly understand the academic environment.

— Prof Hesham Marei,
Vice Chancellor Academics and Dean,
College of Dentistry, Gulf Medical University

Value over lowest cost

Procurement practices in the GCC are also shifting from a ‘lowest bidder’ focus to a ‘best value’ model, evaluating total cost of ownership and educational impact. Prof Marei emphasises, “Universities now recognise that the lowest upfront cost often results in higher long-term expenses.” This approach prioritises teaching excellence and sustainable outcomes.

He also emphasises that in order to stay aligned with curricular evolution, MedTech firms must prioritise communication. Dr Fazel stresses, “It is crucial to maintain ongoing communication with academic stakeholders.” This ensures brands anticipate emerging needs and remain indispensable partners. ■

Preparing graduates for jobs that don't exist yet

Universities are rethinking curricula, industry engagement and learning models to equip graduates for a job market defined by rapid technological and economic change

By **Amitha R**

As artificial intelligence, automation and shifting economic priorities reshape the labour market, universities are facing a fundamental question: how do you prepare graduates for roles that are still taking shape? For higher education leaders, the challenge is no longer limited to employability at graduation, but to ensuring relevance across decades of professional change.

Universities are responding by re-examining how learning happens, moving beyond narrow discipline-based training to curricula that emphasise adaptability, critical thinking and lifelong learning. From industry-linked projects and interdisciplinary programmes to greater integration of digital and AI skills, institutions are rethinking the relationship between education and work.

Leaders from universities across the GCC offer insights into how higher education is adapting to prepare graduates not just for their first job but for careers that will unfold in an unpredictable world.



Prof Bassam Alameddine
President, American University of Ras Al Khaimah

Preparing graduates for careers that may not yet exist requires more than updating curricula; it demands a holistic shift in how universities cultivate talent and develop adaptability. At the American University of Ras al Khaimah (AURAK),

our focus is to graduate learners who can think critically, adapt confidently and lead responsibly in a world defined by rapid disruptive technological change. We integrate interdisciplinary learning, experiential opportunities and AI-enabled tools to ensure that our students are not passive recipients of knowledge but active problem-solvers. Equally vital are the human qualities, notably, resilience, ethical awareness, communication and creativity, which enable individuals to overcome uncertainty. By nurturing curiosity and fostering a mindset of lifelong learning, universities empower graduates to succeed in emerging fields and shape the future with integrity and impact.



Dr Tod Laursen
Chancellor, American University of Sharjah

“At AUS, preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist means equipping them for multiple career pathways and a lifetime of learning. Traits such as emotional intelligence, collaboration and adaptability are now invoked so often that they risk becoming truisms. The real test is whether those qualities emerge not just in mission statements, but in practice.

For AUS, the answer begins with the people who stand at the front of our classrooms: our faculty. They are the main reason students choose to remain after they join, and also the reason they succeed when they leave. They teach, mentor and guide students as they grow into capable,

confident professionals. Their work drives our top employability outcomes, and we are proud to rank first in the UAE for employer reputation (QS World University Rankings). At AUS, employability is not simply a metric we track, but rather a measure of our success as educators.

At AUS, students learn as much outside of the classroom as they do within it. For instance, they have recently designed multifunctional robotic arms for satellite docking with the National Space Centre, exhibited original work at premium industry exhibitions and contributed to national research on persistent environmental pollutants, work that is helping shape public understanding of risk.

Preparing students for the future is not about chasing fanciful, speculative jobs. It is about giving students the breadth and intellectual flexibility to thrive personally and professionally, while staying in touch with industry's ever-evolving demands.”



Vanessa Northway
Deputy Vice Principal - Learning & Teaching and Student Experience, Heriot-Watt University Dubai

Heriot-Watt University Dubai has significantly strengthened its global collaboration initiatives to ensure our programmes remain closely aligned with emerging industry needs. By leveraging partnerships with leading international universities, research institutions and industry players, we have created opportunities for students and faculty to engage in

cross-border research, internships and joint projects that reflect global best practices. These collaborations enable our students to gain exposure to international standards, innovative technologies and emerging trends, equipping them with the skills and perspectives required by rapidly evolving industries.

The curriculum is reviewed and updated regularly and systematically to ensure it remains closely aligned with evolving industry needs. Typically, each programme undergoes a comprehensive review every two to three years, supplemented by ongoing feedback from industry advisory boards, employers, alumni and faculty. We also prioritise field trips, both local and international, along with seminars and masterclasses from experts. This approach enables our students to graduate with not only a strong academic foundation but also the practical capabilities and adaptability required to thrive in dynamic, rapidly changing sectors.

The university stays abreast of the latest industry developments so we can prepare our graduates for the job market. For instance, many of the programmes we offer are aligned with national priorities and emerging roles. These include degrees such as artificial intelligence, mechanical and energy engineering, real estate management and finance, and business analytics. Our industry relationships, career fairs, counselling services and professional workshops also help students navigate an ever-evolving job market with confidence.



Sergei Guriev
Dean, London Business School

The world of work is changing rapidly, and the AI revolution will lead to loss of jobs, the creation of new ones and the recombination of tasks within many roles. London Business School (LBS) graduates are employed in. While it is too early to tell what the long-term impact will be, educational institutions must

prepare students to thrive through change and uncertainty.

At London Business School we respond to this challenge with a three-pronged approach. First, we are at the forefront of studying the impact of AI on business and how lifelong learners can respond to those challenges. We recently launched the LBS Data Science & AI Initiative, to actively shape the way AI can create value, drive innovation and deliver positive impact across business and society.

Second, we equip our students with AI skills, both teaching them how to use AI but also integrating AI in teaching non-AI subjects. Whether seeking new jobs with traditional employers or working in start-ups and scale-ups, AI will help LBS students reach new heights.

Third, we prioritise lifelong learning. As technological disruption accelerates, even people with one or multiple university degrees will need to continue learning. We offer (and continue to develop) a wide portfolio of full-time and part-time programmes and executive education courses for mid-career and senior business leaders that help upgrade their leadership skills, strategic mindset and confidence to work in complex, fast-changing environments. We are also launching an endowed Institute on Longevity and Business. Research on lifelong learning will be at the core of the Institute's research agenda that will develop practical insights that can help leaders navigate the world of longer lives and careers.



Randa Bessiso
Founding Director - Middle East, The University of Manchester

At the Middle East branch in Dubai, we have pioneered business education for working professionals through our flexible learning part-time master's programmes, supporting and graduating thousands of students since 2006. With the pace of technological, economic and

social change, it's essential to help students prepare for future roles. The key is to embed employability across curricula and develop adaptability, transferable skills (communication, problem-solving, leadership, digital and AI literacy) and a commitment to lifelong learning. Our students and alumni also have access to mentoring, careers services, exposure to employers and a supporting network of peers. Times Higher Education ranks The University of Manchester 5th in the UK and 56th in the world for graduate employability. This is one of the clearest measures of our success and it's because employers believe the Manchester experience, combining teaching, research excellence and social responsibility, produces graduates ready to make a real difference from day one.



Dr Karim Seghir
Chancellor, Ajman University (AU)

The future isn't just something that happens to us; society continually shapes it through decisions, ethics and actions. At Ajman University, we provide spaces and settings for our students to work with innovation and compassion towards a shared, sustainable and prosperous future. We are dedicated to breaking down barriers that separate universities from society and industry, fostering a curriculum of 'Edupreneurship'. It's the reason we created MASAR Career Excellence, which offers students comprehensive programmes that uniquely prepare them for the workplace. MASAR also provides industry partners with opportunities to engage directly with our students' talents and skills.

Our partnership with P&T Architects and Engineers Ltd. in Dubai is a great example. P&T's experts develop courses and teach at AU, and our architecture students gain practical experience through fieldwork with the firm. Every moment that stakeholders can connect and collaborate enhances opportunities for meaningful social impact today and tomorrow. ■



GCC universities report 40–60% faster experiment set-up cycles and stronger student capstone outcomes through the use of AI, cloud and robotics

The rise of new age labs

No longer confined to static spaces, laboratories in universities across the GCC are evolving into dynamic hubs that adapt to curriculum needs and technological advancements, strengthening experiential learning, research and industry relevance

By **Ritika**

Laboratories in the GCC are undergoing a profound transformation as universities reimagine these spaces to integrate cutting-edge technologies, foster interdisciplinary collaboration and align with global educational trends.

New-age laboratories today have evolved from basic, isolated spaces into smart, adaptable environments that support interdisciplinary research, precise experimentation and advanced teaching.

This shift, more than an exercise in upgrading facilities, is also aimed at catering to the demands of a rapidly evolving job market and preparing students for future challenges, where adaptability, innovation and sustainability are paramount.

The higher education sector in the region, led by the UAE and Saudi Arabia, has long been a hub for innovation, particularly in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and universities here are prioritising labs that go beyond traditional models.

These new age labs incorporate flexible designs, smart technologies and collaborative frameworks, enabling seamless integration of theoretical learning with practical application.

Advancements in laboratory design

A major trend taking shape is the development of modular and flexible lab designs allowing institutions to adapt quickly to changing research needs and interdisciplinary demands, moving away from rigid, siloed setups to more integrated environments.



Collaborations are structured to go beyond equipment supply, incorporating faculty and student training, technical customisation, documentation and continuous upgrade pathways.

— **Prof Sourī Banerjee**,
Director, BITS Pilani Dubai Campus

Prof Khalid Hussain, Interim Provost at the American University of Ras Al Khaimah emphasises a shift towards a modular lab design philosophy. This approach, he explains, enables rapid reconfiguration based on emerging



Partnerships are formalised through MoUs that outline roles, responsibilities, technology integration and opportunities for student engagement.

— **Dr C Komathi Jeyakaran**,
Assistant Professor, Department of
Computer Studies & Engineering,
Symbiosis Dubai

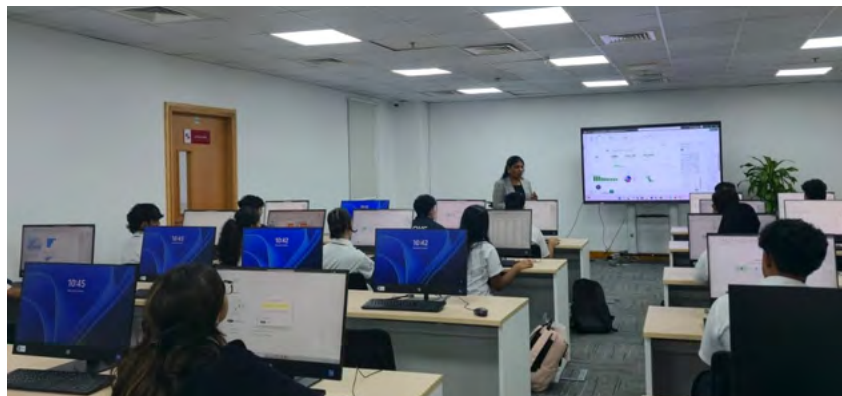
priorities. “Recent advancements include open, flexible lab layouts that can accommodate multiple disciplines within one environment,” he says. Such designs not only promote efficiency but also reduce long-term costs by facilitating easy modifications.

Hussain further notes that sustainability is a key driver, with labs incorporating features that extend their lifespan amid technological evolution. “Our labs remain relevant as technology evolves, reducing costly overhauls and enabling rapid adoption of new research directions,” he adds. This perspective is echoed by others, who see modular designs as essential for fostering collaboration across fields like engineering and biotechnology.

Prof Souri Banerjee, Director of BITS Pilani Dubai Campus shares a similar view, highlighting how his institution has implemented scalable lab spaces. Banerjee points out that these include movable workstations and shared zones for instrumentation, which enhance interaction between experimental and computational work. He describes this as “a modular, scalable and reconfigurable laboratory design philosophy,” underscoring its role in creating versatile environments.

By prioritising adaptability, universities in the region are addressing the need for spaces that support both individual research and team-based projects, ultimately enriching the learning experience for students.

At De Montfort University, Dubai, the focus is on purpose-built labs



At Symbiosis Dubai, tech-infused labs support creativity, collaboration and rapid experimentation in digitally rich learning environments

that mimic industry settings. Simon Bradbury, Pro Vice-Chancellor International, De Montfort University, Dubai discusses how flexibility is embedded in their design principles. “Flexibility is a core design principle, enabling spaces to shift between teaching, workshops and collaborative projects,” he explains. This strategy, according to Bradbury, ensures that labs are not static entities but dynamic hubs that evolve with curriculum requirements and technological advancements.

Dr Balamurugan Balusamy, Chairperson of the School of Engineering & IT at Manipal Academy of Higher Education also advocates for designs that encourage cross-disciplinary engagement. Balusamy highlights the benefits of open layouts, saying, “Our facilities feature open layouts and modular workstations that can be reconfigured for joint projects between CS, Engineering, Business and Design.” This approach, he argues, fosters innovative problem-solving by breaking down traditional barriers, a crucial element in preparing students for multifaceted real-world scenarios.

Emerging technologies in lab environments

Institutions are incorporating tools like artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and automated systems to enhance research capabilities and simulate real-world applications, thereby making labs more interactive and efficient, bridging the gap between academia and industry.

Prof Hussain, articulating this shift at the American University of Ras Al Khaimah, where labs now feature advanced tools, mentions “AI-enabled experimentation platforms, remote monitoring systems, digital twin environments and sensor-rich data acquisition networks” as key innovations that support real-time analytics. “We are also expanding our capacity in robotics, drone technology,



We are also expanding our capacity in robotics, drone technology, additive manufacturing, advanced materials testing, cybersecurity and sustainable energy systems

— **Prof Khalid Hussain**,
Interim Provost, American University of
Ras Al Khaimah

additive manufacturing, advanced materials testing, cybersecurity and sustainable energy systems,” he adds.

These elements equip students with skills demanded by employers, such as data analysis and predictive modelling.

Prof Banerjee says their facilities at BITS Pilani Dubai Campus support key areas such as “smart infrastructure and buildings, sustainable energy systems, advanced manufacturing, aerospace and autonomous platforms, emerging capabilities in biotechnology, tissue engineering, biosensors and artificial intelligence.”

According to him, facilities also include high-performance computing, AI-enabled robotics, modern analytical and characterisation instruments

and immersive AR/VR environments. “Together, these innovations enable data-driven experimentation, interdisciplinary research and hands-on learning that closely reflect real-world engineering and scientific practice,” he adds.

De Montfort University Dubai has invested in digitally enabled laboratory, classroom and studio spaces across computing, cybersecurity, engineering, design, psychology and finance. Bradbury highlights how these technologies integrate industry-standard software and platforms that reflect professional practice, particularly within cybersecurity and finance.

According to him, virtualisation and simulation technologies are used to replicate real-world scenarios, allowing students to apply theory in practical contexts, from cyber defence environments to engineering systems and trading simulations.

Dr Balusamy says MAHE Dubai is building a future-ready ecosystem across its labs. “Our Computer Science and Engineering labs now include cloud innovation suites, allowing students to build and test cloud-native applications. We’ve introduced advanced networking and cybersecurity labs, and AI and robotics labs and industrial robotics kits,” he adds.

According to Dr Balusamy, these new age labs are being designed to support real-time processing with OpenCL acceleration, where Remote iLabs provide anytime, anywhere access to experiments and is a key enabler of BYOD learning. “The




Our facilities feature open layouts and modular workstations that can be reconfigured for joint projects between CS, Engineering, Business and Design.

— **Dr Balamurugan Balusamy**,
Chairperson, School of Engineering & IT,
Manipal Academy of Higher Education Dubai

integration of HUDA (Hybrid Unified Digital Automation) further supports scalable IoT and cross-disciplinary automation projects,” he says.

“By bringing such diverse technologies under one roof, we ensure that learning is deeply experiential, whether a student is designing a virtual building, programming an autonomous drone, or analysing financial data,” he adds.

Emphasising on the creative potential of tech-infused labs, Dr

C Komathi Jeyakaran, Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Studies & Engineering at Symbiosis Dubai describes them as “digitally rich environments that support creativity, collaboration and rapid experimentation.” She says they shorten development cycles and encourages interdisciplinary teamwork, a vital aspect in fields like engineering and design.

The adoption of these technologies across labs at higher education institutions in the GCC is not without challenges, such as the need for ongoing training and infrastructure investment. However, the benefits are clear: enhanced data accuracy, reduced errors and improved research outcomes. For instance, AI-driven platforms can analyse experiments in real time, allowing students to iterate quickly and learn from failures. This aligns with the region’s push towards digital transformation, ensuring that higher education remains at the forefront of global trends.

Creating efficiency and connectivity

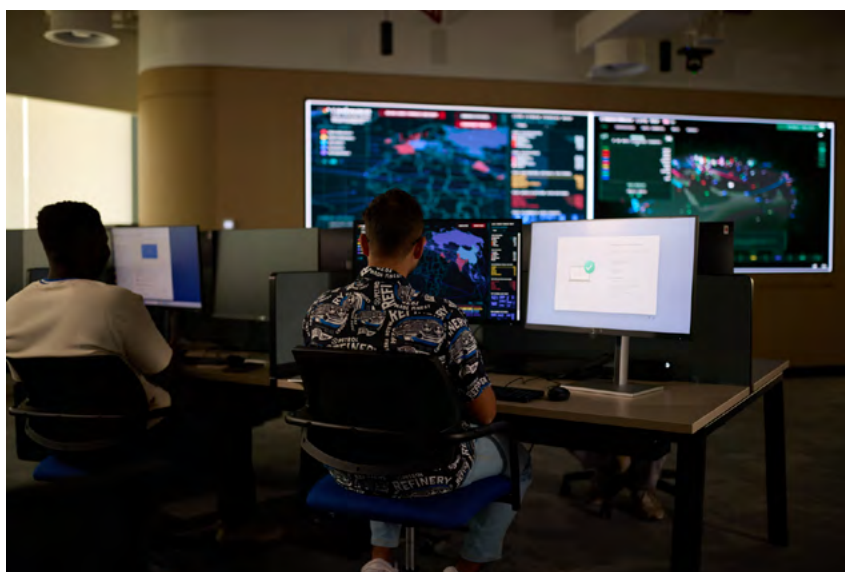
The transition towards smart labs means implementing automation, connectivity and intelligent management by leveraging IoT and AI to optimise workflows, making research more efficient and accessible.

The transition at the American University of Ras Al Khaimah is anchored on embedding intelligence, automation and connectivity into every stage of the research workflow. By implementing IoT-enabled equipment, Prof Hussain points out significant improvements in efficiency such as faster data processing and better resource allocation.

Prof Banerjee says, “Research efficiency has increased significantly through reduced experimentation cycles, better resource utilisation and seamless integration between theory and practice.” According to him, smart labs are shortening timelines for projects, particularly in fast-paced fields such as AI and biotechnology.

For Bradbury the transition towards smart, technology-enabled labs is centred on research-informed teaching rather than traditional research activity.

This approach he argues, “allows emerging technologies such as AI-driven design processes and advanced computing platforms to be embedded directly into teaching and applied projects,” leading to learning becoming more efficient, practical and closely aligned with evolving industry expectations.



De Montfort University Dubai has developed purpose-built labs that closely replicate industry environments

Dr Balusamy, underscoring the practical advantages, explains that the labs at MAHE Dubai use “digital intelligence and connectivity” for real-time tracking. This has streamlined operations and aligned research with modern standards. Likewise, Dr Jeyakaran also points out how these environments facilitate rapid experimentation, fostering a culture of innovation.

Smart labs are also promoting inclusivity by enabling remote access, which is especially valuable in the GCC’s diverse student population. This connectivity ensures that education is not limited by physical boundaries, supporting collaborative efforts across campuses and even internationally.

As Balusamy explains, experiments that once required manual monitoring can now be tracked remotely in real time. “We’ve moved to cloud-based lab management platforms, so data from our experiments is instantly recorded and accessible to team members, whether they are on campus or off-site,” he says, adding that such high level of connectivity and automation has effectively turned their labs into adaptive, self-monitoring ecosystems.

According to him, its impact on research efficiency has been remarkable. “We’ve witnessed 40-60% faster set up cycles for experiments and higher quality student capstone projects leveraging AI, cloud and robotics,” he adds.

There is greater emphasis on high-precision instruments, data integration, safety and sustainability, says Faraz Ahmed Khan, Sales Manager at Laboratory Scientific Supplies FZC. “Institutions now require labs that not only deliver reliable results but also integrate seamlessly into curricula, research workflows and industry collaborations, a shift from standalone equipment to complete, value-added laboratory ecosystems,” he says.

Choosing the right partners

Meanwhile, institutions are increasingly focusing on strategic partnerships with technology vendors to enhance laboratory capabilities. Vendors are evaluated based on their proven track record, reputation and ability to provide cutting-edge solutions that meet educational needs. Beyond initial delivery, partners are chosen for their commitment to ongoing assistance, including training programmes, technical customisation and pathways for upgrades.

As Prof Hussain points out that vendor selection is also based on their capacity to support integration with existing platforms, ensuring seamless interoperability.



“Our collaborations are often structured as strategic partnerships, not merely procurement contracts, allowing joint curriculum development, student certifications, faculty training and research collaboration,” he says.

Echoing a similar strategy, Prof Banerjee says it’s the faculty experts who define technical specifications aligned with teaching and research goals, followed by institutional procurement and competitive evaluation. “Collaborations are structured to go beyond equipment supply, incorporating faculty and student training, technical customisation, documentation and continuous upgrade pathways,” he explains, adding that this approach ensures that partnerships remain aligned with evolving academic priorities while providing students and researchers access to industry-grade platforms and hands-on learning opportunities.

De Montfort University Dubai, Bradbury notes, prioritises industry relevance, academic fit and long-term value in decision-making. “Priority is given to organisations that can support implementation, staff training and future platform development, rather than providing standalone tools,” he adds.

Dr Balusamy says they prefer to work with technology vendors and solution providers who support global certifications and are willing to collaborate in the long run. “Crucially, our collaborations are structured to be more than transactional supplier agreements; they’re true partnerships in curriculum and research,” he says.

Dr Jeyakaran says at Symbiosis Dubai, partnerships with technology vendors are strategic, long-term and collaborative but not merely transactional relationships. “Partnerships are formalised through MoUs that outline roles, responsibilities, technology integration and opportunities for student engagement,” she says, adding that this ensures continuity and meaningful collaboration.

Sharing a vendor’s perspective, Khan points out that suppliers always prefer to work collaboratively with academic institutions to understand research focus areas, lab space constraints, budget parameters and long-term goals.

“Based on these insights, our team proposes tailored solutions, from equipment selection to project management and phased delivery plans, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities,” he adds.

Elaborating on the challenges faced by suppliers, Khan says keeping pace with rapid technological change, ensuring cost-effective solutions and aligning diverse institutional needs with available infrastructure and budgets can be challenging.

Industry partnerships

Partnerships between universities and leading laboratory technology brands lead to the creation of specialised hubs focused on cutting-edge fields such as AI, machine learning, cybersecurity and robotics. Additionally, students gain access to industry-recognised certifications and micro-credentials.

Prof Hussain points out that “these collaborations enable the establishment of new centers of excellence in areas such as AI & machine learning, cybersecurity, robotics, sustainable energy and innovation entrepreneurship.” According to him, such partnerships support the development of industry-informed curricula and provide industry-recognised micro-credentials and certifications that strengthen graduate employability.

For Prof Banerjee such collaborations also enable students to work with globally relevant tools. “Industry partnerships also facilitate joint research, knowledge exchange and exposure to real-world engineering challenges,” he says.

Overall, such strategic partnerships with industry ensures that laboratory designs and technologies remain aligned with market needs, fostering a symbiotic relationship between academia and business. ■



CANADIAN
UNIVERSITY DUBAI
Your portal to Canadian education

Boost Your Employability for the Future
of Work at Dubai's #1 Ranked University



Future-ready skills
Industry exposure
Career impact



NEW at CUD: Minors in Business Administration

For BBA and Non-BBA Students

Join us for the Open House

8 February | City Walk Campus | 12:00–6:00 PM

Fall Intake | September 2026
Applications Now Open



INSPIRING MINDS
TRANSFORMING LIVES

مرخصة من وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي في دولة الإمارات
Licensed by Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

800 MYCUD (69283)
www.cud.ac.ae