

# UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

## BUSINESS SCHOOL - DUBAI CAMPUS

A Gulf News Sponsored Supplement

Thursday, February 27, 2025

### Strategic leadership development

30 years in the UAE: Strathclyde Business School develops business leaders to thrive in uncertain futures



University of  
**Strathclyde**  
Business  
School

**30**

YEARS OF  
EXCELLENCE IN THE UAE

# In sync with the pioneering and innovative nature of the UAE

**Professor David Hillier**, Associate Principal and Executive Dean of the University of Strathclyde Business School, draws inspiration from the nation's ideals and values to nurture cadres and staff, fostering their academic and professional growth



**SBS has an illustrious and pioneering history with the MBA – we launched the full time MBA back in 1966, being the first UK business school to offer a one year, full time MBA.”**

**T**his year marks 30 years since the University of Strathclyde Business School (SBS) launched an international centre in the city of Dubai and I'm delighted that so many ambitious and talented individuals have chosen Strathclyde for their MBA education over the past three decades. Now located in Dubai Knowledge Park, our state-of-the-art campus offers a unique learning environment for executives.

SBS has an illustrious and pioneering history with the MBA – we launched the full time MBA back in 1966 and we were the first UK business school to offer a one year, full time MBA. We were the first to offer a part time MBA in the UK and the first to offer a distance learning option in the UK.

We continued with our ambitions and led the way in opening international centres, enabling aspiring business leaders to study in a location close to home and work while studying an established and renowned MBA. Indeed, we were recognised for being leaders in international higher education by being presented with the Queen's Award for Export Achievement for our international expansion back in 1993.

We are proud to be a triple accredited business school, with accreditation from the international accrediting bodies, EQUIS, AMBA and AACSB. We were the first business school in Scotland to gain

triple accreditation as well as the first to gain the Association of Business School's Small Business Charter Award, which recognises our world-leading support for scaling firms in Scotland through innovation, internationalisation and leadership.

The UAE as a country has ideals and values which match Strathclyde's innovative and pioneering nature.

*Continued on page 4*

# “We strive to fulfil our mission of being the place of useful learning”

**Abigail Davenport**, Head of Strathclyde Business School, Dubai Campus elaborates on how the institution presents student experiences that are distinctive and unique

## What's the strategic vision behind Strathclyde's UAE expansion?

The Middle East region is a strategic priority for the University, building on our existing regional presence – with differentiated offerings in the UAE, Oman and Bahrain. Our engagement in the Gulf is further strengthened with the recent launch of a state-of-the-art Innovation, Research and Education hub in Manama, Bahrain.

Here in the UAE, we strive to fulfil our mission of being “the place of useful learning”, and progressing our University goals in line with the UAE's National Strategy for Higher Education 2030. Providing an educational and student experience that is distinctively Strathclyde whilst locally relevant is core to our sustained growth. Our partnerships with strong and diverse strategic regional partners enable us to further enhance the quality of executive education and positively impact local organisations.

## How do international accreditations enhance the MBA programme?

International accreditation demonstrates global quality standards, and Strathclyde Business School's long-held triple accreditation is a hallmark of the sustained quality of our well-established MBA programme. When weighing up their MBA options, students consider a number of factors such as; programme quality, flexibility, learning mode, cohort diversity, networking opportunities or price. By verifying a business school's accreditation status and rankings, students gain added reassurance; this international mark of quality often being a key factor in choosing a business school.

## What's the impact of scholarships on student diversity?

The average age of a Strathclyde MBA student is 35 years old, and they are usually in full-time employment in managerial or executive roles. The weekend classes and flexibility of the programme is designed for busy executives to develop alongside thriving in their professional career. Our student cohorts are very diverse in terms of nationality mix, business sectors and individual experiences. We are very proud of our diverse cohorts that support the value of peer learning, sharing diverse views and ideas. We do



**“We work with our UAE partners in exploring leadership capabilities and where Strathclyde can continue to add value in leadership development.”**

offer scholarships for a range of applicants including female leaders and UAE nationals.

## How does Strathclyde engage with its UAE alumni network?

Strathclyde has a very active and engaged alumni network. Here in the UAE, activities range from global meet ups, alumni committee meetings, informal social gatherings, on-campus masterclasses and online discussion forums – our alumni have many opportunities to

meet, engage and network. The Business School also offers alumni the opportunity to study additional MBA elective modules after graduation, to enjoy further continuous development.

Our UAE alumni are also deeply involved in entrepreneurship and have an Entrepreneurial Advisory Board offering pro bono advice to students, alumni and our wider community. The Board comprises leaders from industry, serial entrepreneurs, CEOs and prominent experts providing mentorship and helping budding entrepreneurs navigate challenges.

## Are there plans to launch new programmes in the UAE?

We work with a number of partners in the UAE, exploring leadership capabilities and where Strathclyde can continue to add value in leadership development and the higher education ecosystem. New programmes are planned for the future, aligning with the UAE's National Strategy for Education 2030 and continuing our contribution to this shared vision. In addition to the core MBA, specialist MBAs and modularisation of learning is a popular development choice. The executive short course expertise that Strathclyde has demonstrated both in Scotland and the Middle East is being further enhanced here in the UAE with expanded offerings to support the ever-growing business community.

## How does Strathclyde's content strategy support the UAE's National Strategy for Education 2030 in upskilling Emiratis, GCC nationals, and expats for the future?

The Executive MBA is designed to equip managers and leaders with the skills, knowledge, and experience needed to navigate today's complex business landscape. By blending academic theory with practical application, the programme enables professionals to tackle real-world challenges head-on.

A key strength of the Executive MBA lies in its direct link between coursework and managerial practice. Students bring their daily workplace challenges into the classroom, drawing on their industry expertise while engaging in discussions with peers. This interactive approach fosters fresh insights and cross-disciplinary thinking, benefiting both students and their employers by introducing innovative strategies and new ways of working.

This depth of collaboration with the business community is central to the programme. Students gain hands-on consultancy experience by working on real-world challenges faced by organisations. The MBA immerses students in high-level strategic problem-solving, refining their communication and influencing skills to drive meaningful change at the executive level.

By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the Executive MBA not only enhances individual careers but also delivers tangible benefits to businesses, fostering innovation and leadership in an ever-changing world. ■

# Teaching on the Strathclyde MBA

The academic teaching in the UAE is carried out through a mix of local counsellors and SBS academics from the Glasgow campus who conduct intensive seminars on teaching trips to Dubai. **Dr Sharon Lemac-Vincere**, SBS academic, Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, Strategy and Innovation, was the first academic in 2025 to fly out to the Gulf to teach in Dubai and other SBS centres. She was delighted to find herself teaching a very inspiring group of MBA students, and she also used her time in the UAE to engage in other research and networking activities nearby. Dr Lemac-Vincere was teaching Digital Transformation and her research interests include space, entrepreneurship and innovation. She shares her experiences as a honoured faculty member



I got 2025 off to a great start by spending some time in Dubai as part of my visit to the Gulf to teach at Strathclyde's centres there. I had the privilege of engaging with a group of lovely Executive MBA students, and we delved into what makes Dubai not just competitive but extraordinary on the global stage in an era of disruptive technology.

Together we discussed how Dubai's edge lies in agility and innovation – Dubai is a fast-moving city that embraces change with open arms, ensuring bureaucracy doesn't slow progress. We also identified Dubai's visionary leadership, with long-term, stable plans backed by funding and unwavering support, which are propelling the city into a future shaped by space exploration and disruptive technologies. It's evident when you're in Dubai that the Emirati traditions and values serve as a strong backbone to future plans, seamlessly integrating modernity while preserving heritage.

It was a pleasure to teach – and have discussions with – these executive-level students. We all agreed Dubai is an inspiring place to be, especially in an era where technology and ambition know no bounds.

I was delighted too to offer a Masterclass in Dubai on Space Cybersecurity. One of my areas of research, I was proud to highlight Scotland's quick adoption of this important sector, which will only continue to grow.

Travelling to our international centres also gave me the chance to engage with local businesses, organisations and individuals, which provides me and the business school with opportunities for future collaboration and engagement, as well as material for my own research. I took the opportunity to travel to Abu Dhabi where I met with the British Chamber of Commerce Abu Dhabi and visited the new aerospace facilities at Khalifa University.

It was wonderful to travel at what is an important time for Scottish heritage each year – Burns Night – which celebrates our national poet Robert Burns! I was delighted to be able to share some Scottish shortbread with the wonderful MBA cohort, which was so generously provided for us to enjoy. Back in Scotland, I am looking forward to seeing what's next for these executives – future leaders – and the incredible city of Dubai itself – and return soon in the not so distant future! ■

Continued from page 2



It's undoubtedly a country where its people strive to do well, succeed in their chosen career and develop themselves both academically and professionally.

We are delighted to offer our MBA in a country where the Ministry of Education launched the National Strategy for Higher Education 2030, a strategy which sets out to build and achieve the highest scientific and professional education standards to serve the UAE's future

generations. This strategy underlines the importance of educating the country's future talent to drive economic development and achieve national goals. The growth of the higher education sector in the UAE is clearly a crucial strategic priority. Strathclyde's ethos of being 'a place of useful learning' as set down by our founder, Professor John Anderson, in 1796 is in line with this strategy and our MBA provides people with the necessary

skills to progress their career and face the challenges of the future.

We can see this evidenced in our wonderful UAE alumni – we are incredibly proud of all our alumni we have seen take on senior roles after graduation and perform to the best of their ability, joining a network of Strathclyde alumni around the world. We have many incredibly successful alumni living and working in the UAE who are fabulous ambassadors both for the Strathclyde

MBA and the way the UAE values and rewards ambition and hard work.

While we celebrate 30 hugely rewarding years of being in Dubai, we are also looking to the future and thrilled to be in this exciting and inspirational part of the world. The UAE is ambitious in its plans for the country, its citizens and residents, and we are happy to play our part as the UAE solidifies its position as a global hub for higher education. ■

# “Our MBA programme has changed to become more practice focused”

**Dr Marisa Smith** is the Director of Strathclyde Executive Education and Development (SEED), and responsible for all Strathclyde's MBA programmes and executive education. She shares her role and responsibilities and how the history and current ethos of Strathclyde Business School combine to make the Strathclyde MBA stand out from its competitors

## What's your role and what does it involve?

I am the Director of Strathclyde Executive Education and Development (SEED). This entails looking after our MBA offerings as well as Continuous Professional Development, short courses and tailored corporate executive programmes.

## What changes have you seen in the MBA?

I have been involved in the MBA programme for over 13 years. Through this time, it has changed and evolved so much to keep up to date with the changing needs of businesses as well as to keep at the forefront of academic research. While the foundational elements of good management practice are everlasting, the way in which we do it changes – for example, how we respond to the rapid development of AI and how that impact on businesses, ethics and society or how to make meaningful change considering the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Our MBA has gone through some recent changes to make it more practice focused, including the introduction of two challenge-based modules. The Consulting Impact Challenge allows students to develop their consulting skills and work on several real-life company-based problems. We work closely with our business communities to help them solve problems within their organisations while simultaneously allowing students to gain relevant authentic consultancy experience. The Boardroom Challenge explores a more strategic level challenge that organisations may be facing. Students not only get to consolidate their consulting skills but also develop competencies in the communication and influencing skills required to make change at board level.

## What else does SEED offer?

We also work with organisations to design bespoke corporate MBAs. Our previous corporate MBAs have included Iberdrola, William Grants and Sons, and the Weir Group. A key part of our approach to corporate MBAs is that we collaborate and co-create with our corporate partners to design, deliver and develop programmes that support the organisation to realise their goals. SEED also runs open specialised MBA programmes such as our MBA in Sustainable Energy Futures, which was developed with leading academics working with industry partners to tackle some of the key issues facing the industry right now. We also offer short courses specific to organisational needs and have designed custom-made solutions for organisations



“We work closely with our business communities to help them solve problems within their organisations, while allowing students to gain consultancy experience.”

business school in Scotland to achieve triple accreditation. We have always been innovative in our approach to MBA development and delivery, for example, being the first one year full time MBA in the UK in 1966 taking in a diverse cohort of students. We also won the Queen's Award for Export Achievement in 1993 as a result of our international expansion with our international centres.

## What else makes SBS stand out as a business school?

Our MBA students benefit from our innovative Global Practitioners initiative: our Global Practitioners are a new class of colleagues who connect the academic and commercial worlds. They come from a diverse range of industries and backgrounds, reflecting the broad nature of subjects addressed in our general management programmes and the rich variety of students and colleague profiles in our learning environment. Our Global Practitioner initiative was shortlisted for AMBA's Best Innovation Strategy Award in 2024.

This award was introduced by AMBA to recognise and reward game-changing new practices, risks and creativity around a school's programmes, so we were especially delighted to be recognised in this category.

The Global Practitioners work across all MBA centres, but our international centres also have Local Counsellors who support the Strathclyde Faculty in contextualising the learning for the local environment. On our MBA we have Strathclyde Faculty who travel to our international centres to teach face-to-face. The Local Counsellors support students in-country to allow further consolidation and reflection on their learning.

Our MBA also allows students to personalise their learning through our electives and Summer School. The electives allow students to gain expertise in additional topics or they can deep dive into a subject that they found interesting in the core MBA.

Our electives are refreshed annually and are available at our main Glasgow campus and across our international centres, including Dubai. The Summer School, hosted each year in Glasgow, is a particular highlight for our UAE students.

We also recognise that many of our MBA students undertake their studies alongside their full-time jobs so we have a degree of flexibility in our programme to allow completion of the MBA. Our staff are very skilled in meeting the needs of students who are managing competing demands on their time. ■

## What makes the Strathclyde MBA special?

The Strathclyde MBA stands out due to it being one of the longest running MBAs with over 50 years' experience in the development and teaching of MBA students. We have been AMBA accredited for over 40 years and the Business School, as a whole, was the first

such as Leonardo (defense), Enable (third sector) and Johnstone Carmichael (finance).

# A transformative journey in more ways than one

**Khaled Sallam**, Director, Global Network Processing Product, GCC & NALP – VISA, and a Strathclyde MBA student since April 2024 shares his views on the programme



**E**mbarking on my MBA journey at Strathclyde Business School in Dubai has been nothing short of transformative. More than just a degree, it's been a gateway to new perspectives, strategic insights, and a powerful network of like-minded professionals. The programme masterfully blends academic depth with real-world relevance, ensuring every lesson learned translates into meaningful impact. With a world-class business school and an environment that thrives on collaboration, Strathclyde has exceeded my expectations in every way.

One of the standout aspects of the programme is its balance between theory and application. The curriculum is designed to challenge conventional thinking while equipping students with practical frameworks that can be immediately implemented in professional settings. From strategic management to digital transformation and leadership, every module is crafted to provide deep insights into modern business challenges. The case-study approach and interactive discussions make learning dynamic, fostering an engaging classroom experience that bridges academia and industry.

A key highlight has been applying my learning directly to real-world business challenges, enhancing my strategic decision-making and leadership skills. The diverse peer

group and extensive alumni network provide exceptional networking opportunities, offering exposure to different industries and global business practices. Learning alongside professionals from various backgrounds has been invaluable, as it brings different viewpoints into discussions, enriching the overall experience. The programme doesn't just focus on academic excellence but also encourages collaboration, critical thinking, and leadership development, which are essential skills in today's fast-paced business world.

Beyond the coursework, the support system at Strathclyde is outstanding. Faculty members bring a wealth of industry expertise, ensuring that discussions go beyond textbooks and into real-world business implications. The school also organises networking events, guest lectures, and industry engagements that allow students to connect with business leaders and innovators.

This programme has equipped me with the skills and mindset I need to excel. The MBA degree's strong emphasis on strategy, innovation, and global business perspectives makes it a valuable investment in my career growth. Strathclyde hasn't just educated me — it has empowered me to become a forward-thinking leader who can drive real change in my industry.



# Developing a strategic mindset and leadership capabilities

**Wasef Shakaa** is a Local Counsellor and Global Practitioner who teaches strategy on the MBA programme. A computer and communications engineer, he has a PhD in Management Science and also did his MBA at SBS. He has worked in senior positions at Siemens, Honeywell, SITA, Eltete and Dubai Projects and has experience in financial technology, manufacturing, distribution, digital transformation, logistics, air travel and investments. He is currently Chief Operating Officer with Zag Trading



ensuring they develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are essential in today's business environment.

As a Global Practitioner, my focus is on integrating real-world business challenges into the classroom. I teach strategy and business analytics courses, leveraging my industry experience to bring case studies and contemporary business issues to life. I work closely with students through local sessions, discussions, and one-on-one coaching, helping them apply theoretical concepts to practical business scenarios. This dynamic interaction not only enriches the student experience but also keeps me engaged with emerging business trends and challenges.

I also work with the University to develop locally relevant content that benefits our students on the MBA and other programmes.

An MBA at Strathclyde Dubai is a transformative experience that goes beyond acquiring knowledge — it's about developing a strategic mindset, leadership capabilities, and a global perspective.

**For those considering this journey, I would advise them to:**

1. Be prepared for intense learning: The

programme is rigorous, so time management and discipline are crucial.

2. Engage with faculty and peers: The diverse student body provides a unique opportunity to learn from professionals across industries and cultures.

3. Apply learning in real time: The programme encourages applying frameworks and concepts to real-world business challenges. Leveraging this in your workplace will maximise your ROI from the MBA.

4. Embrace the network: Strathclyde has a strong alumni network that can open doors to new opportunities.

If you are seeking an MBA that balances academic excellence with real-world application, Strathclyde Dubai is an outstanding choice.

Having gone through the Strathclyde MBA myself, I understand the challenges and opportunities that students face. This allows me to offer practical advice on managing coursework, balancing work-life commitments, and maximising the learning experience.

More importantly, my own MBA journey helped me develop a structured approach to problem-solving and strategic thinking — skills I now pass on to my students. When they struggle with complex

business cases or strategic frameworks, I can relate to their challenges and guide them effectively.

I also emphasise the importance of critical thinking and adaptability, ensuring they leave the programme not just with knowledge but with the ability to apply it in a rapidly evolving business world.

My goal, as both an educator and business professional is to help students transition from learning to leadership, equipping them with the tools and confidence to excel in their careers. Strathclyde's commitment to practical, applied learning makes this possible, and I am proud to be part of that journey.

## EXECUTIVE MBA AT SBS DUBAI

Part-time, 24-month programme  
 More info  
<https://strathclyde.in/uae>

**Contact us:**  
 Email: [sbs-uae@strath.ac.uk](mailto:sbs-uae@strath.ac.uk)  
 Call & WhatsApp:  
 +971 52 336 7358



# International Enterprising Impactful Leading Strathclyde

The **final** word in business education



University of  
**Strathclyde**  
Business  
School

**30**

YEARS OF  
EXCELLENCE IN THE UAE

As a well-established top 10 UK business school\* within a leading international technological University, Strathclyde understands the business needs of organisations: from start-ups and SMEs to global industries.

A key player in the Gulf region since 1995, we are proud to offer the acclaimed MBA programme in Dubai, celebrating 30 years of excellence in delivering this prestigious course. The programme is offered part time at weekends to meet the needs of busy executives.

**Make Strathclyde your destination**

**<https://strathclyde.in/uae>**



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



\*Financial Times Executive MBA Rankings 2022