

# Blackboard®

News Release

## CONTACT

Massimo Morigi, Blackboard  
+44 (0)20 7534 2063 or [massimo.morigi@blackboard.com](mailto:massimo.morigi@blackboard.com)

## **Blackboard and Higher Colleges of Technology Establish Digital Education Center of Excellence in the Middle East**

*New initiative to boost the institution's strategic role in Emiratization by  
training technology-savvy educators*

**ABU DHABI – 31 July 2018:** Blackboard and the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) largest education institution, extended their partnership to create the first Blackboard Center of Excellence in the Middle East.

Signed in the presence of Dr. Abdullatif Al Shamsi, Vice Chancellor of HCT, Dr. Jihad Mohaidat, Executive Dean - Ed Tech of HCT and Bill Ballhaus, Chairman, CEO and President of Blackboard, the main goal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to create a dedicated facility to help teachers improve their knowledge of edtech solutions and to develop a community of skilled professionals who can become future leaders in digital education. The Center of Excellence will leverage Blackboard's eTeacher certification program to train instructors on the fundamentals of digital teaching and learning, on how to implement a digital platform and create outstanding online courses.

In today's technology-driven and dynamic economy, education institutions must adapt to the rapidly changing requirements and demands of students, who are technology aware and more connected than ever before, and expect education to be the same. Moreover, in 2010 the UAE government launched the UAE Vision 2021, which sets the key themes for the socio-economic development of the country and calls for a shift to a diversified and knowledge-based economy.

To deliver on this vision and meet the needs of the learners, HCT has implemented a strategy for 'Transforming Applied Higher Education' that includes investing in academic excellence, promoting innovative learning approaches, making sure student success is held to the highest possible standard, and ensuring student employability after graduation. The institution also provides its educators and students with world-class facilities that support individualized, blended and distance learning.

"This agreement with Blackboard is an important milestone," said Dr. Abdullatif Al Shamsi, Vice Chancellor of HCT. "Our organizations have been working closely for

many years and this MOU will further strengthen our partnership and empower our educators and staff with the necessary knowledge and tools they need to be successful today and tomorrow. Eventually, this will also benefit our students, equipping them with much-required skills.”

“A critical figure of this digital revolution is a competent, well-trained, and digitally fluent educator,” said Robert Speed, Regional Vice President of Blackboard. “Institutions recognize that it is no longer acceptable to have only a handful of technologically capable instructors if they want to attract students and help them become more employable and successful. The Center of Excellence will empower educators with the right competencies to successfully use technology in their pedagogical approach.”

Blackboard has been working with HCT for almost two decades to rethink the educational experience and to better support students in the UAE, and is focused on delivering an integrated, flexible platform able to provide a unique connected experience throughout its entire portfolio.

### **About Blackboard**

Our mission is to partner with the global education community to enable learner and institutional success, leveraging innovative technologies and services. With an unmatched understanding of the world of the learner, the most comprehensive student-success solutions, and the greatest capacity for innovation, Blackboard is education’s partner in change.

### **About HCT:**

Founded in 1988 with four campuses, the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) has grown to be the UAE’s largest applied higher educational institution, gaining a well-respected reputation for innovative and job-focused experiential learning.

Approximately 23,000 students attend 16 modern, technology-oriented men's and women's campuses in the cities of Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, Dubai, Fujairah, Madinat Zayed, Ras Al Khaimah, Ruwais and Sharjah. HCT offers a wide range of programs in the academic fields of Applied Media, Business, Computer Information Science, Education, Engineering Technology & Science, General Academic Requirements and Health Sciences.

These programs are all relevant to the UAE’s fast-growing economy and are designed in consultation with business and industry leaders to ensure that HCT students’ skills are job-relevant and to the highest standards. The courses taught at the HCT campuses are a hybrid blend of innovative, academic studies and work-relevant programs, ensuring that HCT graduates have the necessary 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to make positive and lasting contributions to UAE society. All HCT programs are constantly monitored to ensure they are at the cutting-edge of industry standards and technological change.