

OCTOBER 2025

MEA

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SESSION SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

- Introduction by **Omar El-Smaile**, Director of Alumni & Careers (MEA), based in Dubai.
- Purpose: **overview** of MEA/GCC job landscape—sectors performing well, target markets, visa notes, and job-search tips.
- Note: A **follow-up session in two weeks (Nov 11)** will cover company partnerships and more detail.

ALUMNI FOOTPRINT & PLACEMENT CONCENTRATION

- ~3,500 alumni in MEA; roughly 55–60% in UAE + Saudi.
- ~70% of placements in Saudi + UAE; UAE accounts for nearly half.
- Employers recently hiring IE graduates in the region: **Ipsos, EY / EY-Parthenon, Monitor Deloitte, Chalhoub Group** (luxury retail), **Jumeirah Group** (hospitality), **Qatar Airways**.

PRIORITY MARKETS (GCC FOCUS)

UAE

- ~90% expat population; highly international and diverse.
- Ambition to **double population/economy**; large economic plan and increased trade/government spending.
- **Heavy investment**: AI, data infrastructure, Arabic LLMs, robotics/drones, healthcare.
- **Visas** typically company-sponsored after offer; **easy business setup**; **mature & competitive** market; growing preference for **regional/local experience**.

Saudi Arabia

- **Vision 2030**: diversify beyond oil; large investments in **tourism, sports, mega-events/giga-projects**; PIF active.
- **Hiring across sectors**, but **Saudization** quotas can reserve roles for nationals; some postings specify **“Saudi nationals only.”**
- Consulting prominent given public-sector transformation projects.

Qatar

- ~90% expat; high **per-capita GDP** and **high salaries**; **calmer lifestyle**.

- Investment in **education, infrastructure, oil & gas, technology, sports** (e.g., F1)
- **Less targeted** by candidates → **lower competition**; consulting **present but smaller** with limited projects

SECTOR DEMANDS & TRENDS (REGION-WIDE)

- **Consulting:** Big Four and strategy firms (**BCG, Bain, McKinsey, Accenture**). Strong needs in **AI, data/analytics, digital transformation, healthcare consulting, public-sector work**.
- **Tech/Digital:** **AI, product management, cybersecurity, data analytics**. Ongoing **cloud/data center build-out** (Azure, Google, AWS) in **Saudi, Qatar, UAE**.
- **Financial Services:** Opportunities (though selective) in **private/wealth banking, fintech, investment analysis**; **rising M&A/IPO** activity → added demand.
- **E-commerce & Retail:** High demand; broad **digitization** (incl. government processes).
- **Green Energy & Sustainability:** Policy-led growth; **new firms** and roles emerging.
- **Healthcare:** **Growing demand**, driven by **pharma** and **tech/digitalization of healthcare**.

SALARY BENCHMARKS (GCC; TAX-FREE)

- **Entry level** (fresh grads): **USD 3–4k/month** (net).
- **Post-MBA Consulting:** **USD 9–11k/month** (Big Four typically **USD 6–7k**).
- **Finance/Wealth/IB:** **USD 8–10k/month**.
- **Industry (general):** **USD 5–6k/month**.
- Notes: Benefits often include **medical insurance, visa sponsorship**, sometimes **housing/transport/annual flight**. Salaries vary by company and market conditions; some UAE salaries **stagnant or down** in pockets due to strong talent inflow.

JOB SEARCH CHANNELS & NETWORKING PLAYBOOK

- Platforms: **LinkedIn, Indeed, GulfTalent, headhunter/recruiter sites**.
- **Networking is decisive**—most roles found via connections.
- **LinkedIn Alumni Tool (IE Business School page):** Filter by **location, function, sector** to identify and contact relevant alumni.
- **Headhunters** (e.g., **Michael Page**—large team in Dubai; some **exclusive** roles):
 - Use job page **contact name + reference number** → reach out on LinkedIn; concise case for fit; attach CV; ask for a short call.
- **Market competitiveness:** thousands of applicants per role in UAE; start **early outreach** and build **relationships**.

✈ VISAS, VISITS & COMMUNITY ACCESS

- **Tourist visas** commonly available on arrival/online (nationality-dependent).
- **Best time to visit: Nov–Apr; Jun–Sep** very hot/humid.
- **Active alumni community** across UAE/Saudi/Qatar; **regular events** (at least monthly).
- **IEConnect:** join **IE UAE Alumni Club**; event listings and directories.
- **WhatsApp groups** exist for **alumni living locally** (not open to all students); school exploring better student-alumni connection channels.

💬 CONSULTING MARKET DYNAMICS (Q&A CLARIFICATIONS)

- **Project-based staffing** is common on government engagements; some firms allocate ~20–30% of resources via external consultants.
- Periodic **budget cuts/reshuffles** on mega-projects can trigger **scaling back** or **bench time**.
- You're onboarding a company ("**Match Connect Hire/Higher**") to post **project-based consulting roles** on the career portal.

💬 NATIONALIZATION / BARRIERS TO ENTRY (Q&A CLARIFICATIONS)

- **Saudi:** Private/multinationals must meet **Saudization quotas**; if quotas aren't met, hiring expats is restricted; some roles **reserved for Saudis**.
- **UAE/Qatar:** Nationalization present but **lower impact** than Saudi (e.g., **Emiratization** around entry-level; threshold applies to companies **≥50 employees** with a small percentage target).
- **Oman:** Market smaller/slower than UAE/Saudi/Qatar; some nationalization; **fewer opportunities** overall.

💬 INTERNSHIPS / EARLY CAREER PATHWAYS (Q&A CLARIFICATIONS)

- Companies typically **sponsor visas** and provide **stipends/allowances** → prefer **longer internships (~6+ months)**, especially for MBA/EMBA profiles.
- **Undergraduate** long internships (6–12 months) more common.
- For **Master in Finance** candidates facing "4+ years required" postings:
 - Target **true entry roles**; highlight **projects/outcomes** from the master's that match JD keywords; consider **longer internships, Big Four corporate finance, family offices** as entry paths.

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SENIORITY & COMPETITION (Q&A CLARIFICATIONS)

- Hiring **across all levels** (junior to very senior).
- **Regional experience** is an advantage but **not mandatory**; competitiveness is high at all seniorities due to global interest in GCC roles.

REGULAR INTERN HOSTS & PARTNERSHIPS

- **Chalhoub Group, Jumeirah Group** regularly take interns; more **official partnerships** to be shared in the Nov 11 session,

CAREER TARGETING & FOCUS (Q&A CLARIFICATIONS)

- For candidates weighing **VC vs consulting vs banking**:
 - Skill sets differ; **prioritize 1–2 sectors** first and commit to them before switching.

IN-PERSON NETWORKING & IMMERSION WEEKS

- For visitors (e.g., **Global Immersion Week**):
 - Coordinate with you for **alumni events**; set up **coffee chats** in advance with sector-relevant alumni; community events are **good in-person touchpoints**.