

CASE STUDY: Abu Dhabi's leading civil servants join Saïd Business School's development programme for transformational change

The Executive Education team of Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford is working with the government of Abu Dhabi to deliver a development programme for more than 200 of its leading civil servants. The programme has been created to support the government's Policy Agenda, a major transformation project initiated by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, setting out the Emirate's vision of the future.

"The new vision of the government is to be among the top five governments within five years" said Ali Al Ketbi, Undersecretary of the Department of Civil Service in Abu Dhabi. "The change is vast and the need for quality of training will be vast", he adds.

The Abu Dhabi Oxford Leadership Development Programme was launched in January 2008 with the first group of 13 senior civil servants completing a five day programme in Oxford. Nine subsequent programmes have been held in Abu Dhabi with more than 200 participants to date.



Andrew White,
Programme
Director and
Fellow in Strategic
Management at
Saïd said: "We

were delighted to be asked to provide this intensive development programme for the Abu Dhabi civil service in support of the government's change initiative. The Policy Agenda is a challenging and important undertaking for Abu

Dhabi and is requiring a step-change in the work of government departments and the people within them. We are working with the high potential leaders within the civil service to identify exactly what is required to allow each of them to meet the objectives of the Agenda."

The Oxford Development Programme is built upon one-to-one coaching with the participants to create Personal Development Plans which are closely tied to the detailed requirements of the Policy Agenda and the competencies set out within it. The plans take into account a range of issues such as behavioural changes required, the particular knowledge required by each individual in his or her role, the experience levels they require, and the personal networks which will help them achieve their objectives. Masterclasses, group work and discussion sessions are also key elements of the programme. A range of detailed case studies based on local industries and government departments have been developed to highlight the work of national role models and good practice. Typically, the Personal Development Plans will specify further development programmes for each of the participants according to their personal requirements and the nature of their role.

"Oxford has a strong tradition of working closely with individuals in our development work and we are able to draw upon this expertise in designing a programme which precisely meets the needs of the participants. Our extensive experience of working with public

sector clients at a senior level has greatly enriched our understanding of the dynamics at work in this situation and fed into the programme."

The intention is that the high potential leaders who complete the Oxford Programme will become drivers of change throughout the Civil Service to help embed the change initiative. "We are helping to develop the next generation of the country's leaders and the cultural change necessary within the workforce," said Andrew White. "Abu Dhabi requires motivated, highly-qualified and trained leaders to achieve its goals and this programme is instrumental in helping achieve that."



The response to the programme has been strong and the engagement of participants is high. Neil Selby, International Director, Executive Education at Saïd Business School commented: "The participants have a clear appreciation of the nature of the change required in their departments and their own part in bringing it about. Cultural change on this scale is a slow process but already there are clear signs of the impact of the programme in practice." Ali Al Ketbi, who was an early participant of the programme, shares this view, and said: "While it is taking time to do so, I would say the culture is more dynamic than ever."

For further information about custom programmes at Saïd Business School, please contact Steve Ludlow at steve.ludlow@sbs.ox.ac.uk