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The University of Manchester

The University of Manchester - Dubai



Alumni Book 2026

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Message from the Founding Director & CEO, Middle East

The University of Manchester - Dubai



Welcome to the 2026 Student and Alumni Yearbook

It is always a pleasure to be among friends, colleagues, students and alumni. Our Annual Students and Alumni Gala Dinner is one of the highlights of the year: a chance to make new connections, rekindle old friendships and celebrate the community we have built together across the region.

This year, however, gives us an especially important reason to pause and reflect.

2026 marks 20 years since The University of Manchester established its presence in Dubai Knowledge Park.

This yearbook is therefore more than a record of another year. It is a celebration of the people who have shaped our journey: our students and alumni, colleagues and academics, partners and friends.

Over two decades, we have experienced milestones, successes and challenges. We have navigated global financial crises, conflicts and a pandemic. Through it all, our regional community has remained remarkably resilient, supported by the University's leadership and our many friends and partners in the UAE.

Around the walls of our Dubai branch are photographs of every student cohort since 2006. They tell a simple story: our work is about helping people succeed.

Every student becomes an alumni. Many remain actively connected to the branch and the University as mentors, speakers, adjunct faculty, partners and friends. I believe the quality of these relationships is the true measure of our success in the Middle East.

The numbers matter, of course. Over 20 years, thousands of working professionals from across the region have studied with us, developing their careers and, in many cases, changing the course of their lives.

But our story is about more than numbers.

A University Branch for the Region

Our role as the University's Middle East branch continues to evolve. While our buildings, programmes and ambitions have grown, one thing has remained constant: our belief in people and in the power of education to change lives.

Today, The University of Manchester - Dubai operates as a fully

fledged branch for the Middle East. It is licensed by the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, with the University's academic programmes accredited by the UAE Commission for Academic Accreditation.

The branch now contributes across all three pillars of the University's mission: teaching and learning, research, and social responsibility.

We are a flexible learning hub and a connector of people, organisations, ideas, data and expertise between the Middle East, the wider region and Manchester. Increasingly, we are also becoming a regional hub for research collaboration with government, industry and academic partners.

Our inaugural Research Forum in 2026 was an important milestone in that journey. It brought together representatives from MOHESR, KHDA and ADEK, industry partners, universities, alumni, students, academic colleagues and the University's Business Engagement team.

The purpose was simple: to explore how universities, business and government can work together to turn research and knowledge into practical impact.

From Manchester for the World

This work reflects the University's new 10-year strategy and its powerful ambition: "From Manchester for the world."

It is an ambition to mobilise our community, build on the strengths of the regions in which we operate, and use our expertise and social responsibility to make a positive difference.

We call this "Manchesterness" - being practical, collaborative, inventive and purposeful; seeing an opportunity and getting the job done.

Not all of us are from Manchester, but through our connection to the University we share a special relationship with the city and its people. That spirit feels particularly relevant in Dubai.

Dubai, the UAE, and the wider GCC have an extraordinary ambition to attract, nurture and develop global talent and build a knowledge-driven economy. The University's ambition to excel in research, learning and progressive impact aligns strongly with that vision.

Our North Star is clear: to be a great 21st-century university, creating knowledge for the public good, locally and globally.

That means excellence in teaching and research, an outstanding student experience, inspiring innovation and creating the knowledge and graduates who can help address some of the world's most pressing challenges.

Looking Forward

My own experience of leadership and research has taught me that partnerships are not transactions. They are relationships built on responsibility, transparency and shared benefit.

That principle is at the heart of our work in the Middle East.

Our partnerships with government, business, universities, schools, communities and individuals allow ideas to become opportunities, opportunities to become action, and action to create lasting impact.

That is why our 20th anniversary is about more than looking back. It is a moment to recognise how far we have come and to think boldly about what comes next.

When we established ourselves in Dubai in 2006, we knew we were in the right place at the right time.

Twenty years on, we still do.

The world has changed, and change is constant. But the pace and ambition of Dubai and the UAE make this an especially exciting place to be. Keeping pace is a challenge, but also a tremendous source of inspiration.

There are far too many people and organisations to thank individually after 20 years of activity, but you know who you are.

I would particularly like to thank my team at the branch for their passion, commitment and support. The success of these past 20 years belongs to everyone who has contributed to our journey.

And most of all, I thank our students and alumni.

This yearbook is a celebration of you.

It captures some of the people, achievements, friendships and moments that have shaped our year. But it also represents something much bigger: a community that has grown, adapted and flourished over two decades.

Our journey has always been about people helping other people succeed.

That remains our purpose.

And as we look towards the next 20 years, I am confident that our greatest achievements are still ahead of us.

Thank you for making the last 20 years such a success.

Here's to the next 20.

With warmest wishes,

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

Message from The University of Manchester – Dubai Team



The Annual Student and Alumni Gala Dinner is the highlight of our face-to-face social calendar and our opportunity to celebrate your success and achievements. It is a chance to recognise the contribution you make to The University of Manchester, The University of Manchester–Dubai and the wider regional community.

This year, the celebration is especially significant as we mark the 20th anniversary of The University of Manchester's Middle East branch in Dubai, 20 years of supporting students and alumni across the region and building a vibrant and connected Manchester community.

We know that, in such a large and diverse community, not everyone is able to join us this evening. You are very much part of our thoughts and our community, and we will share highlights of the Gala with students and alumni across the region.

The Gala is also an exciting opportunity to welcome our newest part-time master's students. Over the past 12 months, we have been delighted to welcome an outstanding group of high-calibre professionals to our programmes. Many already hold master's degrees, are building successful careers and occupy senior leadership positions in significant organisations. Their experience, perspectives and ambitions add further strength to our shared community.

Despite the regional headwinds we have all faced, our student community continues to grow across our portfolio of programmes, including the Global Part-time MBA, MSc Financial

Management and MA Educational Leadership in Practice.

We have also continued, wherever possible, to deliver the networking events, faculty-led masterclasses, and workshops that are such an important part of the student experience. There have inevitably been some disruptions, but our team remains committed to maintaining these opportunities for connection and learning, and has considerable experience in making them happen when circumstances allow.

Our regional network of corporate and social responsibility partners is also continuing to grow. These organisations make an important contribution to our community and support many of our activities throughout the year, including the Gala. We are extremely grateful for their continued partnership.

Today, The University of Manchester–Dubai, the University's Middle East branch, remains one of the largest and fastest-growing locations in the University's international network.

But our greatest strength is not measured simply by numbers.

It is the quality of our students and alumni, the strength of our partnerships, and the active support of the diverse community we have built together across the region.

Thank you for being such an important part of our 20-year journey and for helping us shape the next chapter.

Alumni Ambassadors Award 2025



Eng. Faisal Haddawi

Chairman of the Board
EstidamaKSA



Eng. Mohammad AlMuaili

Vice Chairman - CEO
KRH Group



Dr. Mouza Al Ameri

Breast Oncoplastic Surgeon
SEHA Tawam Hospital



Saad Ansari

Co-founder & CEO
Xpence



Nivin Abu-Snaineh

VP Global Head Sales & Distribution,
Wealth Management & Private Banking
Arab Bank



Mitchell van Wyk

Finance Director
Sodexo | Kelvin



Andrew Strefford

Executive Director - Business
Development and Program Management
ASPIRE



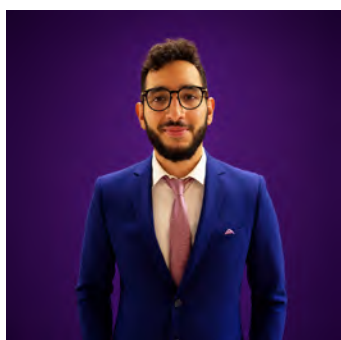
Ibrahim Amayreh

Manager
KPMG, KSA



Sarah Abuagela

Partner
Ceras Ventures



Mohammad Al Habbal

Stem Coordinator Middle/Senior School
ANPS



Rebecca Bleek

Affinity Leader
IMENA

Alumni Spotlight



Eng. Mohammed Al Muaili
Vice Chairman - CEO
KRH Group

Eng. Mohammed E. Al Muaili is a Chief Executive Officer with over 25 years of experience across logistics, operations, and international business. His work has focused on building organisations, growing businesses, and navigating complex environments across different markets. He currently serves at Kuwait Resources House (KRH), as Vice Chairman - CEO.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from California State University and completed executive education at London Business School. He earned his MBA from The University of Manchester in 2021 as part of the "COVID cohort" and was honoured with the Alumni Ambassador Award in 2025.

Simon Zoghbi
Chief Executive Officer
Chattels & More

Rocking the boat: Taking the quantum leap to the ultimate business leadership role Simon Zoghbi has recently moved into a new role with Chattels & More, stepping up from his previous VP business leadership role to the ultimate strategic decision-maker position of the organisation - CEO. Simon had acquired solid business experience and a track record of success in a career built over many years but – proving it is never too late – decided to pursue the MBA aged 49.

Prior to his current role, his career over the previous eight years had included substantial accomplishments - expanding the business from two retail locations to 18 and achieving remarkable financial growth with consistent double-digit increases annually.



Tina Lobo Belthur
Group Human Resources and Administration Director
RTS Investments Group

Tina Belthur is an experienced business leader with progressive management experience developed over a 20+ year career. RTS Investments Group LLC comprises a diverse portfolio of companies operating in Hospitality, Food and Beverage, Trading, Construction, Mining and Real Estate. Tina directs HR and Administrative operations for 2,500 employees across multiple offices, factories and project locations in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. She reports directly to the Chairman and Owner and is responsible for setting out the strategic implementation of the HR and Administration principles and guidelines for the diverse companies to align with the Group's strategic priorities.



Chantelle Asante

**Assistant Headteacher
Anthem Schools Trust**

Chantelle Asante is a strategic leader with more than 13 years of experience driving performance, culture, and outcomes across complex, multicultural environments. She has designed and led high-impact professional development and capacity-building programmes across diverse teams and is recognised for her transformational leadership, using data-driven strategies to improve engagement, collaboration, and accountability. Now, her aim is seeking to bring her expertise to mission-driven organisations in consulting, leadership development, and organisational strategy.

Sarah El Khanji

**G2 Homeroom Teacher & Team Leader
ACS International School Doha**

Sarah El Khanji is an experienced educator with over five years in the international education sector in Qatar, specialising in the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP). Three years ago, she was a Jolly Phonics Language Lead and, for the last two years, she has been a team lead. Her professional philosophy focuses on empowering students to become lifelong learners equipped with critical thinking, curiosity, and a global perspective. She's particularly passionate about instilling a love for reading from the early years, recognising it as foundational to academic excellence and personal growth.



Would you like your story to be featured?
We would love to hear from you!

Share your interest with us at
alumni.me@manchester.ac.uk and be part of our
future **Alumni Spotlights**.

[Click here](#) to read our Alumni Spotlight stories

Manchester MentorME Programme

Connecting students and alumni through meaningful mentoring relationships

At The University of Manchester – Dubai, we recognise that meaningful learning continues beyond the classroom. The Manchester MentorME Programme connects students and alumni through purposeful mentoring relationships, creating opportunities to share knowledge, exchange experiences, and support personal and professional development.

Since its launch in 2023, MentorME has grown into a thriving platform for connection and collaboration, facilitating more than 200 mentoring connections and bringing together over 250 students and alumni across five successful cohorts.

The programme continues to strengthen our community by encouraging knowledge-sharing, guidance, and lifelong connections between the University's students and alumni.



Disclaimer: The Manchester MentorME Programme is currently transitioning to a new platform and is expected to be available soon. For further information or enquiries about the new platform, please contact alumni.me@manchester.ac.uk.



Ramadan Suhoor 2026

The University of Manchester – Dubai brought the spirit of Ramadan closer to its wider community through a series of special Suhoor gatherings held across Kuwait, Jeddah, and Riyadh in 2026.

These gatherings provided a meaningful opportunity for students, alumni, and members of the University community to come together, reconnect, and celebrate the values of community and togetherness that define the holy month.

Beyond sharing a traditional Suhoor, the evenings created a welcoming space for conversations, new connections, and the exchange of experiences across generations. The gatherings reflected the University's commitment to building a strong, connected global community and nurturing relationships that extend well beyond the classroom.

Jeddah



Kuwait



Riyadh





Stronger Together - 20 Years of Celebration

Our 20th anniversary celebrations began on 12 February 2026 with a special community gathering at Dubai Knowledge Park. Bringing together our social responsibility and strategic talent partners, the evening celebrated collaboration, learning, and shared purpose.

Guests enjoyed an engaging outdoor festival featuring interactive activities, games, and opportunities to connect. A highlight of the evening was a masterclass led by Professor Ken McPhail, Head of Alliance Manchester Business School, exploring leadership, responsibility, and the evolving role of business in society.

The event marked the beginning of a year-long celebration of 20 years in the region, while reaffirming our commitment to lifelong learning, meaningful partnerships, and positive impact.





Retro Night: The Students & Alumni Gala Dinner 2025

The Students and Alumni Gala Dinner 2025 was a memorable celebration of connection, achievement, and community. Bringing together students, alumni, and guests, the evening created a valuable opportunity to reconnect, share experiences, and celebrate the journeys that continue to inspire our community.

It was wonderful to see meaningful conversations, new connections, and a strong sense of belonging throughout the event. As we reflect on the evening, we are grateful to everyone who attended and contributed to its success.

The Gala Dinner was a reminder that while individual journeys may take different paths, our shared community continues to bring us together.





Graduation Celebration 2025

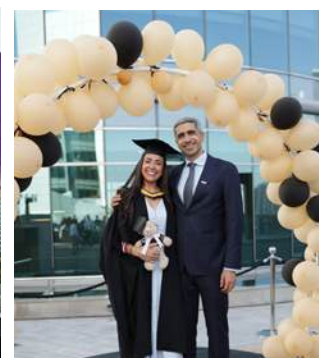
Congrats to the Graduating Class of 2025 - this was only the beginning. We can't wait to see how you shape the future with your talent, drive, and Manchester spirit.

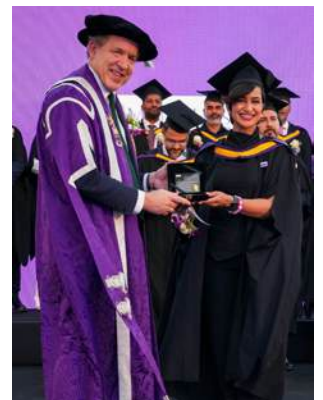
The celebration was special as it was presided over by the President and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Manchester, Professor Duncan Ivison, who was on his first official visit to the United Arab Emirates and opened the graduation celebration with an inspirational address. It was also attended by several delegates from the Manchester campus and Hong Kong and Shanghai Centres.

Other guest speakers who addressed the audience included Andrew Clark, Deputy Consul General Dubai Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; and Mazen Suleiman, Graduate Representative of the year and Senior Regional Sales Director of Industrial Automation Business - MEA, Delta Electronics EMEA.

Other key participants in the programme included Richard Cotton, Director of Student Recruitment and International Development at The University of Manchester and the three Programme Directors - Xavier Duran, MBA Programmes Director; Professor Arif Khurshed, Programme Director for MSc Financial Management; and Dr. Paul Armstrong, Programme Director for MA Educational Leadership in Practice as well as several members of the Middle East Branch Team.

Thank you to everyone from the UAE, Manchester, and across the globe that joined us for this very special day!





Entrepreneurship Club Launch

The Entrepreneurship Club was launched, on 25th November 2026, during the President & Vice-Chancellor of The University of Manchester, Professor Duncan Ivison's first official visit to the UAE.

We appreciate all our senior alumni and business partners who attended which included founders, growth professionals and eco-system enablers who shared not just their successes, but the real stories behind the journey. You have helped set the foundation for the club.

The event was opened by the Middle East Founding Director & CEO, Randa Bessiso, and we were honoured to be also joined by Professor John Holden, VP for Civic Engagement & Innovation at The University of Manchester, who spoke about nurturing meaningful entrepreneurial impact. Professor Duncan Ivison also shared his reflections on the importance of entrepreneurship, innovation and community, setting the tone for the Club and its future.

The main theme of the conversation was about the entrepreneurship journey with each of the participants around the table sharing their full and honest experience. It was a reminder that entrepreneurship isn't just about the destination; it's about cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset in any context, building community, and redefining success beyond only exits and returns.





Alumni Entrepreneurs' Participation, Entrepreneurship Club Members



Ziad Makhzoumi
Chief Executive Officer
Prime Strategy Consulting Group



Mohamed Roushdy
Founder
Fintech Bazaar



Mohannad AlKalash
VP - METAP Region
ZOOM



Dr. Bhaskar Dasgupta
Family Office Principal and
Board Member



Wasseem Suleiman
Lead Partner
Forvis Mazars, UAE



Saad Ansari
Co-Founder & CEO
Xpence



Dr. Mahdi Nazari Mehrabi
CTO & Co-Founder
NorthTelecom



Hadi Nazari Mehrabi
Group CEO
NorthTelecom



Anna Koriakovskaia
Chief Executive Officer
ANASOFT



Mohammed Jaffer
Regional Director
Visa



Mohamed Abdin
Commercial Director
CorporateStack Solutions



Kerry Watts
Managing Director & Co-Founder
Star Centre



Cara Chen
Associate Director – Life Science
G42



Dr. Usama Nouri
Founder and Managing Partner
AcceMind

Middle East - Challenge Accepted

On 23 November 2025, Prof. Duncan Ivison, President and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Manchester, officially launched the university's "Challenge Accepted" global campaign in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The event marked the campaign's first international launch outside the United Kingdom, highlighting Dubai's role as a vibrant hub for the University's global community. Hosted by The University of Manchester – Dubai, the gathering brought together alumni, academic leaders, and industry professionals from across the region.

The launch provided an opportunity to connect, inspire collaboration, and introduce the University's ambitious fundraising and volunteering initiative, which aims to bring its global community together to address some of the world's most pressing challenges.



Social Responsibility

At The University of Manchester – Dubai, social responsibility is central to how we connect with our community and contribute beyond the classroom. Through a range of initiatives, partnerships, and outreach activities, we strive to create a positive and lasting impact across the region.

By supporting volunteering, sustainability, and community-focused projects, we provide students and alumni with meaningful opportunities to contribute, develop a stronger sense of responsibility, and build valuable leadership skills.

Together with our partners and wider community, we remain committed to using knowledge, collaboration, and action as a force for positive change.



Turtle Rehabilitation Project

During his first UAE visit, Professor Duncan Ivison, President & Vice-Chancellor of The University of Manchester, joined delegates, alumni, and partners at the Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project. The visit concluded with the sunset release of six turtles, including "Manchester 2035", named in tribute to the University's vision for the future.





Philippine Bahrain Caregiver Society

Through our engagement with the Philippine Bahrain Caregiver Society, we supported initiatives focused on promoting health education and providing care assistance to the needy ones and labourers. The engagement reflected our commitment to community wellbeing, compassion, and creating a positive impact among those truly in need.



Iftaar Meal Distribution in Kuwait

As part of our commitment to social responsibility, The University of Manchester community supported an Iftaar Meal Distribution initiative in Kuwait, helping provide meals during the holy month of Ramadan. The initiative reflected the values of giving, compassion, and community, creating a meaningful impact through collective action.





Companies for Good - Toy Making

Through our engagement with Companies for Good, our community took part in meaningful activities designed to support those in need. Participants created handmade toys for underprivileged children including those living in refugee camps.



Student & Alumni Referral Programme



BeeKind, Beelnspired, BeetheChange, BeeManchester! Refer a friend, colleague or family member to any of our programmes and they can avail a 10% discount on their tuition fees, and you will also be rewarded!

[Click here](#) to get in touch with one of our counsellors to learn more.

Alumni Feedback Survey



The University of Manchester is committed to maintaining the highest standards of education and continuously improving the student and alumni experience.

This survey is designed to capture your feedback on how your studies have supported your career, personal development, and overall experience. Your responses will help us strengthen our Programmes and support future graduates.

The survey will take approximately 3–5 minutes.

Ministry of Higher Education Institutional Accreditation Survey



As a valued alumnus of the University of Manchester - Dubai, your experience after graduation matters to us. We want to understand how your studies have contributed to your overall journey since leaving the University.

IMPORTANT!

Your feedback is also vital to us for meeting the requirements of the:

- Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) and
- Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA),

which require us to collect specific graduate information. This information is crucial to maintain the accreditation of the programs by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR) of the UAE.

We kindly ask you to take a few minutes to complete the survey and share your latest information with us.

Your response will help us better understand the experiences and outcomes of our graduates and will contribute to the continued improvement of the student and alumni experience.



The survey will take approximately 5–6 minutes.

Keep in touch!

Connect & Engage

Stay connected with The University of Manchester - Dubai community beyond graduation. Share your latest achievements, career updates, and contact information with us and continue to engage through our virtual and in-person events and social responsibility initiatives.

Career Services

Need help with reviewing your resume, interviewing, or transitioning to a new career field? Our careers team would love to help.

Refer a Friend

Some of the best referrals of prospective students come from our alumni. Learn more about our Student Referral Programme by clicking [here](#).

Join us for our future events



Stay connected!

Email: alumni.me@manchester.ac.uk



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