

2025-2026

INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

Annual Report

Prepared by

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Submitted to

Dean of AFS

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Executive Summary

The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre (IEC) at Gulf University is the university's strategic engine for turning ideas into impact. It expands the university's academic mission by enabling practical innovation, venture creation, and industry collaboration, positioning Gulf University as a producer of solutions, not only graduates. For students, the Centre provides a clear pathway from classroom learning to market application through training, mentorship, and access to entrepreneurial networks, thereby strengthening employability and leadership skills. For the local Bahraini market, the IEC contributes to a more dynamic SME ecosystem by helping opportunity-driven founders validate ideas, build resilient business models, and create jobs in priority sectors.

The Centre's mandate aligns directly with Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, particularly its emphasis on competitiveness, fairness, and sustainability. By cultivating a knowledge-based economy and supporting private-sector growth, the IEC translates national priorities into tangible outcomes: skilled talent, investment-ready start-ups, and collaborations that accelerate diversification and long-term value creation. In doing so, the Centre acts as a bridge between academia and the marketplace, channeling research, creativity, and technology into practical, scalable ventures that benefit the Kingdom.

This year marked a pivotal new chapter for the IEC. The Centre launched a refreshed brand identity that communicates originality, infinite possibility, and real-world impact signaling a clear commitment to high standards and measurable results. The year's signature event, Entrepreneurship Week, was delivered in collaboration with UNIDO and brought together students, founders, experts, and investors for keynote dialogues, hands-on labs, and pitch activities that advanced market readiness. In parallel, the Centre introduced the GU Company Program, a structured pipeline that guides teams from problem discovery to prototype, market validation, and investment preparation reinforcing the university's role as a catalyst for new ventures.

Taken together, these initiatives position the IEC as a strategic asset for Gulf University and a meaningful contributor to Bahrain's innovation landscape. They demonstrate traction against national goals, elevate the student experience, and deepen engagement with the local economy. This report builds on that momentum by outlining our outcomes, partnerships, and next-stage priorities evidence that the Centre is not only aligned with Vision 2030, but actively delivering on it.

About Gulf University:

Gulf University (GU) was established in the year 2001 by a decree of His Royal Highness, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, with the core values of excellence, continuous development, diversity, collaboration, creativity, and sustainability. GU has a strong commitment to offer excellent education and produce graduates who are fit for the labour market with practical skills, creative and innovative in applying technology, effective communicators with critical thinking skills, and adaptable to a dynamic environment. GU alumni are truly global citizens spreading worldwide across diverse nationalities, especially in the GCC region. The university complies with the regulations of the Higher Education Council (HEC) of the Ministry of Education in its pursuit towards continuous quality enhancement in academics and administrative services. Gulf University (GU) is one of the first three licensed private universities in Bahrain and currently offers 4 Programs, namely, bachelor's in accounting & finance, bachelor's in human resource management, bachelor's in mass communication program, and bachelor's in the interior design engineering program. Our alumni are now close to 3,000, with more than 22 nationalities scattered all around the world. On the regional scale, Gulf University has close to 1,600 alumni concentrated in Kuwait and approximately 500 in Saudi Arabia.

GU Vision:

- Gulf University aims to be a distinguished higher education institution in Bahrain and beyond; its competitive graduates, impressive research, and enthusiastic contribution to communities' growth.

GU Mission:

- Gulf University, a private institution in the Kingdom of Bahrain, is keen to provide continuous higher education that nurtures students' attributes towards critical thinking, life-long and reflective learning.
- GU also encourages research activities with a sound impact both in academia and practice.

- GU's stimulating environment supports its highly skilled staff and graduates to compete in increasing socio-economic challenges and engage in the development of the Bahraini community and beyond.

GU Strategic Directions: GU strives to become a distinguished provider of higher education at the local, regional and international level through achieving excellence in academic programs, scientific research, national and international collaboration, continuous quality enhancement, hiring and retaining pioneering Staff, alumni engagement, delivered within an enriched campus with contemporary physical and learning resources. Figure 1 below clearly illustrates the seven strategic directions of GU.

About Innovation & Entrepreneurship Center:

The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of the Gulf works for aspiring and current project owners from our students, graduates, and society to create their innovative business ideas and turn them into real successful projects. In addition to that, ICE at Gulf university helps students and community members acquire the tools, develop the skills and cultivate the mindset of an entrepreneur so that they may create economic and social value throughout the kingdom of Bahrain and GCC as well.

IEC Vision:

The first center to support our current students, alumni, and society to transform their innovative ideas into real successful businesses that contribute to economic development.

IEC Mission:

The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of the Gulf works for aspiring and current project owners from our students, graduates, and society to create their innovative business ideas and turn them into real successful projects and inspire them to work directly by providing them with support services such as training, consulting and research services and others one of the services is the failure of it during the start-up phase, which allows its projects to grow and flourish.

The Goals of the Center:

The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship aims to achieve the following goals.

- Supporting entrepreneurship by discovering talented entrepreneurs.
- Creating a culture of innovation and risk tolerance by nurturing entrepreneurial values among students and enhancing the business capabilities of potential entrepreneurs.
- Promote successful innovative business ideas by identifying promising student projects and providing support services to market these ideas and inventions.
- Encouraging self-employment among university graduates.
- Create an effective network with entrepreneurship centers, business incubators, industry, and society at the national and regional levels to promote entrepreneurial projects.
- Providing potential and current business leaders with a set of effective services (consulting, financing, training, and research) that suit their stage of business.

Gulf University's Strategic Plan to Support Innovation and Entrepreneurship:

Gulf University's commitment to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship is embedded in its strategic plan, mission, and core values.

This commitment is reflected in several key areas:

1. Mission Statement

The mission of Gulf University highlights the promotion of innovation and creativity to cultivate a professional workforce and intellectual capital within a stimulating multicultural environment.

2. Core Values

Core Value 6: Creativity emphasizes the crucial role of creativity and innovation. It states: "We foster creativity, innovation, and critical thinking skills to better serve the university and society. We encourage initiative and problem-solving abilities among our staff and

students, which are reflected in teaching, learning, research, and community services." This demonstrates Gulf University's dedication to prioritizing creativity and innovation, supporting the academic development of students and staff, and positively impacting the wider community through innovative solutions and thoughtful engagement.

3. Strategic Themes

Gulf University's strategic plan includes eight main themes, with STH4 focusing on Market Repositioning through Innovation and Internationalization. This theme underscores the university's dynamic approach to strengthening its position in the higher education sector locally and regionally. The strategic goal states: "Gulf University will reposition itself in the higher education sector in Bahrain and the region by participating in university rankings and innovative practices in teaching and learning." This approach highlights the university's commitment to elevating its profile through active participation in university rankings and integrating innovative approaches across its educational and operational framework.

Within the 5Theme Strategic Hub focusing on innovation and entrepreneurship, one key performance indicator (KPI) is the number of innovation and entrepreneurship projects undertaken by students and staff. This KPI measures the volume of innovative and entrepreneurial projects initiated and completed within a given timeframe, fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurial thinking across the university community.

4. Strategic Objectives

Gulf University emphasizes innovation as a key element in numerous strategic objectives to enhance its operations, partnerships, and learning environment:

- OB13: Building Meaningful Collaboration with Industry and Academia

This goal emphasizes the role of innovation in achieving societal impact through collaboration with industry and academia, aligning with strategic themes STH1 to STH4. It aims to use innovative methods to enrich the university's impact and effectiveness locally and regionally.

- OB22: Improving the Effectiveness of University Services

Innovation and digitization are coupled to streamline and enhance university services, in line with strategic themes STH2, STH5, and STH7. The goal is to modernize service delivery through innovative technologies and processes.

- OB22.IN02: Activating the Innovative and Technological Learning Unit

This initiative integrates innovation into teaching and learning by activating a dedicated module, aiming to improve learning outcomes through advanced teaching methods and techniques.

- OB35: Empowering Students and Staff

This goal focuses on empowering students and staff through classification, innovation, and digitization, aligning with STH5 and STH7. It includes fostering an environment that supports creative thinking and problem-solving, using digital tools to enhance learning and management processes.

These goals reflect Gulf University's strategic commitment to integrating innovation into all academic and operational practices, thereby enhancing its competitiveness and effectiveness in the higher education sector

IEC Operational Plan 2025-2026

Areas	Objective	Initiative	Tasks to be reflected in the action plans	Sources of Initiative	Target / Milestone (PIs)	responsibility	Time Frame		Budget	Progress (Actual Achievement)	Evidence of Achievement	Line Manager Notes	QADC notes
Innovation and Entrepreneurship	OB20: Utilize and support student potential and interest.	OB20. IN01: Transform student initiatives to entrepreneurial project by providing facilities and services	Conduct an entrepreneurship workshop to transfer a successful initiative to projects		At least 1 project annually	Director of IEC	September,25	July,24	BD 0	100% of the entrepreneurship workshop was successfully conducted, transferring a successful initiative to projects.	"Your Business Supercharged by AI" Annual report 2025-2026		
			Provide a feasibility study and assistant for successful initiatives			Director of IEC	October,23	Feb,24		No progress made (0%) in providing a feasibility study and assistance for successful initiatives.			
		OB21. IN01: Collaborate with external bodies to contribute towards society, environment and entrepreneurship	Involving Students with external Activities/ workshop (Injaz)		At least 1 collaborative project to promote social innovation	Director of IEC	September,23	March,24	BD 0	100% progress achieved in involving students with external activities/workshops (Injaz)	Annual report 2025-2026, Injaz Report		
		OB21. IN02: Build Relationships with Sponsors to conduct Entrepreneurship related events	Connect students with external bodies		Involving Students with external bodies (UNIDO & Injaz)	Director of IEC	December,23	April,24	BD 0	100% progress achieved in securing internships in Bahrain through summer 25-26, TOT (UNIDO) 100% progress was achieved in connecting students project with "Friendship society for the blinds"	UNIDO Annual report 2025-2026, Friendship Society of the blinds, Annual Report 2025-2026		
		OB21. IN03: Activate incubator services to support community initiatives	Conduct an agreement with Bahrain Business Incubator Centre		At least 2 services	Director of IEC	January,24	May,24	BD 0	No progress made (0%) in creating innovation labs at GU in collaboration with external professional bodies.	Bayan Sweet Incubator Cafe proposal , Annual report 2023-2034		
			Create innovation labs at GU in collaboration with external professional bodies.			Director of IEC	December,23	July,24					

IEC CENTER ACTIVITIES IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2025-2026

To cultivate the talents, skills, and innovative capacities of students, the Centre provides specialized consultancy for aspiring entrepreneurs. This includes leveraging institutional support to encourage creativity, nurturing student-led innovations, and identifying promising projects that merit further development. Tailored support services are offered through structured consultations with the Centre, in alignment with the annexed action plan.

The University continues to operate under a hybrid model, prioritizing flexibility while remaining steadfast in its commitment to ensuring the health and safety of all students.

Accordingly, the Activities of IEC referring to the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences during the academic year 2025-2026 are as follows:

No.	Activity Name	No. of students	Date	Status
1	INJAZ Sustainability Hackathon (GWECCC).	10	08-11/09/2025	Conducted
2	INJAZ Company Program	15	15/09/2025- 15/05/2026	Conducted
3	Entrepreneurship Week	Up to 300	19-23/4/2026	Canceled
4	Ramadan Culture Night	50	02/03/2026	Canceled
5	GU Company Program 25-26	Up to 50	15/02/2026	Canceled
6	Podcast " Rowad- رواد"	15	Feb-July 25-26	Canceled
7	Treasure Hunt Hackathon	30	01/05/2026	Canceled
8	AI Competition (External)	15	01/06/2026	Canceled
9	Entrepreneurship Club	6	1/10/2026	Launched
10	THINK PINK (Food Vendors)	10	20/10/2026	Conducted
11	Bahrain National Day (Food vendors and students Projects)	15	10/12/2026	Conducted
12	MOU with Ebdaa Bank	0	25/06/2026	Conducted

For a sustained period this year, the war halted execution across nearly the entire IEC portfolio. Initiatives that had been fully planned and, in several cases, were already in motion were canceled or indefinitely postponed as safety concerns, partner unavailability, and logistical constraints made normal delivery impossible. This was not a matter of scaling back ambition; it was a wholesale suspension of the Centre's delivery calendar at the point in the year when several flagship programs were due to move from planning into execution.

The disruption reached partners as much as it reached the Centre itself. Entrepreneurs and speakers who had confirmed their participation months in advance withdrew, citing the changed regional circumstances; sponsors and external stakeholders slowed or paused their engagement; and venue, logistics, and marketing plans that had already been finalized in several cases had to be shelved. Entrepreneurship Week the Centre's flagship event and a strategic pillar of its vision for connecting students, founders, and investors was the single most visible casualty of this period, but it was far from the only one; the Rowad podcast lost its entire confirmed guest lineup in the same window, and momentum across the Hackathon, GU Company Program, and partner MOU activations was similarly interrupted.

The table below summarizes the status of selected initiatives during the war period:

Initiative	Original Delivery Window	Status During War Period
Entrepreneurship Week (2nd Edition)	April 2026	Execution canceled/postponed; flagship event most severely affected
Entrepreneurs Podcast “Rowad - رواد”	Guest recording, Jan-Jul 2026	Full confirmed guest lineup (5 entrepreneurs) withdrew
Hackathon: Treasure Hunt	March 2026	Execution canceled
GU Company Program	Feb-Apr 2026	Execution canceled
MOUs & Partner Activations	Ongoing, Jan-Jul 2026	Partner responsiveness stalled; activations paused
Ramadan Culture Night	Monday March 2 nd 2026	Execution canceled

The Second Challenge: Student Engagement Shortfall in Summer Courses

When conditions allowed the Centre to resume operations, the expectation was that renewed programming would recover much of the ground lost earlier in the year before the academic year closed. That recovery met an unexpected second obstacle: registration in the Centre's summer courses (May-July 2025-2026) came in very low, well short of what the initiatives were designed to reach.

Several factors likely contributed to this outcome, though a fuller root-cause review with student feedback is recommended before the Centre finalizes its response. The compressed planning and marketing window left after the war reduced how well summer offerings could be communicated to students. Students' own routines, plans, and academic priorities had been disrupted alongside the Centre's, which likely reduced bandwidth or appetite for extracurricular commitments during the immediate recovery period. And the timing itself arriving in the summer months, when student presence on campus is naturally lower offered little cushion for the shortfall in outreach time.

Compounding Effect on Value and Outcomes

The two challenges did not act independently; they compounded one another. The war did not only delay initiatives, it consumed the runway the Centre would normally have used to plan, market, and staff its recovery activity properly. Programs that did resume did so with a shorter lead time than intended. Into that shorter lead time, the Centre then absorbed a summer term with markedly lower-than-expected registration.

The practical result is that several initiatives delivered, or planned for delivery, this year reached a smaller pool of students than intended, and the value the Centre can demonstrate against its own KPIs team formation, workshop attendance, and conversion into flagship programs fell short in places of what the 2025-2026 operational plan called for.

- Entrepreneurs Podcast “Rowad - رواد”

This year the Centre launched Rowad - رواد, a new entrepreneurship podcast intended to build the IEC brand and student learning through consistent, high-quality content featuring alumni and ecosystem leaders, under a season plan of 5 episodes.

The Centre had secured commitment from five entrepreneurs with strong success stories to appear as guests for the season. As the regional situation developed, all five withdrew from their commitments and apologized, citing changed circumstances. In the same conversation, they referred the Centre to Start-up Bahrain, which offered to connect IEC with additional entrepreneurs willing to join the podcast.

The Centre is treating this as an opportunity to broaden its guest network rather than a setback to the season plan: the Start-up Bahrain referral opens a new, potentially larger pipeline of guests for future episodes, and formalizing this relationship is a near-term priority for the podcast team.

- Entrepreneurs Club

A significant milestone for 2025-2026 was the official launch of the Entrepreneurs Club, IEC's student community engine designed to sustain engagement, support peer learning, and provide a steady pipeline of student talent into IEC's flagship programs. The Club launched with six registered members and a full leadership structure, under the Director of IEC as Club Advisor:

Role	Name
Club Advisor	Director of IEC/ Ms. Fatima Al-Shuwaikh
President	Muneer Abdulrakeeab Ali
Vice President	Yusuf Jameel
Secretary	Fedaa Husain A. Mohamed Mohamed
Events & Projects Coordinator	Islam Khaldoun Alrida
Media & Marketing Coordinator	Zahra Basem Alarayedh

Role	Name
General Member	Zainab Ebrahim Alawainati

Over the remainder of the year, the Club is expected to run a monthly activity calendar (pitch nights, visits, peer mentoring), recruit volunteers for the Hackathon and Entrepreneurship Week, support GU Company Program and AI Competition participants, and help prepare student showcases for the Projects Exhibition, per the Centre's Action Plan.



GU Company Program “How to Train your AI Dragon”

The GU Company Program is a university-wide AI innovation competition, organized by IEC and led this cycle by Dr. Waleed, designed to empower students from all four colleges AFS, Media, Law, and Engineering to explore the potential of AI in business, law, media, and engineering. The program guides students through a structured process from ideation to execution, culminating in a final pitch event where interdisciplinary teams showcase AI-driven business solutions, with training, mentorship, and hands-on experience alongside entrepreneurial and leadership skill-building.

Timeline (1-Month Duration)

Phase	Duration	Activities
Launch & Registration	Week 1	Announcement of the competition, call for applications, and team formation; teams submit a proposal with their AI-driven solution concept.
Workshops and Training	Week 2	Training sessions covering AI fundamentals, business modeling, AI ethics, prototyping, and pitching techniques.
Ideation & Mentorship	Week 2	Intensive mentorship covering AI fundamentals, business modeling, AI ethics, prototyping, and pitching techniques.
Prototyping & Development	Week 3	Teams build working prototypes, develop business models, and refine presentations with technical mentor support.
Submission & Pre-Judging	Week 4	Teams finalize prototypes, business models, and presentations ahead of the final pitch.
Final Pitch Event	Week 4-5	Top-performing teams present live before a panel of judges; winners selected against the evaluation criteria.

Team Formation & Eligibility

- Each team consists of 5-7 students, with representation from at least two faculty members from each college (AFS, Media, Law, Engineering).
- Teams submit a one-page concept note outlining their AI-driven solution, problem statement, target market, and expected impact.
- Each team has at least one technical lead (AI development) and one business lead (commercialization strategy).
- Faculty mentors are assigned to guide teams throughout the competition.
- Open to all undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at Gulf University.

Submission Requirements

- A written business proposal (5-10 pages) covering problem identification, AI implementation, market feasibility, and impact analysis.
- A technical document outlining AI methodologies, algorithms, or models used.
- A working prototype or demo showcasing the AI solution in action.
- A pitch video (3-5 minutes) explaining the idea, value proposition, and business potential.
- A live pitch presentation before the judging panel, supported by a short product demo video.

Judging Criteria

The judging panel includes external industry professionals and AI startup representatives, ensuring students receive practical, real-world feedback.

Criteria	Weightage	Description
Innovation & Creativity	20%	Novelty and originality of the AI-driven solution.
Technical feasibility	20%	Implementation quality, AI model effectiveness, and technical soundness.
Business Viability	20%	Market potential, scalability, and business model clarity.
Interdisciplinary Integration	15%	How well the team incorporates expertise from multiple disciplines.
Impact & Relevance	15%	The significance of the solution in solving real-world challenges.
Pitch Presentation	10%	Clarity, engagement, and persuasiveness of the pitch.

Awards & Post-Competition Support

- 1st Place: Cash prize, startup incubation support, mentorship from AI experts.
- 2nd Place: Cash prize, AI-focused training program, networking opportunities.
- 3rd Place: Cash prize, certificates, and potential internship opportunities.
- Best Interdisciplinary Team Award and Certificates of Participation for all completing teams.
- Post-competition: access to incubation programs, industry networking events, collaboration with AI research labs, and university showcase/media coverage for selected teams.

AI Competition: "Bahrain AI Innovation Challenge"- External

Hosted by Gulf University and led by Dr. Waleed, the Bahrain AI Innovation Challenge is a competition dedicated purely to Artificial Intelligence — model building, algorithms, and intelligent systems — under the tagline “Where Intelligence Meets Innovation.” It is designed to position IEC and GU as a regional hub for applied AI solutions for business and society, complementing the interdisciplinary GU Company Program with a track focused on AI research and model development.

Competition Tracks

- Computer Vision Projects (object detection, face recognition, OCR, medical imaging)
- Natural Language Processing Projects (chatbots, summarization, speech recognition)
- Generative AI & LLMs (ChatGPT-like models, prompt engineering, AI content creation)
- Reinforcement Learning (AI for robotics, autonomous systems, games)
- AI Model Optimization (TinyML, model compression, quantization, pruning)
- Explainable & Ethical AI Research (bias reduction, AI fairness, model transparency)

Submission Requirements

- AI problem statement and proposed model/algorithm (architecture, tools)
- Dataset description (source, preprocessing)
- Model training and evaluation metrics (accuracy, F1, BLEU, IoU, etc.)
- Prototype demonstration (if applicable) and source code repository link
- AI ethics and bias considerations

Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Weightage
Innovation & Originality of AI Model	25%
Accuracy, Metrics & Robustness	30%
Scalability & Optimization	15%
Ethical AI & Explainability	10%
Presentation & Technical Clarity	20%

Eligibility & Sponsors

Open to university students, AI researchers, data scientists, AI developers, and professionals, in teams of 1-5, with expected familiarity in Python, TensorFlow, PyTorch, Scikit-learn, OpenCV, and Hugging Face. The judging panel draws on industry AI experts and researchers, hosted by Gulf University

UNIDO Summer Training Program (Training of Trainers)

Building on last year's successful Entrepreneurship Week collaboration with UNIDO, the Centre is planning a summer Training-of-Trainers (ToT) program with UNIDO to equip a cohort of trainers with proper facilitation and delivery skills. The program is intended to strengthen the Centre's internal capacity to deliver workshops, mentoring sessions, and event programming consistently across future initiatives, reducing reliance on any single facilitator or partner and improving the Centre's ability to withstand scheduling disruptions such as those experienced this year.

Closing Note

Taken together, the war and its aftershock in student engagement represent the defining operating story of the Centre's 2025-2026 year: not a lack of planning or ambition, but an external shock large enough to disrupt the operating calendar, followed by a slower-than-hoped recovery in the one input every IEC initiative depends on students actually showing up. The Centre's recommendations for 2026-2027 set out in the main Annual Report, particularly around contingency planning, flexible and hybrid delivery formats, and diversified partner and outreach pipelines, respond directly to both halves of this challenge.

Detailed Performance Evaluation Report

INJAZ Bahrain Company Program 2025–2026

Project: Noor.ai | Instagram: @noor.ai.bh

Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive evaluation of “Noor.ai,” an artificial-intelligence entrepreneurial project developed by Gulf University students under the INJAZ Bahrain Company Program for the 2025–2026 academic year. It covers the project's mission and product, its digital presence the Instagram account noor.ai.bh and a newly launched integrated website team structure and departmental responsibilities, student academic performance including the ESP exam, and the full set of operational and leadership challenges that ultimately prevented the team from qualifying for the finals.

Three findings stand out. First, the team built a genuine multi-channel presence for the product (social media plus a dedicated website), reflecting real entrepreneurial execution beyond the classroom. Second, students achieved a distinguished ESP exam result a 7-out-of-11 pass rate that INJAZ officials confirmed as the best among all participating universities, against a historical university-wide pass rate of under 30%. Third, a cluster of leadership, communication, and commitment issues — not a lack of creativity or technical merit — were the primary drivers of the team's underperformance at the judging stage. The report closes with concrete, actionable recommendations for the 2026–2027 cycle.

Introduction: The INJAZ Bahrain Company Program

The INJAZ Bahrain Company Program is one of the Kingdom of Bahrain's leading entrepreneurship competitions, giving university students the opportunity to design, launch, and operate a real start-up venture over an academic year under the mentorship of industry professionals and INJAZ staff. Gulf University participated in the 2025–2026 cycle through Noor.ai, an AI-based initiative developed by students and supervised by the university's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (IEC).

Beyond the competition itself, the program is designed to build entrepreneurial mindsets, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and applied business skills company formation, product development, marketing, financial planning, and formal pitching to a judging panel. Noor.ai's participation therefore needs to be read on two tracks at once: as a competition entry judged against other universities' companies, and as a hands-on learning vehicle for the 13 students involved, each of whom took on a functional role inside the company.

Project Overview: Noor.ai

Noor.ai is an AI-based entrepreneurial solution built to deliver smart, accessible tools that improve users' day-to-day experience, reflecting the team's effort to combine innovation, applied artificial intelligence, and entrepreneurship in a single product. The project's positioning centers on accessibility and societal impact: rather than a purely academic prototype, the team pursued a product with real users in mind, paired with the market-facing infrastructure brand, social presence, and a website — needed to present it credibly to judges, mentors, and the public.

This dual focus (product plus go-to-market presence) is consistent with INJAZ's judging criteria, which assess not only the underlying idea but also the company's execution: branding, marketing reach, financial planning, and presentation readiness. It also explains why the team invested specifically in an Instagram account and an integrated website alongside the AI product itself these are the customer-facing assets a judging panel and future users would expect from a functioning company.

Digital Presence

Instagram Account — @noor.ai.bh

The team launched and managed a dedicated Instagram account, "@noor.ai.bh" (instagram.com/noor.ai.bh), as Noor.ai's primary social media channel. Within the team's departmental structure, this fell under the Marketing and Social Media role, which was responsible for publicizing the project's mission, sharing updates on product development, and building audience engagement ahead of the judging rounds. A social channel of this kind typically serves three functions for an INJAZ company: demonstrating marketing capability to judges, building a real audience the product can be tested against, and creating a public record of the team's progress over the year.

Limitation: Instagram restricts automated access to profile pages, so this report could not independently verify quantitative performance follower count, reach, likes, or engagement rate for @noor.ai.bh. To fully document this workstream, it is recommended the Marketing team export and attach official Instagram Insights screenshots (audience growth over time, top-performing posts, reach and engagement rate) to the next version of this report, alongside a short narrative on content strategy and posting cadence.

Website

In parallel, the team designed and launched a fully integrated website for Noor.ai, giving the product a standalone, professional online presence beyond social media. A dedicated website is typically the strongest single credibility signal a student company can show a judging panel, since it usually consolidates the product pitch, brand identity, and contact/engagement channel in one place effectively functioning as the company's digital storefront.

Limitation: no website URL or image files were provided for this report, so screenshots could not be captured or embedded. Once the site link (or exported screenshots of the homepage, product page, and any key features) is shared with the IEC, this section can be updated with visual evidence of the finished product, which would also strengthen future funding, patent, or investor conversations recommended elsewhere in this report.

Team Structure and Departmental Responsibilities

The Noor.ai company was organized into eight functional departments, mirroring a real start-up's structure — a deliberate part of the INJAZ learning model. The table below summarizes each department's role within the project.

Department	Core Responsibilities
Management & Leadership (CEO)	Coordinated overall operations, delegated responsibilities across departments, served as the main point of contact with INJAZ Bahrain, and supervised project execution and judging-round logistics.
Marketing & Social Media	Managed the @noor.ai.bh Instagram account, developed content and brand messaging, and worked to build audience engagement ahead of the judging rounds.
Operations	Oversaw day-to-day execution of project tasks, timelines, and internal coordination between departments.
Finance	Prepared financial planning, budgeting, and analysis for the company; most affected by mid-cycle student withdrawals (see Commitment Challenges).
Product Development	Built and refined the Noor.ai AI product itself, including preparation of the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) for demonstration.

Human Resources	Supported internal team coordination, role clarity, and member engagement within the company.
Public Relations	Managed external communications and Noor.ai's public-facing image, complementing the marketing/social media function.
Presentation Preparation	Prepared pitch materials and coached the team for the physical/virtual judging-round presentation.

Student Performance and ESP Exam Results

Academically, the standout result of the year was the team's performance in the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) exam: 7 of the 11 students who sat the exam passed it. This is a notable achievement in context historically, fewer than 30% of students pass this exam university-wide, meaning the Noor.ai cohort passed at roughly double the typical rate. INJAZ officials went further, confirming that Gulf University's students recorded the best ESP exam performance among all participating universities in this year's program.

This result matters for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that the operational and leadership setbacks described elsewhere in this report did not reflect a lack of individual student capability or effort academically, this cohort outperformed both its own university's historical baseline and its INJAZ peer institutions. Second, it gives Gulf University and the IEC a concrete, verifiable success story to carry into the 2026–2027 cycle, independent of the competition outcome, and a strong argument for continued investment in ESP preparation alongside entrepreneurial training.

Major Challenges Encountered

National Circumstances and Program Instability

The team's competition journey unfolded against difficult national circumstances in Bahrain during the academic year. Some students had to travel outside the country, while others were engaged as frontliners, both of which affected attendance, commitment, and internal communication at various points in the year. Compounding this, INJAZ Bahrain repeatedly adjusted report deadlines, submission schedules, and judging dates over the course of the program. Each adjustment forced the team to re-plan on short notice, and the cumulative effect was significantly added pressure, particularly when changes landed during midterm examination periods.

Leadership and Operational Challenges

Several leadership and operational issues compounded the external pressures above. The CEO's outside work commitments limited the time available to manage the team day to day, which in practice led to unclear communication, weak delegation of responsibilities, and insufficient coordination between departments. Team members were often not fully aware of their roles and expectations, which created frustration and confusion rather than an effort problem, since the same students went on to deliver the strong ESP result described above.

Judging Round Incident

INJAZ Bahrain gave participating teams the choice of presenting either physically or virtually during the judging rounds. Given travel circumstances and conflicts with midterm exams, the majority of the team voted to present virtually. However, the CEO independently decided to present physically instead, without informing the rest of

the team until the night before the judging round on April 18, 2026. As a direct result, only 4 of the 13 students were able to attend the presentation in person, which weakened both coordination and presentation readiness on the day.

MVP Presentation Issue

One day before the presentation, the supervising party asked the CEO to confirm that the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) would be brought to the judging round, and the CEO confirmed it would be available. On the day of the presentation, however, the MVP was not brought up. the team's stated explanation was that it had simply been forgotten. Since the MVP is typically central to how judges assess product readiness, its absence directly undercut the professionalism of the presentation and reduces the team's chances of qualifying, independent of the underlying product's quality.

Commitment Challenges

Although the initial team formation process was carried out carefully, sustaining commitment through the full academic year proved difficult. Several Finance Department students withdrew from the project approximately two weeks before the judging rounds, citing graduation responsibilities, academic workload, work commitments, and competing report deadlines. This late withdrawal created operational pressure at the worst possible time and directly affected completion of the company's financial reports and analysis — an area judges specifically flagged as needing improvement.

Evaluation Criteria Observation

It is also worth noting that the judging criteria and evaluation expectations were not entirely clear to the team at the start of the competition. Several expectations only became clear in later stages, and in some cases only after the judges' feedback was received post-competition. This suggests an opportunity for the IEC to seek earlier, more detailed clarification of judging rubrics directly from INJAZ Bahrain at the start of future cycles, rather than inferring them as the year progresses.

Judges' Feedback

After the team learned it had not qualified for the finals, the IEC requested and received detailed feedback from the INJAZ judging panel. The feedback was constructive and, notably, positive on the core idea:

- Judges acknowledged Noor.ai as one of the stronger participating teams and highlighted the strong underlying potential of the idea.
- They flagged the need to improve report quality, structure, and depth of financial analysis.
- They recommended a stronger, more complete prototype presentation, including having the MVP physically present.
- They advised reducing reliance on AI-generated content in written materials, in favor of demonstrating stronger student critical thinking and original analysis.
- They encouraged the team to pursue formal patent registration for the product and to continue developing the prototype beyond the competition.

Lessons Learned

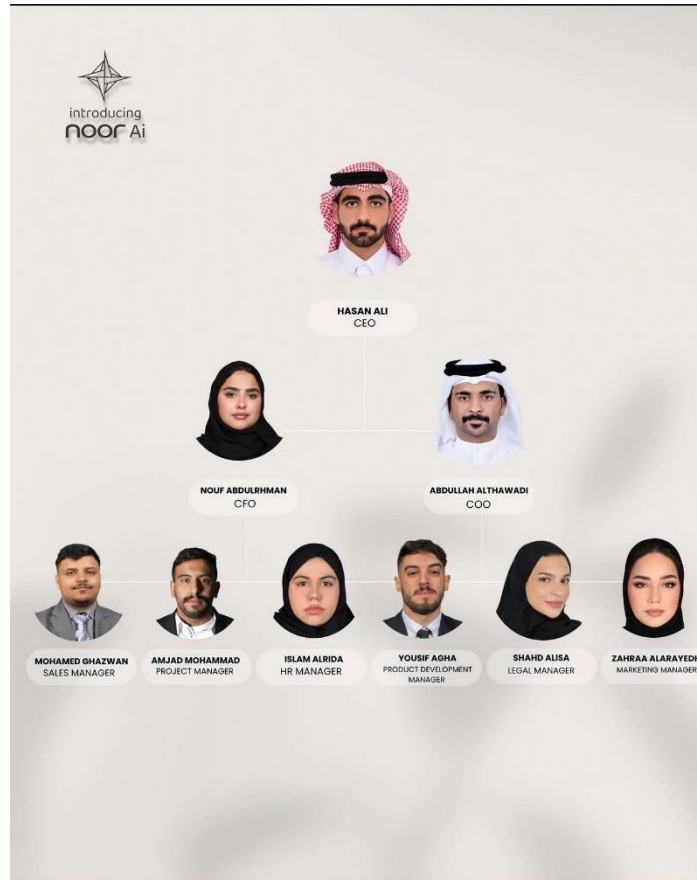
- Leadership accountability: unilateral, unshared decisions (as in the judging-round format change) carry real operational risk and should be avoided in a team-based company structure.
- Communication: role clarity and consistent internal updates are as important to judging outcomes as the underlying product idea.
- Collaborative decision-making: format, logistics, and presentation decisions should be made with the team, not around it.
- Early preparation: MVP readiness, financial reporting, and pitch materials all need buffer time well before submission or judging deadlines, not last-minute confirmation the day before.
- Financial planning and staffing: the Finance function needs redundancy (more than one or two committed students) so late withdrawals do not stall a core deliverable.
- Backup planning: presentation logistics (attendance mode, MVP transport, contingency for absent members) need an explicit backup plan, not an assumption that the original plan will hold.

Strategic Recommendations for 2026–2027

Recommendation	Action
Broaden participation across colleges	Extend recruitment beyond current departments; the College of Engineering should nominate projects with clear societal and community impact.
Strengthen the Finance function	The Finance Department should nominate at least three committed students (not one or two) to fully supervise financial planning and analysis, reducing single-point-of-failure risk.
Selection criteria	Prioritize commitment, leadership, teamwork, and sustained engagement over technical interest alone when selecting student participants.
Early team formation	Begin team formation, leadership selection, and role assignment before the start of the 2026–2027 academic year, rather than after it begins.
Training and workshops	Run structured training workshops on pitching, financial reporting, and judging-criteria expectations ahead of the competition cycle.
Shared decision-making protocol	Establish an explicit rule that logistics decisions affecting the whole team (presentation format, MVP handling) require team sign-off, not unilateral leadership calls.
Document digital presence with data	Continue and formalize the Instagram (@noor.ai.bh) and website channels; attach Instagram Insights and website screenshots to reporting so marketing performance is verifiable, not just descriptive.
Build on the ESP result	Use this year's ESP exam outcome (7/11 passed, best among participating universities) as a model — identify what supported that result and apply the same preparation approach to other academic components of the program.

Although Noor.ai did not qualify for the finals, the 2025–2026 cycle produced substantial, tangible value for Gulf University: a working AI product supported by a real digital presence (an active Instagram account and a fully integrated website), a distinguished ESP exam result recognized by INJAZ officials as the best among participating universities, and a clear, well-documented set of operational lessons. The shortfalls that affected the

judging outcome were concentrated in leadership process and logistics — not in student capability or product creativity which means they are directly addressable through the recommendations above. With earlier preparation, shared decision-making, and a strengthened Finance team, Gulf University is well positioned to field a more competitive Noor.ai entry in the 2026–2027 program.







The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (IEC) at Gulf University plays a vital role

In cultivating a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among students, graduates, and the wider community. Positioned as a catalyst for transforming creative ideas into viable business ventures, the Center navigates a landscape marked by both promising opportunities and pressing challenges that shape its ability to deliver on its strategic and operational goals. On the opportunity front, the IEC is well-placed to leverage strategic partnerships, diversify funding channels, harness cutting-edge technological advancements, and expand its outreach through digital and online platforms. These prospects offer considerable potential to enhance the Center's visibility, impact, and contribution to the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Bahrain. Yet, these opportunities are tempered by a series of significant threats. Chief among them is the ongoing challenge of securing consistent student commitment and active engagement in the Center's initiatives, which remains the cornerstone of its success. Additionally, the absence of a dedicated incubator facility within the university limits the ability to systematically nurture and scale promising student projects into sustainable enterprises. Other hurdles include limited resources, complexities in organizing large-scale events, and the constant need to ensure that programs remain relevant and impactful within Bahrain's rapidly evolving economic environment.

Effectively addressing these challenges while strategically capitalizing on emerging opportunities is essential for the IEC to strengthen its role as an engine of entrepreneurial growth and to advance Bahrain's long-term vision of economic diversification and innovation-driven development.

The annual review of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (IEC)

Opportunities & Threats

The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre continues to play a vital role in cultivating a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among students, graduates, and the wider community. It is well-placed to leverage strategic partnerships, diversify funding channels, harness technological advancements, and expand outreach through digital and online platforms prospects that offer considerable potential to enhance the Centre's visibility, impact, and contribution to Bahrain's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

These opportunities are tempered by several threats. Foremost this year was regional instability tied to the war, which disrupted timelines, partner responsiveness, and in-person event planning across the portfolio, most visibly for Entrepreneurship Week and the Rowad podcast guest pipeline. Other continuing challenges include securing consistent student commitment and active engagement, the absence of a dedicated incubator facility within the university, limited resources, the complexity of organizing large-scale events, and the constant need to keep programs relevant within Bahrain's evolving economic environment.

Effectively addressing these challenges while capitalizing on emerging opportunities including new partnerships such as the Start-up Bahrain referral is essential for the Centre to strengthen its role as an engine of entrepreneurial growth and to advance Bahrain's long-term vision of economic diversification and innovation-driven development.

Annual Final Review:

- Challenges

The annual review of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre (IEC) for 2025-2026 highlights genuine areas of progress alongside targets that were not fully realized a pattern that repeats from year to year but was made more pronounced this cycle by the regional disruption addressed below. Among the year's notable achievements, the Centre successfully signed three Memoranda of Understanding with DOO Mena, China Smart City, and HUB Bahrain representing a meaningful expansion of its collaborative network and a credible foundation to build on with the two remaining priority partners, the SMEs Organization and Ebdaa Bank, identified in the 2025-2026 action plan. At the same time, a set of structural challenges continued to limit full execution of the Centre's operational plan. These are addressed individually below, not to catalogue shortfall for its own sake, but so that next year's planning cycle can respond to each one directly rather than in general terms.

Regional Instability & Operational Disruption

The war in the region was this year's most significant and pervasive challenge. It disrupted planning for most initiatives on the calendar, delayed partner confirmations, and required the Centre to rework timelines most notably for Entrepreneurship Week and the Rowad podcast, where a confirmed guest lineup withdrew in full. A full account of this disruption and its aftermath is set out in the accompanying war impact review.

Collaboration and Partnership Challenge

Despite the successful establishment of MOUs with DOO Mena, China Smart City, and HUB Bahrain, other planned collaborations were not fully formalized this year. Limited engagement and insufficient responsiveness from certain external stakeholders a pattern the regional situation likely reinforced slowed progress and left additional partnership opportunities on the table, most notably with the SMEs Organization and Ibdaa Bank, both named priorities in the 2025-2026 action plan. The gap is not only about signatures: even where MOUs exist, the Centre's own portfolio tracking distinguishes between partnerships that are signed and those that are activated through concrete speaker visits, mentorship, sponsorship, or student opportunities, and this year several signed relationships delivered fewer activations than planned. Left unaddressed, this pattern narrows the pipeline of external speakers, mentors, and sponsors that flagship programs such as Entrepreneurship Week, the GU Company Program, and the Hackathon depend on.

Resource Constraints

The goal of providing adequate facilities and financial support for students' entrepreneurial projects was not achieved this year. Persistent financial limitations and budgetary restrictions continued to hinder the development of an enabling infrastructure, most notably the absence of a dedicated incubator or co-working space that would allow promising student ideas to be nurtured past the ideation stage and scaled into sustainable ventures. Without this infrastructure, teams that complete programs such as Injaz or the GU Company Program have limited means of continuing their work on campus once the formal program ends, which weakens the Centre's ability to convert strong pitches into lasting student businesses and to demonstrate the kind of investment-ready outcomes referenced in the Centre's own vision.

Event Organization Difficulties

Efforts to expand the Centre's portfolio of events exhibitions, workshops, and networking activities were constrained by logistical challenges and limited resources this year, and were compounded by the shortened planning windows that followed the regional disruption. Large-scale events such as Entrepreneurship Week, the Treasure Hunt Hackathon, and the Projects Exhibition each depend on lead time for venue booking, vendor and sponsor coordination, and volunteer management; when that lead time is compressed, the Centre must either scale back ambition or accept greater delivery risk. These barriers reduced the scope of student exposure

to entrepreneurial experiences this year and limited the visibility the Centre could otherwise generate for its initiatives through in-person turnout and media coverage.

Student Engagement Issues

Sustaining strong student participation in entrepreneurial activities remains a core challenge for the Centre. Many students demonstrate initial interest reflected in workshop sign-ups and program applications but lack the long-term commitment needed to see a venture idea through from ideation to prototype, which undermines the continuity and impact of IEC programs in both physical and hybrid settings. This pattern was especially visible in the low registration for the Centre's summer courses (May-July 2025-2026), where turnout fell well short of what the programming was designed to reach (see the accompanying war impact review for detail). The newly launched Entrepreneurs Club, with its six founding members, is a first structural response to this challenge, but on its own it is not yet a substitute for a deeper, funnel-based approach to engagement.

Technological Integration

The objective of fully embedding advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence and virtual reality, into the Centre's operations has yet to be realized. Resource constraints and gaps in technical expertise continued to delay adoption of these tools this year, even as the Centre made real progress on the content side through the GU Company Program and the AI Competition External track, both of which put AI squarely in front of students as a subject of competition and learning. What remains underdeveloped is the operational layer tools such as a shared portfolio tracker for managing tasks and KPIs across ten concurrent initiatives, and virtual mentoring or webinar platforms that would make hybrid delivery a genuine substitute for in-person programming rather than a fallback.

Strategic Goal Alignment

Certain strategic objectives, particularly those aimed at deepening innovation outcomes and strengthening entrepreneurial project support, were not achieved in full this year. This reflects a persistent misalignment between the ambition embedded in Gulf University's strategic objectives (including OB13 on industry and academia collaboration, OB21 on external partnerships, and OB35 on empowering students and staff) and the resources available to the Centre to pursue them simultaneously. Where the Centre pursued a full slate of ten initiatives in parallel this year, the strategic objectives most dependent on sustained resourcing and multi-month partner engagement were the ones most likely to fall short, suggesting that alignment in future cycles needs to happen at the point objectives are set, not only when progress is reviewed.

Green Jobs in last 3 years

Academic Year	Faculty/Department	Total Graduates	Graduates With Green Jobs	Description Of Green Jobs	Data Source
2023/2024	Accounting & Finance	18	5	Climate Change Accountant, Sustainability Auditors and ESG Analyst	Alumni Database
2023/2024	Human Resource	114	11	Sustainability HR Generalist; Talent Acquisition, Green HR manager.	Alumni Survey
2023/2024	Interior Design Engineering	24	11	Sustainable Interior Designer, Sustainability Consultant for Interior Design; Green Building Specialist	Tracer Study Report
2023/2024	Mass Communication	66	9	Sustainable Interior Designer, Sustainability Consultant for Interior Design; Green Building Specialist and Sustainability Journalist	Career Center Data
2024/2025	Accounting & Finance	12	4	Climate Change Accountant, Sustainability Auditors and ESG Analyst	Alumni Database
2024/2025	Human Resource	91	14	Sustainability HR Generalist; Talent Acquisition, Green HR manager.	Alumni Database
2024/2025	Interior Design Engineering	35	4	Sustainable Interior Designer, Sustainability Consultant for Interior Design; Green Building Specialist	Alumni Database

2024/2025	Mass Communication	43	11	Sustainable Interior Designer, Sustainability Consultant for Interior Design; Green Building Specialist and Sustainability Journalist	Alumni Database
2024/2025	Law	10	4	Sustainability Lawyer, Environmental Law Consultant; Corporate Compliance Specialist and ESG Legal Researcher	Alumni Database
2025/2026	Accounting & Finance	21	7	Sustainability Accountant, Sustainability Auditors	Alumni Database
2025/2026	Human Resource	101	26	Sustainability HR Generalist; Talent Acquisition, Sustainability Compensation & Benefits Specialist	Alumni Survey
2025/2026	Interior Design Engineering	31	8	Sustainable Interior Designer, Sustainability Consultant for Interior Design; Green Building Specialist	Tracer Study Report
2025/2026	Mass Communication	41	11	Sustainable Interior Designer, Sustainability Consultant for Interior Design; Green Building Specialist and Sustainability Journalist	Career Center Data
2025/2026	Law	12	3	Sustainability Lawyer, Environmental Law Consultant; Corporate Compliance Specialist and ESG Legal Researcher	Alumni Database
	Total	619	128		

GU- Start-Ups

Company Name - اسم المشروع	Issuing Date - تاريخ الإنشاء	Registration No - رقم التسجيل	Product Type - نوع المنتج
Ahmed Solar panels	2025	Applied for	Energy
Khalid Style	2024	68141-6	Mobile Accessories
Coffee Letcia	2021	68141-4	Snacks
Suk Al-Sajjad	2019	67569-9	Carpet Sales
Flare Media	2018	88404-1	Application (App)
Flare Media	2018	88404-1	Artistic Production and Photography
Dagous Restaurant	2016	38253-2	Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner
Jimmy Burger	2023	161904-1	Fast Food
UniFind	2023	Applied For	Application (App)
NSGI	2023	Applied For	Investing
Bayan Caffé	2023	Applied For	Coffee Shop

Recommendations for the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences

Drawing upon the insights of this annual report, together with the analysis of prevailing challenges and emerging opportunities, the following recommendations are advanced to elevate the Centre's influence, strengthen its operational effectiveness, and ensure alignment with its strategic objectives:

1. Deepen Partnerships and Collaborations

Proactively expand and formalize strategic alliances with universities, industry leaders, government entities, and international organizations to broaden the Centre's ecosystem and create impactful opportunities for students.

- Close the two outstanding MOUs identified in the 2025-2026 action plan with the SMEs Organization and Ibdaa Bank using the same focal-point model that helped secure the DOO Mena, China Smart City, and HUB Bahrain agreements.
- Treat activation, not signature, as the real success measure: tie each partner to a minimum number of concrete activities per year (speaker visits, mentorship hours, sponsorship, or internships), consistent with the portfolio's existing MOU tracker.
- Formalize the relationship with Start-up Bahrain, which emerged this year as an unplanned but promising referral partner for the Rowad podcast, as a template for how the Centre converts a single point of contact into a durable pipeline.

2. Expanding Access to Funding

Pursue diversified funding avenues, including competitive grants, venture capital, angel investors, and government-backed entrepreneurship programs, to ensure sustainable financial support for student projects and Centre initiatives.

- Extend the sponsorship model already used for the Treasure Hunt Hackathon (telecom sponsors such as Zain, Batelco, or Viva) to other flagship events that currently rely solely on the Centre's own budget.
- Link competition prize structures (GU Company Program, AI Competition External) to incubation or seed-funding pathways, so winning teams have a funded next step rather than a one-time award.
- Use the Projects Exhibition, delivered with BRINC, as a recurring channel to pursue follow-on investment or grant conversations for the Centre's strongest student ventures.

3. Accelerate Technological Integration

Integrate advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and immersive tools into the Centre's programs and operations to enhance innovation capacity and student readiness for future markets.

- Stand up the shared portfolio tracker already planned in Centre governance as a lightweight technology investment that pays back across all ten initiatives, not just the AI-themed ones.
- Pilot a virtual mentoring or webinar platform so hybrid delivery becomes a fully-featured option for workshops and mentorship, not a stopgap used only when in-person delivery is not possible.

4. Enhance Student Engagement

Establish structured mentorship schemes, regular feedback mechanisms, and dynamic, hands-on workshops to foster deeper student commitment, sustained participation, and experiential learning.

- Build a clear funnel from the Monthly Business Workshops into the Entrepreneurs Club and from the Club into flagship programs, so early interest has a structured next step rather than depending on a student's own initiative to re-engage.
- Grow the Entrepreneurs Club beyond its six founding members with a targeted recruitment push, using the Club's own leadership team as ambassadors.
- Apply the lesson of this year's low summer-course registration by moving outreach and marketing for summer programming earlier in the calendar, rather than compressing it into the weeks immediately before the term begins.

5. Optimize Resource Utilization

Secure additional funding streams while strategically reallocating existing resources to maximize efficiency, ensure equitable support, and enhance the impact of planned activities.

- Direct a larger share of next year's budget toward the initiatives that demonstrated the strongest completion and engagement this year, rather than distributing resources evenly across all ten initiatives regardless of traction.
- Share costs and logistics across closely related initiatives for example, a single venue booking and volunteer pool across the Hackathon, Trade Quest, and Entrepreneurship Week where calendars allow to stretch a constrained budget further.

6. Leverage Hybrid Event Models

Design and implement hybrid events that seamlessly combine physical and virtual participation, thereby expanding accessibility, mitigating logistical constraints, and increasing stakeholder reach. This year's experience, in which regional conditions disrupted purely in-person plans for Entrepreneurship Week and other flagship events with little notice, makes this a resilience measure as much as an accessibility one: every flagship event on the 2026-2027 calendar should have a hybrid or virtual contingency plan defined at launch, not improvised once in-person delivery becomes uncertain.

7. Realign Strategic Priorities

Recalibrate strategic objectives to reflect available resources, ensuring that operational plans are realistic, achievable, and capable of delivering measurable outcomes. In practice, this means distinguishing at the start of each planning cycle between initiatives the Centre must deliver regardless of conditions its flagship commitments and those it will pursue as resources allow, so that a shock to the calendar, such as this year's regional disruption, does not force every initiative to compete equally for a suddenly shortened runway.

8. Institutionalizing Continuous Improvement

Embed a culture of reflection and enhancement by systematically evaluating processes, programs, and initiatives, ensuring ongoing adaptability and excellence. The Centre already has the right governance scaffolding for this in its Monthly Portfolio Review and Weekly

Operations Huddle; formalizing a short retrospective at the close of each initiative capturing lessons such as this year's summer-engagement shortfall and MOU activation gap would ensure those lessons shape next year's design rather than repeating.

Conclusion:

The 2025–2026 academic year represented a period of both achievement and challenge for the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (IEC) at Gulf University. Despite operating within a difficult regional environment characterized by external instability, disruptions to planning cycles, and fluctuating levels of student engagement, the Centre continued to demonstrate resilience and commitment toward fostering a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and experiential learning across the University.

Throughout the year, the Centre successfully expanded its network of strategic partnerships, delivered a diverse portfolio of entrepreneurial initiatives, launched new programs and competitions, and provided students with valuable opportunities to engage with industry experts, entrepreneurs, and innovation ecosystems both locally and internationally. These accomplishments reaffirm the Centre's growing role as a catalyst for entrepreneurial development and interdisciplinary collaboration within Gulf University and the wider Bahraini community.

At the same time, the annual review highlighted several structural and operational challenges that require continued attention, including sustaining student commitment, strengthening external collaborations, expanding resource availability, enhancing technological integration, and ensuring greater alignment between strategic ambitions and operational capacities. The experiences of this academic year have demonstrated the importance of flexibility, contingency planning, hybrid delivery models, and institutionalized continuous improvement mechanisms in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of entrepreneurial initiatives.

Looking ahead, the Centre is well-positioned to build upon the lessons learned during this cycle. By leveraging its expanding partnership network, strengthening engagement strategies, pursuing diversified funding opportunities, and continuing to integrate emerging technologies into its programs, the IEC can further enhance its impact and establish itself as a leading regional hub for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Ultimately, the challenges encountered during the 2025–2026 academic year should not be viewed as setbacks, but rather as opportunities for reflection, adaptation, and growth. The experiences of this year have provided valuable insights that will guide future planning and support the Centre's continued contribution toward Gulf University's strategic objectives and Bahrain's broader vision for economic diversification, innovation-driven development, and entrepreneurial excellence. The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center remains committed to empowering students, nurturing innovative ideas, and transforming entrepreneurial aspirations into sustainable and impactful ventures for the years ahead.

END OF REPORT