

PRESS RELEASE

HBKU celebrates significant growth with graduation of its largest class to date

Qataris make up more than 40% of new graduates

Doha, April 30, 2017 – Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), a member of Qatar Foundation (QF) for Education, Science, and Community Development, celebrated the graduation of its largest class to date at a ceremony held on 30 April at the HBKU Student Center in Education City. The university conferred degrees on 148 graduates in the presence Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, Chief Executive Officer and Vice Chairperson of QF, and Chairperson of HBKU’s Board of Trustees.

Also present were government ministers, ambassadors, representatives of QF leadership and members of HBKU’s Board of Trustees, as well as faculty, family and friends of the graduating students.

HBKU Class of 2017 is significantly larger than last year’s 111, and is almost double the number of students of its first graduating class in 2014 – numbers that bear witness not only to the university’s rapid growth, but to the increasing demand for pioneering higher education.

In another milestone for the university, this year’s class marks the graduation of the first 17 students from HBKU’s College of Science and Engineering master’s programmes in Biological and Biomedical Sciences (BBS), Sustainable Energy, and Sustainable Environment. Also graduating were 87 students from the College of Islamic Studies, 18 from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and 26 with an Executive Master in Energy and Resources.

Earlier in the day, the university’s Board of Trustees met to discuss developments at HBKU. Speaking ahead of the graduation ceremony, the board’s chairperson, Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, said: “At the heart of HBKU is an ethos that stems from the man from whom the university takes its name: His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, our Father Emir. His Highness’s commitment to making Qatar a progressive nation that plays a transformative global role while always preserving Qatar’s cherished heritage and culture has shaped HBKU’s ecosystem of providing innovation, collaboration, and multidisciplinary education and research that is globally benchmarked but has Qatar at its heart. The university’s leadership is committed to supporting the development of forward-thinking intellectual capacity and today’s graduates join a small but growing body of HBKU alumni who, as our most powerful ambassadors, are already shaping the future.”

Thirty seven countries are represented in this year’s class, including over 40 percent Qataris. The high percentage of Qatari graduates is reflected in several of HBKU’s programmes, such as the Executive Master in Energy and Resources programme, which includes 92 percent graduating Qataris, and the Master of Arts in Public Policy in Islam programme with 48 percent of Qatari graduates. Graduating

students this year are fairly evenly split across gender lines, with women accounting for 49 percent of the total.

The President of HBKU, Dr. Ahmad Hasnah, presented the diplomas to the graduating students. He highlighted how innovation is at the heart of HBKU's teaching model and how the university is responding to the need for education to be at the vanguard of efforts to build a strong, sustainable future economy for Qatar: "All of HBKU's academic programs have been developed in response to a clear demand for producing highly skilled experts in targeted fields," he said. "Institutions such as HBKU greatly contribute towards the creation of knowledge, advance research, and educate a new generation of leaders able to address the needs of the global knowledge economy. The exceptional students graduating today embody the many hopes and aspirations of the University; as a result, our students benefit from exceptional multidisciplinary educational training and research experience in subjects that have been deemed central to the long-term aspirations and needs of our nation, the region and beyond.

"Each of our graduates leaves HBKU as global citizens who are equipped and empowered with entrepreneurial and practical skills that will enable them to have long term, tangible positive impact in the community here in Qatar and beyond. I applaud the dedication of HBKU's Class of 2017 and I am confident that they will continue applying what they've learned to build bright futures for themselves and their communities."

HBKU has attracted high quality faculty and staff and, in doing so, is quickly becoming a renowned hub for scholarship and research. Several discoveries, research breakthroughs, and faculty recognitions marked the University's academic year. From the discovery of new planets and development of new language apps, to being selected for validation of clinical trials for a groundbreaking immunotherapy vaccine for Parkinson's disease, HBKU has demonstrated its academic and research capabilities.

This year's HBKU graduation ceremony featured Chaker Khazaal as its keynote speaker. The Palestinian-Canadian is the author of the *Confessions of a War Child* trilogy and is editor in chief of StepFeed and YallaFeed. In his speech, Khazaal inspired the graduates to dream big, saying: "An achievement is an idea once dreamt that turned into reality with hard work, persistence and redefining possibilities. Today, you are ambassadors for the power of dreaming by becoming graduates and ambassadors for your university, for your country, and for our region."

At the ceremony, graduates shared their delight at successfully completing their studies.

Mounira Walid Fayyad, who graduated with a Master in Biological and Biomedical Sciences, said: "I found things very difficult at first because my undergraduate studies prior to coming to HBKU involved very little practical experience," she explained. "However, I was able to overcome this through the

strong support of faculty members. The fact that the professors at HBKU care about their students and want to help them throughout their educational journey makes a big difference to the student experience at HBKU. The practical experience I've built in a lab environment has pushed me out of my comfort zone, and really allowed me to get a feel of what it means to work in the biomedical sciences outside the confines of the classroom. I feel my time at HBKU has formed a big part of my academic journey and I'm hoping to go on to pursue my PhD."

Ahmed Al Jassim, who is graduating with an MA in Public Policy in Islam, said: "I feel immensely proud and incredibly blessed to graduate from the College of Islamic Studies. My time here at HBKU has been filled with fond memories – from learning in the classroom, to the enriching experiences outside of it, the University has inspired me be an advocate for positive change in the Qatari community and I look forward to applying what I have learned here in my future endeavours."

Another graduate, Ibrahim Suwan, who just earned his Master of Arts in Translation Studies, commented: "I joined my programme because I wanted to acquire translation as a skill and explore it further as a linguistic activity. The programme allowed me to draw upon multiple disciplines such as sociology, psychology and postmodern theory. I was pleased to learn that translation has taken a much different turn since the 90's, it has stopped being thought of as a profession that takes place in an office environment and is now seen more broadly as having a crucial role in international institutions."

Looking to the future, the first batch of students to complete the juris doctor (JD) graduate law degree programme and the first students to receive doctoral degrees from HBKU's College of Science and Engineering will graduate in 2018. In the meantime, the university continues to grow its academic offering with the recent launch of three new programs: a Master of Science and PhD in Genomics and Precision Medicine (GPM), a Master of Arts in Women, Society, and Development, and a Master of Arts in Digital Humanities and Societies.

To find out more about HBKU, please visit www.hbku.edu.qa.

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About Hamad Bin Khalifa University

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, is an emerging research university that is building its foundation upon unique collaborations with local and international partners. Located in Education City, HBKU delivers undergraduate and graduate programs through its College of Science and Engineering, College of Law and Public Policy, College of Health and Life Sciences, College of Islamic Studies, and its College of Humanities and Social Sciences. It also provides unparalleled opportunities for research and scholarship



through its research institutes, and its Center of Executive Education delivers customized programs for the business community of Qatar and the region, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.