



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION – MARKET DEVELOPMENT PLAN **MIDDLE EAST**

The Victorian Government's one- to two-year strategic priorities for International Education

MARKET INSIGHTS

- The Middle East has a young demographic, with 70 per cent of the population under 30 years of age and one-third under the age of 15. A key characteristic of the Middle East is the region's 108 million young people that make up more than 28 per cent of the population aged between 15 and 29.¹ This demographic presents challenges for policy makers across the region in terms of labour market outcomes.
- Growth in the region is expected to accelerate to 3 per cent in 2017.² However, consideration should be given to regional challenges in relation to lower oil prices, and in some cases geopolitical tensions, that continue to impact the region.
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are highly dependent on oil-related revenues. They also face several challenges due to migration inflow and a public sector that struggles to create jobs at the pace of labour supply, which is also resulting in a diminishing of the quality of jobs in the local market.

1 'Middle East and North Africa: Youth facts', *Youth Policy*, accessed 9/11/2016, www.youthpolicy.org/mappings/%20regionallyouthscenes/mena/facts/

2 'Economic Snapshot for the Middle East & North Africa', 2016, *Focus Economics*, accessed 9/11/2016, www.focus-economics.com/regions/middle-east-and-north-africa

COUNTRY EDUCATION PROFILES

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE is investing heavily in education and innovation to further its goals of achieving a world-class education system and competitive knowledge economy (*Vision 2021*). While economic growth is slowing, education spending is still being prioritised, and education costs represent an increasingly large burden for consumers. The UAE now has one of the most highly developed private education markets in the world and continues to promote itself as a regional and global education hub, particularly for higher education. As demand to study in the UAE grows, from both the local population and from across the region, there is still potential in this market for foreign investment in education, including pre-school, independent general education, higher education, professional training and development, and vocational and technical education.

Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Arabian Government is investing heavily in education and training programs to develop a skilled, knowledge-based local workforce. By 2017, the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation will have completed 50 technical colleges, 50 girls' higher technical institutes and 180 industrial secondary institutes.³ The plan is the first step in creating training placements for about 500,000 students, including 250,000 girls. Young people will be trained in vocational professions such as IT, medical equipment handling, plumbing, electrical and mechanical trades, beauty therapy and hairdressing.

Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran Vision 2025 articulates the nation's plan to be a leader in the region by 2025. The country's sixth *Five-Year Development Plan (2016–2021)* lays out a roadmap for national progress towards this goal. Education continues to be a priority in the new development plan. Iran is expected to experience a rise in economic growth to 4.6 per cent in 2017.⁴

Oman

Oman's *Vision 2040* prioritises education and training, particularly in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, in order to equip Omani nationals to drive private sector growth and build an innovation and knowledge-led society.

Kuwait

One of the most developed countries in the region, Kuwait is facing a period of slowing economic growth and spending cutbacks as the price of oil remains low. The government is prioritising the role of education and training to diversify the economy. It has focused on improving quality rather than expanding education provision. Demand for post-secondary education is rising nonetheless, resulting in increasing competition for university places and driving outbound student mobility.

Qatar

The *Qatar National Vision 2030* outlines plans to transform the country into a global knowledge-based economy. The plan places human resources development as the main priority for the next 15 years. The *Qatar National Research Strategy* outlines its goal to create and train 2000 scientists in the next four years.

3 'World TVET Database Country Profiles: Saudi Arabia', 2012, UNESCO-UNEVOC, accessed 9/11/2016, www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=World+TVET+Database&ct=SAU

4 'Iran's Economic Outlook: Spring 2016', *The World Bank*, accessed 9/11/2016, www.worldbank.org/en/country/iran/publication/economic-outlook-spring-2016

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Develop relationships with relevant government and sector stakeholders to build emerging markets such as Iran

Rationale

Iran is the second largest economy in the Middle East after Saudi Arabia. Despite the Iranian economy being restricted over the past 30 years, the country has maintained a healthy volume of self-funded students enrolling in study abroad programs. At present, more Iranian students are studying abroad than students from Saudi Arabia. Economic growth is expected following the lifting of major sanctions and could potentially lead to a 100 per cent increase in self-funded enrolments over the next three years. Austrade has also identified training opportunities in aviation, medicine, infrastructure and construction, as well as English language studies.

Key actions

- Develop relationships with relevant government stakeholders.
- Build a network of reputable education agents and build expertise in Victorian education, including the depth and breadth of providers, using tools such as MyStory.
- Hold an event in Iran showcasing Victoria's education sector.
- Enhance marketing activity through the Study Melbourne campaign at relevant roadshows and events.

Stakeholders

Iranian Government, providers and agents, Austrade, Victorian higher education and vocational education and training institutions

2. Support Victorian vocational education and training (VET) providers to respond to opportunities in targeted industries across the region

Rationale

A number of economic policy settings across the region indicate that demand for skills training is set to rise. In turn, partnership opportunities for Victorian providers are expected to increase in the future.

Key actions

- Build and strengthen relationships with industry peak bodies and agencies involved in workforce development to understand training needs and position Victorian VET providers to respond to training requirements.
- Develop collateral profiling Victorian VET capabilities to support emerging opportunities.
- Support providers to work collaboratively to secure high-value offshore projects.

Stakeholders

Relevant ministries, industry peak bodies and workforce development agencies, targeted institutions in the region, Victorian VET providers

3. Promote and position Victoria’s education, training and research-related capabilities in healthcare services in the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia

Rationale

The growth of the healthcare sector has been driven by a number of factors, such as a growing population, the introduction of compulsory health insurance and the rise in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes. The medical workforce is unable to keep up with the demand and it is estimated that by 2020, there will be a shortage of up to 150,000 physicians and 1.8 million nurses and midwifery personnel. Governments in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman are also under pressure to increase the quality of medical staff as well as reduce the reliance on a foreign workforce. This presents opportunities for Victorian providers to respond to local needs, particularly in the provision of future workforce planning, capacity building, skills transfer, healthcare curriculum development and evidence-based practice.

Key actions

- Identify healthcare service needs in key markets and work with other Victorian Government departments to understand and articulate the breadth of Victoria’s capabilities.
- Develop and support relationships with relevant government decision-makers and health service providers in target markets.
- Develop collateral profiling Victoria’s education, training and research capabilities with a focus on health.
- Support Victorian providers to work collaboratively to secure high-value offshore projects.

Stakeholders

Ministries of health and hospitals in Oman, UAE and Saudi Arabia, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian hospitals, Victorian healthcare education and training providers

4. Support the expansion of offshore VCE delivery in the Middle East, in particular Saudi Arabia and the UAE

Rationale

By 2020, demand for school education in the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) states is expected to see an additional 7000 schools established throughout the region, most notably in Saudi Arabia.

In terms of English-speaking schools, the UAE is a leader in the region with around 545,000 students enrolled across approximately 550 international schools, followed by Saudi Arabia with around 261,000 international school enrolments. Drivers of this demand include not just the large expatriate population, but also demand from local families for a quality, English-speaking education.

This trend presents an opportunity to grow the offshore delivery of Victoria’s K–10 curriculum and VCE, creating a pathway for future tertiary education in Victoria.

Key actions

- Develop and support relationships with relevant government decision-makers and secondary education providers in target markets.
- Develop market opportunities for VCE through relevant promotional campaigns and events.

Stakeholders

Victorian schools, UAE and Saudi government agencies, public and private partners

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