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INSEAD Brings the MBA to Abu Dhabi

INSEAD's first MBA module in Abu Dhabi is giving participants a real taste of how business is conducted in the Middle East.

Conducting due diligence in a leisure time industry and assisting one of London's coolest night clubs set up premises in one of the world's most glamorous cities may be a business student's dream, but they're live projects and part of the course for participants selected for INSEAD's first MBA module in Abu Dhabi launched in January.

The module, part of INSEAD's signature 10-month MBA programme has been in the planning since the school opened its third international campus in the emirate in 2010, giving participants first-hand experience at doing business in one of the world's fastest growing economies while providing them with significant networking opportunities.

"INSEAD's MBA participants are gaining a regional perspective here and looking at different issues, whether it's opportunities for women in business in the Middle East or the effect of the Arab Spring on economic development," Peter Zemsky, INSEAD Deputy Dean of Degree Programmes and Curriculum told INSEAD Knowledge at the conclusion of the first session.

The school's MBA participants have flocked to the challenge with 148 students applying for the module. The final 37 were handpicked for their diversity in background, experience, case expertise relating to some of the projects and nationality -

including women from Lagos, Malaysia and the U.A.E.

The module offers three elective course credits to contribute to the overall 10.5 credits required for the MBA programme, and includes classroom learning, company visits and engagement with local business leaders as well as activities to provide insights into the region's culture and traditions.

And then there are the big projects, such as working on environmentally-friendly business models for waste management and evaluating potential investments for a large Middle East media company. "We're also doing a fascinating project with the Ministry of Sound, the London nightclub," adds Zemsky. "We met with them in London and are bringing them to Dubai to find a venue and partner for a possible launch here. It's project work like this on real case studies that makes the course exceptional."

INSEAD has a strong background of action learning programmes based on live projects, particularly in areas of entrepreneurship where students look at business planning, but going into big companies with all their complexities is not something the school has traditionally done in such an organised manner, notes Zemsky. While the Middle East module is about confirming INSEAD's commitment

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to developing Abu Dhabi as an innovative education hub and increasing the school's visibility in the region, a major benefit is the opportunity it gives to exploring more intensive use of major project work within the MBA programme.

“There's a move across the industry into more experiential learning and this is one way to take some of the resources put forward by our partners and really build on our relationships in the U.A.E. while doing something state-of-the-art,” Zemsky said.

Students will return to Abu Dhabi to complete the module on March 23.

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