



## **QATAR FOUNDATION PROVIDES BUILDING BLOCKS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING**

*QF higher education institutes offer wide range of community-focused classes*

Qatar Foundation (QF), together with the higher education institutes based at Education City, is helping to inspire curiosity, spark creativity, and stimulate critical thinking – the building blocks of lifelong learning – through a wide range of engaging and diverse community classes.

“People want to learn,” explained Dr. Cynthia J. Hebsgaard, Senior Assistant Dean & Director Executive & Professional Education, Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), a QF partner university. “And we want to share our knowledge with the community.

“GU-Q’s community classes are a great way to engage with the public. These courses are a wonderful way to make people feel welcome to the university and help them feel like they’re part of the organization. And for us, this outreach is very important.”

Since its launch in 2015, the classes have grown in popularity, with nearly 125 people signed up for the current edition that started on October 28, bringing the total number of participants up to 913. Running twice a year – in fall and spring – the classes last for six weeks and are offered in both English and Arabic.

The program offers a wide variety of subjects, including international relations, and classes range from life coaching and career development to web design and literature. Speaking about the diversity of the subjects, Dr. Hebsgaard said: “Many of our topics are contextually relevant to the Gulf region. There are a tremendous number of expatriates in the community who might want to know something about Middle Eastern politics or Turkish literature, which are not topics they would typically learn if they were back home.”

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), a member of QF, launched its community classes in 2016, and, similarly to GU-Q, has seen a steady increase in participants over the last two years. Abdulla Al-Emadi, Community Service Supervisor, HBKU Student Affairs, said: “Our classes are becoming very popular – approximately 80 percent of attendees are female, and approximately 70 percent of attendees are Qatari.”

Offering both practical and theoretical classes, the program supports public learning and community engagement through courses specializing in leadership, co-active coaching, entrepreneurship, and public speaking.

“We are trying to support the community by offering a wide range of topics that are designed to meet the individual needs of the learners while aiding their professional development,” said Al-Emadi. “Ultimately,



we want HBKU to become a go-to destination for those who are trying to pursue lifelong learning opportunities.”

Meanwhile, the Translation and Interpreting Institute (TII), part of HBKU’s College of Humanities and Social Sciences, also offers courses in seven languages, including Arabic, French, German, Italian, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish. Open to the wider community – for adults of all ages and abilities – the classes are designed to promote and support language learning.

And such opportunities to discover new skills and take already-held talents to a new level are also available at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar), another QF partner university, where undergraduate student Salma Awad is studying painting and printmaking. Prior to joining the academic institute, she took four community classes at the university, including observational drawing, watercolor, basic graphic design, and a portfolio development class.

“I actually took the courses because I didn’t know what I wanted to study at university,” said Ms. Awad. “So the classes really helped me decide what path I wanted my future to take, which is, of course, art.

“The VCUarts Qatar classes are for everyone – for all ages and abilities. They teach you that anyone can draw; whether you think you can or can’t, you will make art. The teachers help you to develop your own style. I think it’s always good to explore different areas to develop your interests.”

VCUarts Qatar was the first university in Education City to offer community classes, launching the program in 2009. The program, designed to develop and support self-directed lifelong learners and creative innovators, is offered quarterly, with classes running in fall, spring, late spring, and summer. Open to all, the program regularly attracts up to 1,000 participants each year.

Discussing the impact of the classes, Ms. Awad said: “I spent time as a teaching assistant this summer, mostly working with children aged six to eight, although I also helped out with older students, too. I wanted to gain experience in this role so that one day I might also be able to share my knowledge with others.”

**ENDS**

### **Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential**

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a non-profit organization that supports Qatar on its journey to becoming a diversified and sustainable economy. QF strives to serve the people of Qatar and beyond by providing specialized programs across its innovation-focused ecosystem of education, science and research, and community development.



QF was founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, who shared the vision to provide Qatar with quality education. Today, QF's world-class education system offers lifelong learning opportunities to community members as young as six months through to doctoral level, enabling graduates to thrive in a global environment and contribute to the nation's development.

QF is also creating a multidisciplinary innovation hub in Qatar, where homegrown researchers are working to address local and global challenges. By promoting a culture of lifelong learning and fostering social engagement through programs that embody Qatari culture, QF is committed to empowering the local community and contributing to a better world for all.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit [www.qf.org.qa](http://www.qf.org.qa)