

Education New Zealand  
Manapou ki te Ao  
Level 5, Lambton House  
160 Lambton Quay  
PO Box 12041  
Wellington 6144  
New Zealand

P: +64 4 472 0788  
E: info@enz.govt.nz

www.enz.govt.nz  
www.studyinnewzealand.govt.nz

25 January 2024

s9(2)(a)

Dear s9(2)(a)

## Official Information Act (OIA) 1982 request – information on ENZ-led visit to Oman, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in April/May 2023

I refer to your OIA request to Education New Zealand, received on 18 December 2023, seeking information as below:

*All briefings, memos and other key documents relating to the visit by the education delegation led by Education New Zealand Manapou ki te Ao (ENZ) from 29 April to 8 May 2023, involving four New Zealand universities, to Oman, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia.*

Please find attached material relating to the trip, which includes details of meetings and events undertaken across the region. In addition, we have provided excerpts pertinent to your request which were sourced from documents considered out of scope of your request. For example, the activities excerpt is from a proposed itinerary document which contains a high amount of administrative information, such as flight booking and hotel references and addresses.

Some information has been withheld under the following sections of the OIA

- Section 9(2)(a) – protect the privacy of individuals
- Section 9(2)(g)(i) - maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any public service agency or organisation in the course of their duty

The full delegation was:

- Amy Rutherford, Regional Director, Americas, Middle East and Europe, Education New Zealand
- Bronwyn Shanks, Senior Advisor, Middle East and Europe, Education New Zealand
- Richard Witts, University of Waikato
- Victoria McInnery, University of Otago
- Mai Al-Sharaf, University of Auckland
- Khiet Vo, Massey University

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Information about how to make a complaint is available at  
<https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/> or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests, where possible. We do not publish requesters' personal information. Please contact us if you have any questions about this.

Yours sincerely

Di Solomon  
General Manager  
Government Relations

## New Zealand’s education relationship with Oman

### Key points

- New Zealand values the strong education relationship we have with Omani partners at government, institution, and student levels.
- We appreciate good cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), the Consulate General in Melbourne, and the education adviser based in Auckland. We understand that the Director for External Scholarships, s9(2)(a), has recently left that role – we hope to continue to work closely with his successor.
- We welcomed the inclusion of New Zealand universities in the Ministry’s scholarships handbook for 2022/23, following a hiatus while travel restrictions were in place due to the pandemic.
- Earlier this year, the New Zealand Government, universities, and the education technology sector participated in the Ministry-sponsored Ghedex event in Muscat. We plan to participate again in 2023.
- Consul General Dr Al Wardi suggested that a visit to Oman by senior university representatives would be one way to raise awareness of the high-quality education and excellent experience that New Zealand offers. We are looking at April 2023 as possible timing for such a visit.
- We are keen to meet the study needs of Omani students and support the broader efforts of the Omani Government towards Vision 2040 goals. Is there scope to offer vocational education and training opportunities to Omani students through the newly established Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology?

### Background

There has been steady growth in the number of Omanis studying abroad, up to a current estimate of 15,000 students, attracted by personal development and employment opportunities, and the chance to experience new cultures and learn new languages.

2 Data from Immigration New Zealand (INZ) shows that, as at 30 October 2022, there were 88 Omani students in New Zealand universities, and a further 21 visa holders for university courses still outside New Zealand. Pre-Covid, the number of Omani students in New Zealand grew slowly but steadily to 294 students in 2019, mainly at university level.

International students from Oman, 2013-2019							
	International Student Numbers						
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Oman	222	225	185	230	257	259	294

  

International students from Oman by subsector, 2013-2019							
	International Student Numbers						
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Schools	16	17	14	15	30	31	32
English Language Schools	41	66	39	26	15	<5	25
PTEs (funded)	9	7	<5	31	33	46	36
PTEs (unfunded)	40	25	20	31	50	16	5
ITPs	<5	<5	<5	9	<5		
Universities	115	110	106	119	128	162	196

3 The Omani Government provides scholarships for students to study overseas, with a focus on undergraduate programmes in fields of study that are tied to identified labour market requirements in Oman. In 2017, 28 percent (72 out of 257) of Omani students in New Zealand were government scholars, dropping to 22 percent (57 out of 259) the following year. In 2019, government scholars made up less than 12 percent (33 out of 294) of Omani students, partly due to immigration issues that had arisen in 2018, leading to complaints to MoHERI from students’ parents. It seems that these

issues were due to misunderstandings about how students could move from one course to the next on the Pathway Student Visa. We are alert to potential issues as student visa processing recommences. The visa decline rate for Omani applications from 1 August to 5 October 2022 was 5.88%, from a small sample (one application declined out of 17). The decline rate in 2019 was 1.36%.

4 Scholarship students are largely administered by Omani education officials in collaboration with Oman's embassies or consulates abroad. ENZ has a long-standing relationship with the External Scholarships Division within MoHERI. Director s9(2)(a) recently left his position there – it would be useful to have the name and contact details of his successor. Education New Zealand (ENZ) and universities also work closely with the Omani Consulate General in Melbourne, which is responsible for all government scholarship students in New Zealand (and Australia), and Academic Advisor Dr Nadia Kasto, based in Auckland.

5 Due to travel restrictions early in the Covid-19 pandemic, many Omani scholarship students were pursuing the first year of their undergraduate studies online, including with New Zealand universities. This accommodation was removed as other countries increasingly opened to international students in 2021, and the Omani Government asked students to withdraw from New Zealand online programmes in order to study on campus elsewhere. The Omani Government did not send any new students to New Zealand for the 2021/22 academic year, but returning students from Oman were the second largest group in the second cohort of 1,000 international students granted an exception to New Zealand's border closure. These students were nominated by providers to take up places in the cohort, highlighting the value New Zealand universities place on hosting Omani students.

6 In March this year, ENZ, University of Waikato, Victoria University of Wellington, and education technology company Arabic Digital Reform Institute (ADRI) – with much-appreciated support from Reem – participated in Ghedex 2022, a business-to-business and student-facing event supported by MoHERI. At Ghedex, MoHERI officials confirmed that New Zealand was included again in the scholarships handbook for 2022/23, albeit in a limited number of subject areas:

- Students admitted to an ESAM & STEM program can choose to study at one of the recommended institutions in the following countries: United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Ireland, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, France, Canada. The final decision to approve the institution falls to the ministry.
- The ESAM program covers the first undergraduate degree in education, social sciences, the arts, and administration. STEM covers the first undergraduate degree in science, technology and engineering, mathematics, medicine<sup>1</sup>, dentistry, veterinary medicine, or programs that lead beyond bachelor's degree, such as MPHARM, MENG and equivalent.

7 Recent changes to Omani scholarship arrangements give students a greater degree of agency and choice. From this year, they are able to make their own decisions about the country and university that best suit their study needs. Omani Consul General in Melbourne Dr Hamoud Al Wardi recently visited university partners in New Zealand. His advice was that New Zealand and New

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<sup>1</sup> Last year, the Times of Oman reported that, "while there is no change in the criteria for medical specialisations, Australia and New Zealand are no longer considered viable destinations in this category", presumably due to the very limited number of places available in medicine for international students.

<https://timesofoman.com/article/105265-400-study-abroad-scholarships-given-to-omani-students-this-year>

Zealand institutions must be present and active in Oman in the February to April period to maximise any recruitment opportunities. Along with participation at Ghedex scheduled for 5-7 March 2023 in Muscat, in consultation with universities we have started very early planning work on a proposed high-level education delegation visit to the Middle East (Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) in April.

8 Very few Omani students choose to study at New Zealand institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs): fewer than five in 2017, none in 2018 or 2019, and none according to INZ's current data. Degree-level qualifications may be granted by ITPs and, as far as we know, there is no specific regulation stopping Omani government scholarship students from selecting ITPs as a study option. The newly-established Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology brings together all sixteen ITPs, increasing New Zealand's capacity to offer high-quality vocational education and training that is underwritten by the government's qualifications framework.

*Education New Zealand | Manapou ki te Ao  
November 2022*

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**From:** [Shanna Luafalealo](#)  
**To:** [Lisa Futschek](#)  
**Cc:** [DL Americas, Middle East, Europe](#); [Ben Burrowes](#); [Michael Zhang](#); [ENZ Ministerials](#); [Andy Walker](#); [John Wren](#); [Janine Huxford](#); [Kenneth Holt](#); [Geoff Bilbrough](#); [Justin Barnett](#); [DL BD Team](#); [James Dalmer](#); [Jugnu Roy](#); [Abby Humphries](#); [Rodney Wallace](#); [Marie Clark](#); [Sanjay Sewambar](#); [Desiree Lee](#); [Eve Abernethy](#); [Claudia Meister](#); [Craig Rofe](#); [Ariana Ngarimu-Goldsmith](#); [Shona Brown](#); [Carla Rey Vasquez](#); [Julia Moore](#); [Ed Tuari](#); [Sai Rajee](#); [Sean Parkhill](#)  
**Subject:** AMEE Weekly Report Special Edition: Middle East Education Delegation  
**Date:** Monday, 15 May 2023 8:32:50 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)

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Kia ora Lisa,

Welcome to a very special edition of the AMEE team weekly report, where I'll be sharing highlights from Bronwyn and Amy's recent Middle East Education Delegation tour of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. ENZ was joined in the region by representatives from the University of Otago, the University of Waikato, the University of Auckland, and Massey University.

ENZ's long-planned education delegation visit to the Middle East was very successful, with excellent engagement from a range of stakeholders and significant opportunities identified and followed up. The four participating universities were very happy with the platform ENZ provided and the doors we opened for them through a range of events and meetings.

A special whakamihi to Bronwyn for all her amazing work in organising this visit, and special shout out to Amy for all her support on the trip.

Check out all the photos from the delegation on LinkedIn: [Education New Zealand - Middle East](#)

## **NZ Inc engagement**

- Drawing on NZ Inc partnerships, ENZ hosted a workshop for education agents at the New Zealand Consulate General in Dubai, and networking events at the New Zealand Official Residences in Abu Dhabi and Riyadh.

## **Agent engagement**

- ENZ, with representatives from the University of Auckland and the University of Otago, hosted a workshop for 15 very engaged agents in Dubai. They are sending expatriate students to New Zealand (so they don't show up for the UAE in student data sorted by nationality).

## **Alumni engagement**

- ENZ hosted alumni events in Muscat and Riyadh – thanks to generous government scholarship programmes, there are many alumni of New Zealand universities in Oman and Saudi Arabia.

## **B2B and student recruitment**

- ENZ attended GHEDEX in Muscat, a major business and student-facing event organised by the Omani Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), with the University of Otago, the University of Waikato, the University of Auckland, and Massey University. After a two-year hiatus due to border restrictions, New Zealand again features in MoHERI's 2022/23 scholarships handbook and there was strong interest from well-qualified students, their parents, and education contacts.

## **G2G connections**

- The delegation was able to secure a meeting with the Scholarships Office of the Presidential

Court in Abu Dhabi, to discuss New Zealand as a destination for this prestigious programme. Approval of New Zealand universities by the Presidential Court would have a positive impact on our status with other funding bodies, such as the UAE Ministry of Education, Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) and Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA).

- ENZ and universities met with several parts of the Saudi Ministry of Education to reinforce ongoing efforts towards approval of New Zealand universities to receive government sponsored students under the new Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques scholarship programme. Working with the New Zealand Embassy in Riyadh and Universities New Zealand, ENZ has emphasised to Saudi officials New Zealand universities' areas of expertise that align with the subjects set out under the new programme. We do not expect to see the numbers of Saudi students that we did under the previous programme, which, at its peak in 2016, sent over 100,000 students abroad. Nevertheless, approval of New Zealand providers would be an important signal of the quality of New Zealand education and open up opportunities in other areas.
- Meetings with Saudi MoE reinforced clear opportunities for Te Pūkenga as Saudi Arabia works to diversify its economy and upskill its population in line with Vision 2030 – particularly under the new Wa'ed scholarships pathway focused on vocational education and training. I will provide an update to Te Pūkenga's international team on this.
- Met with Sara Al Hussein from The Training Room Online (TTRO) at our networking event in Abu Dhabi. Sara provided an update on work under the arrangement that was signed between TTRO and Talemia (the Saudi Education Ministry's implementation arm) during ICEE in Riyadh in May 2022. TTRO is now involved in significant national initiatives to develop a national e-learning framework covering schools, vocational training, and higher education and to improve access to education in rural areas, using New Zealand as a benchmark.

### University engagements

- With University of Waikato, followed up on the Universities New Zealand visit to Oman in January: a consortium of five New Zealand universities has signed an agreement for cooperation with the University of Muscat, and draft agreements with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) and with MoHERI are under discussion.
- In Dubai, ENZ and the universities met with students at international schools and students currently undertaking the NCUK International Foundation Year at the University of Wollongong in Dubai interested in continuing their studies in New Zealand.
- With University of Waikato and Massey University, visited Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University in Riyadh. PNU is a women's university with 50,000 students (57% in STEM subjects) and its own metro system. Both New Zealand universities undertook to provide information on their offerings, particularly in the areas of renewable energy, computer science, digital media, and sports, with a view to concluding broad cooperation agreements covering study abroad, joint programmes, exchange, and PhD.

Ngā mihi,  
Shanna

Think New



Shanna Luafalealo  
International Market Manager–Americas, Middle East &  
Europe  
Education New Zealand | Manapou ki te Ao

Level 5 Lambton House, 160 Lambton Quay  
PO Box 12041, Wellington 6144, New Zealand  
Mobile: s9(2)(a)

[www.studyinnewzealand.govt.nz](http://www.studyinnewzealand.govt.nz) / [www.enz.govt.nz](http://www.enz.govt.nz)

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[UNCLASSIFIED]

## **FM: New Zealand education delegation visit to the Middle East, 29 April-8 May 2023**

### **RĀPOPOTO – SUMMARY**

Education New Zealand Manapou ki te Ao (ENZ) and representatives from four New Zealand universities saw strong engagement from government contacts, agents, alumni, students and parents during an education delegation visit to Oman from 29 April to 2 May, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from 3 to 5 May, and Saudi Arabia from 6 to 8 May.

### **HOHENGĀ – ACTION**

For information. ENZ to submit information about New Zealand universities' areas of expertise to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) in Auckland, at the behest of Saudi Ministry of Education officials.

### **PŪRONGO – REPORT**

#### *Oman*

The anchor event for the delegation visit was New Zealand participation at the Global Higher Education Exhibition (GHEDEX) in Muscat, a major business and student-facing event held under the patronage of the Omani Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI). This year's event, with 95 exhibitors from 22 countries, attracted 12,000 visitors.

ENZ's pavilion with the University of Otago, the University of Waikato, the University of Auckland, and Massey University attracted strong interest from well-qualified students and their parents, and government and institution representatives. Discussions at GHEDEX reinforced the changing scholarships landscape in Oman. The number of government scholarships for Omani students to study at overseas universities has been steadily dropping, from 1,500 in 2019, to 750 in 2020, and 400 in 2021. Meanwhile, scholarship programmes for students to stay in Oman are expanding.

It is still useful for New Zealand to be included (following a two-year absence due to border restrictions) in MoHERI's 2022/23 scholarships handbook as this raises awareness of New Zealand as a high-quality education destination, alongside our key competitors. But our focus is now on building relationships with other government entities, education institutions and private sector organisations and identifying niche opportunities.

University representatives were able to follow up in the margins of GHEDEX on outcomes of the Universities New Zealand visit to Oman in January: a consortium of five New Zealand universities has signed a cooperation arrangement with the University of Muscat, and draft arrangements with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) and with MoHERI are under discussion. Touring the exhibition, the Head of Oman's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) stopped at the New Zealand pavilion to discuss with the University of Waikato bespoke programmes for his staff s9(2)(a)

#### *UAE*

The delegation was able to secure a meeting with the Scholarships Office of the Presidential Court in Abu Dhabi, to discuss New Zealand as a destination for this prestigious programme. Numbers are small, but approval of New Zealand universities by the Presidential Court would have a positive impact on our status with other funding bodies, such as the UAE

Ministry of Education, Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) and Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA).

The real opportunity for student recruitment in the UAE is in the expatriate population. The universities undertook a programme of visits to and events with international schools in Dubai, organised by Quality NZ. ENZ, with representatives from the University of Auckland and the University of Otago, hosted a workshop for 15 very engaged agents at the New Zealand Consulate General in Dubai (with thanks to NZTE). These agents are sending expatriate students to New Zealand, so they don't show up for the UAE in student data sorted by nationality, but INZ data shows over 350 visas approved for students applying from the UAE from Q2 2019 to Q2 2022 and only eight visas approved for Emiratis over the same period.

ENZ and all eight universities have a partnership with NCUK, a consortium of universities offering in-country pathway programmes that lead to study at universities in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. ENZ and the universities presented to students on the NCUK pathway programme at the University of Wollongong in Dubai (UoWD). The GCC is becoming a hub for NCUK study centres. Alongside UoWD there are plans for more in the UAE and one in Riyadh. The most established study centre in the region is University Foundation College in Doha, with which ENZ has worked on several projects, and there is one in Oman, Muscat Foundation Academy. This NCUK partnership offers a platform to build awareness of New Zealand universities as a high-quality education destination.

#### *Saudi Arabia*

The key objective of meetings with several parts of the Saudi Ministry of Education was to reinforce ongoing efforts towards approval of New Zealand universities to receive government sponsored students under the new Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques scholarship programme, which aims to send 70,000 students to top-ranked universities by 2030. We have submitted to Saudi officials by TPN, in meetings, and by email a list of areas in which New Zealand universities are ranked in the top 200 that align with the subjects set out under the new programme. Following recent meetings in Riyadh, we will now submit the same information via the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) in Auckland.

We do not expect to see the numbers of Saudi students that we did under the previous programme, which, at its peak in 2016, sent over 100,000 students abroad. Nevertheless, approval of New Zealand providers would be an important signal of the quality of New Zealand education and potentially support our involvement in other areas of government funding, for example, with the National Institute for Education and Professional Development (NIEPD), the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC), the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism.

Ambassador Riley met with Dr Amal Shuqair, Deputy Minister for Scholarships, on 3 May. While in Riyadh on 7 and 8 May, the education delegation followed up with Ministry of Education contacts, including Dr Amal's team and Dr Abdulrahman Ali Alamri, Deputy Minister for International Cooperation, and Dr Abbad Almutairi, Director of Research and Development at Centre for Research on Education Policy. The people we're talking to are well-disposed to our points at a high level – Dr Alamri and Dr Abbad in particular are strong advocates for New Zealand – s9(2)(g)(i) Our assessment following these meetings is that getting New Zealand onto the Saudi list for scholarships will take regular and persistent engagement from NZ Inc and institutions.

Institution-to-institution partnerships also require government-level facilitation. We receive expressions of interest from Saudi universities via SACM, and a visit to Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University (PNU) in Riyadh had to be arranged through the Saudi Foreign Ministry. ENZ visited PNU, a women's university with 50,000 students (57% in STEM

subjects), with the University of Waikato and Massey University. Both New Zealand universities undertook to provide information on their offerings, particularly in the areas of renewable energy, computer science, digital media, and sports, with a view to concluding broad cooperation agreements covering study abroad, joint programmes, exchange, and PhD.

As Saudi Arabia works to diversify its economy and upskill its population in line with Vision 2030, there are also clear opportunities for Te Pūkenga. There is a cooperation agreement on the table with TVTC, and the new Wa'ed scholarships pathway is focused on vocational education and training in the private sector. The Ministry has so far selected fifteen countries to work with under Wa'ed – New Zealand is not currently included, but this is still under review.

There is a shift to in-country training – s9(2)(g)(i)

There are still opportunities to attract self-funded students and work with private companies – at our networking event in Riyadh in May, Saudi higher education consultancy EduGuide was keen to work with Massey University on a proposal for new national airline Riyadh Air. ENZ has also connected Massey University with University Foundation College in Qatar to look at potential in-country education provision.

While in the region, ENZ sought an update from Sara Al Hussein, Managing Director (MENA) for New Zealand EdTech company The Training Room Online (TTRO), on the arrangement that TTRO signed with Talemia (the Saudi Education Ministry's implementation arm) during ICEE 2022. TTRO is now involved in significant national initiatives to develop a national e-learning framework covering schools, vocational training, and higher education and to improve access to education in rural areas, using New Zealand as a benchmark.

## **TĀKUPU – COMMENT**

Not having representation on the ground in the region, ENZ greatly appreciated the assistance of our NZ Inc partners in helping to secure high-level meetings and hosting events at the New Zealand Consulate General in Dubai and the New Zealand Official Residences in Abu Dhabi and Riyadh. The warmth the education contacts attending these events showed towards New Zealand highlights that we have a good reputation in the region, but we know that awareness of New Zealand's education offering is low.

Since travel restrictions lifted, ENZ and university representatives have been active the region, supported by our ambassadors meeting with ministers and senior officials in the various education ministries in Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UAE. It's important to continue this face-to-face engagement at all levels in order to maintain and build our education relationships in the region.

**MUTU - ENDS**

Appendix A – Extract of information provided in summary format –

Excerpt from proposed itinerary

Activity
Function for Omani alumni
Ghedex: day 1
Ghedex: day 2
Workshop: Take a New Look at New Zealand Education
Ghedex: day 3
Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise awareness of New Zealand’s high-quality education offering</li><li>• Identify opportunities to support KHDA’s strategic priorities</li></ul>
NZTE briefing for universities
ENZ education agent workshop and networking event
Visit University of Wollongong in Dubai (UoWD)
Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) (tbc) Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise awareness of New Zealand’s high-quality education offering</li><li>• Identify opportunities to support ADEK’s strategic priorities (<a href="#">About Us (adek.gov.ae)</a>)</li><li>• Learn more about ADEK’s new scholarship programme, <a href="#">Khotwa/RizeUp</a> and potential opportunity</li></ul>

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for Te Pūkenga/NZ university cooperation
<p>UAE Ministry of Education Scholarships Office (tbc)</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up in person on 27 March meeting</li> <li>• Present proposal covering all New Zealand universities and rankings/quality in line with criteria for approved programmes (Ministry only approves top 200-ranked universities)</li> </ul>
Networking event in Abu Dhabi
<p>UAE Scholarships Office, part of the Presidential Court</p> <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore potential for inclusion of New Zealand as an approved destination for sponsored students</li> </ul> <p>New Zealand Ambassador to join</p>
<p>Meetings with officials from the office of Dr Amal Shuqair, Deputy Minister for Scholarships, s9(2)(a)</p> <p>Ahmed Saud Al-Mujaish, General Supervisor of Scholarship Services Center, s9(2)(a)</p> <p>Eng. Esam S. Qattan, General Supervisor of Strategic Partnerships, Deputyship of Scholarship, s9(2)(a)</p> <p>Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion of New Zealand universities in the next phase of the scholarships programme</li> </ul>
Dr Abdulrahman Ali Alamri, Deputy Minister for International Cooperation (also responsible for Khebrat), s9(2)(a)

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Dr Ibrahim Mohammed Azizi,  
Advisor, Deputyship for  
International Cooperation,  
s9(2)(a)

Objectives:

- Inclusion of New Zealand universities in the next phase of the scholarships programme
- Follow up on plans to relaunch Khebrat

Networking event

University visit: Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University

Meeting/lunch with:

Dr Abbad Almutairi, Director of Research and Development at Centre for Research on Education Policy, Ministry of Education

Excerpt from ENZ Fortnightly Report to Minister Tinetti for week of 11 May 2023 (ENZ reference 2223-209)

### **New Zealand universities in the Middle East**

ENZ and representatives from four New Zealand universities met with government contacts, institutions, education agents, alumni, students and parents during an education delegation visit to Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia from 29 April to 8 May 2023.

#### *Oman*

ENZ hosted a pavilion with the University of Auckland, the University of Waikato, Massey University and the University of Otago at GHEDEX, a major business and student-facing event organised by the Omani Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI). After a two-year hiatus due to border restrictions, New Zealand again features in MoHERI's 2022/23 scholarships handbook and there was strong interest from students, parents, and government and institution representatives.

Following a Universities New Zealand visit to Oman in January 2023, a consortium of five New Zealand universities has signed an agreement for cooperation with the University of Muscat, and draft agreements with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences with MoHERI are under discussion.

#### *United Arab Emirates (UAE)*

The delegation met with the Scholarships Office of the Presidential Court in Abu Dhabi, to discuss New Zealand as a destination for this prestigious programme. Approval of New Zealand universities by the Presidential Court would have a positive impact on our status

with other funding bodies, such as the UAE Ministry of Education, Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) and Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA).

#### *Saudi Arabia*

The delegation met with several parts of the Saudi Ministry of Education to promote the approval of New Zealand universities to receive government sponsored students under the new Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques scholarship programme, emphasising New Zealand universities' areas of expertise that align with the new programme.

ENZ hosted a workshop for education agents at the New Zealand Consulate General in Dubai, and networking events at the New Zealand Official Residences in Abu Dhabi and Riyadh. ENZ promoted the delegation's visit through its LinkedIn and Arabic Twitter presence.

The new Wa'ed scholarships pathway, which is focused on vocational education and training, may present opportunities for Te Pūkenga. There are also opportunities for New Zealand's EdTech companies. For example, The Training Room Online (TTRO), which was founded by a New Zealander, signed an agreement with Talemia (the Saudi Education Ministry's implementation arm) during a similar education delegation visit to Riyadh in May 2022. TTRO is now involved in significant national initiatives to develop a national e-learning framework covering schools, vocational training, and higher education and to improve access to education in rural areas, using New Zealand as a benchmark.

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