

Emirates Diplomatic Academy, Abu Dhabi

Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy

Introduction

To become a top-notch diplomat of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) requires only the best of the best when it comes to diplomatic training, education and acquiring the right set of skills. Since its inception in 2014, the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy (AGDA) has swiftly become the region's leading centre of excellence for diplomatic capacity development, research and thought leadership — and a home for aspiring future leaders who dream to embark on a promising journey that not only serves their nation, but also, the world's most vulnerable communities.

Established under the guidance of His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, AGDA has become the driving force in the UAE's efforts to qualify talented women and men for international careers and positions of leadership, in support of the nation's foreign policy objectives.

The Academy's mission is not to only prepare aspiring diplomats to represent their country on the international arena, but also provide them with the guidance and insights to enable them to explore regional and global challenges, humanitarian crises and climate change, which ultimately, consolidate and enhance the country's international standing.

AGDA currently has three accredited programs: a postgraduate degree (PGD) in UAE Foreign Policy and International Relations, a Master in Diplomacy and International Relations (MADIR) and an Master program in

Humanitarian Action and Development (MAHAD). In this, AGDA follows the successful model of leading diplomatic training institutions, combining academic and professional training in collaboration with global partners.

In order to teach foreign languages to the highest standards, AGDA is cooperating with leading institutions, such as Alliance Française and Goethe Institute, and the academy is currently negotiating similar agreements with other entities. Currently, Emirates Diplomatic Academy students must choose between Chinese, Spanish, Russian, French and German, Farsi, Hebrew and Korean.

The Academy combines the best of academia, research and practice. AGDA's faculty hosts and participates in an average of 80 lectures, panel discussions, master classes, and informal conversations each year. These events bring together respected thought leaders, researchers, as well as current and former practitioners including diplomats, ministers and former world leaders, who share their personal insights from the actual practice of diplomacy.

The AGDA is pursuing novel approaches to teaching, creating opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in real life. Since 2017, has hosted the Future Diplomats Peace Game (FDPG), in collaboration with the Foreign Policy Group and Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, a negotiation simulation which brings diplomats from various countries together. A new training program for foreign diplomats was launched in 2019 with INSEAD, concentrating on diplomatic leadership.

AGDA is also playing a central role in preparing a carefully selected cohort of mid-career diplomats and civil servants from other government entities for the UAE's prospective term as an elected member on the U.N. Security Council. Emirates Diplomatic Academy in partnership with the United Nations' training arm, as well as the think-tank Security Council Report and several independent contractors, has prepared a comprehensive multi-year training and assessment program to competitively select number of candidates to serve on the UAE's U.N. Security Council team.

Drawing on its faculty and its global network of partners, the AGDA has also built a strong research and analysis department. AGDA currently has four research programmes: Peace and Security in the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA); Energy, Climate Change and Sustainable Development; 21st Century Diplomacy; and Gulf-Asia Relations. This model of establishing an in-house think-tank within the academy is unique in the region.

In January 2021 AGDA was ranked 30th out of a total of 507 think tanks in the region by the widely-followed *Global Go To Think Tank Index*, which is published every year by the Think Tank and Civil Societies Program in the University of Pennsylvania.

One of AGDA'S key research projects was the establishment of the SDG Centre of Excellence for the Arab Region (SDGCAR) in 2018, a regional centre of excellence in training and research that focuses on region-specific challenges and solutions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is part of a global network of regional SDG centres of excellence, all of which are members of the U.N. Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN).

In 2018, AGDA organized the Abu Dhabi Diplomacy Conference (Diplo-Con), where around 300 delegates from across the world gathered to discuss the future of diplomacy. The two-day conference welcomed 60 ambassadors and 25 undersecretaries, with a total of more than 100 nations represented.

The approach

Each year, AGDA welcomes students eager to join its world-class programmes, facilitated by its renowned faculty members and longing to work along with the 86 percent of its total graduates that are currently serving the UAE on various missions — locally, regionally and globally.

In February 2021, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, renamed the Academy from the Emirates Diplomatic Academy, to the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy, after the honourable Emirati diplomat and outgoing Minister of State, His Excellency Dr. Anwar Mohammed Gargash. The renaming simultaneously stipulates AGDA'S status as a major organisation that prepares diplomats who will one day too, make immeasurable contributions and bring about staggering transformations in the country'S foreign political field and global relations.

His Excellency Bernardino León, Director General of AGDA, said:

Our world is in great need of cutting-edge diplomats who can enhance diplomacy on a global level and open the eyes of lead-

ers and decision makers to the severe the needs of humanity. That is why our Academy strives to empower and prepare the greatest diplomats of our time, who not only support the UAE's Next 50 strategy and the country's inspirational vision of a hopeful future — but who also have a deep calling and an urgency to support our delicate planet and the most vulnerable communities.

It is without a doubt that time has proven that becoming an effective diplomat does not necessary simply mean having excellent expertise in politics, but also, understanding the crucial role this career plays in climate change, economy, and healthcare — which are all vital for a prosperous future.

The Former U.N. Special Representative pointed out that in the current hyper-connected world, the nature of diplomacy is everchanging, adding:

Technology has transformed how we, as a society, access and share information, particularly concerning international affairs. This has given rise to a more transparent approach to foreign policy and problem solving. Diplomatic practice has thus shifted away from being solely closed-door, to a more public-facing form of practice.

He thus highlighted that diplomats are now expected to manage rapid complex relations at an increasing speed, not only between States, but also between key business leaders and non-governmental political actors, such as global foundations and the media. “Principles of peace and security are pivotal in a nation’s foreign policy, which is why there is a need for diplomats with powerful negotiation skills and an understanding of the importance in shaping relations and building bridges across all fields,” added His Excellency.

The Academy is having a very pragmatic approach and makes often use of simulations and role-plays. One of the key project in this area is the Future Diplomats Peace Game which we organize together with Foreign Policy Group and the Belfer Center at Harvard University we developed a scenario — based crisis simulation in which participants has to “game out” peaceful resolutions to seemingly intractable conflicts. The

24 junior diplomats from different countries who are participating each year since 2017, are representing the countries and international organizations involved in the crisis. Over the years we developed various scenarios based on ongoing disputes as the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir or more fictive scenarios as the space conflict involving weapons of mass destruction. We engaged over 40 diplomats from different countries over the years including participating from United States, Mexico, Chile and Brazil to mention a few.

The academic foundation

The Academy offers aspiring diplomats a Post-Graduate Diploma (PGD) in UAE Diplomacy and International Relations, which is a nine-month programme that educates students in the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the 21st century world of international affairs. AGDA also offers the Master of Arts in Global Affairs and Diplomatic Leadership, for students who have completed the PGD. This MA Programme, which was launched in 2017, allows students to solidify the knowledge gained on global and regional issues, particularly those relevant to the UAE and the wider Middle East.

But to help serve humanity as a whole, AGDA, with the support of its board members, came up with a compelling programme that is open for all nationalities — a first for the Academy. In 2021, AGDA announced the launch of the Master of Arts in Humanitarian Action and Development, which is a full-time programme that welcomes students with an interest to pursue a career in humanitarian work. This unique programme provides practical skills development and allows students to learn the major theoretical trends that are shaping the delivery of humanitarian aid and development studies, all while improving the decision-making skills of participants and their ability to manage multicultural environments.

The Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy also offers various publications written by its Research Faculty, professors and diplomats. The research themes include peace and security in the MENA Region, energy, climate change and sustainable development, 21st century diplomacy, as well as Gulf-Asia Relations.

The Research and Analysis Department play an eminent role in the Academy's success story, as it contributes to domestic and international debates on issues relevant to the UAE's foreign policy and diplomacy, all while acting as an impactful source of analysis for the government and helping build student diplomats' research and analytical capabilities.

AGDA also launched the first Summer Academy Programme that aims to strengthen the knowledge and skills of diplomats, who are currently serving the UAE on local and international missions. This year, AGDA welcomed 20 diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC), in its week-long programme.

Partnership and events

Moreover, throughout its years, AGDA has been organising events, programmes, conferences, forums and creating international partnerships that spread knowledge in its field. This has immensely provided AGDA with a vast opportunity to enhance its awareness and commitment to public service across various environments and entities.

The countries that have signed key partnerships with AGDA include, Argentina; Bahrain; Brazil; Dominican Republic; Egypt; Hungary; India; Italy; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Mali; Mexico; Morocco; Singapore; Spain; Sudan; the United States, Ukraine, and Yemen.

The Academy signed innumerable partnerships with essential public and private organisations, including UAE Space Agency; Paris Sorbonne University of Abu Dhabi; Oxford Institute for Energy Studies; New York University, as well as the National Defence College in Abu Dhabi.

AGDA is also a member of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT), which was first established in 1972 as a yearly Meeting of Deans and Directors of Diplomatic Academies and Institutes of International Relations. In November 2021, AGDA hosted this forum which welcomed over 50 delegates from more than 30 countries and shed light on various pivotal topics and challenges surrounding 21st-century diplomacy. Participants discussed the future of diplomacy in a post-pandemic world and how to maintain its relevance in the 21st century, as well as digital diplomacy and the need to swiftly adapt to the changing environment of technologies.

The forum also shed light on the integration of technological skills into diplomatic training, as well as gender equity in diplomacy, and international governance.

One of its most recent partnership is with Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and its unique establishment of the Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Distinguished Professorship, at the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs in SAIS. The first-of-its-kind collaboration with SAIS is in particular vital — as it aims to train the next generation of young leaders in international relations, to tackle pressing global challenges, including climate change, public health, and nuclear proliferation.

At the time of the announcement in July 2021, His Excellency Dr. Anwar Gargash said: “Increasingly complex global challenges require thoughtful and sophisticated global problem solvers. This deep and lasting partnership will help train and prepare the next generation of diplomats and foreign policy practitioners from the UAE and other countries to meet these challenges.”

Dr. Mariam Al Mahmoud, Deputy Director General of AGDA, said the partnerships with global institutions are crucial, as they allow AGDA to collaborate with key figures and leaders who can transform the learning experience for the Academy’s students.

AGDA’s mission is to not only enhance diplomatic capabilities of students, but also aims to be a key driver in diplomacy and optimizing relations across borders. In pursuing this long-term vision, our Academy collaborates with a global network of academic entities, including the synergy with Harvard University’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, to deliver five editions of the Future Diplomats Peace Game.

Our Academy will continue its honourable mission to gear the students of today to become the top diplomats of tomorrow. Since its founding, AGDA has provided aspiring diplomats with the necessary tools to tackle some of the world’s most pressing challenges, all while empowering them to become excellent representatives of their homeland.

The Academy not only provides students with world-class academia, but also gives them the unique opportunity to meet and interact with past and current head of states, ministers, diplomats, and leading experts from various fields.

AGDA's Guest Speaker Programme for instance, is a fruitful series that is designed to host a line-up of star-studded guests and world-renowned diplomats and academics, who shed light on international challenging issues, all while providing inspirational words of wisdom for the students.

The discussions, which have also been taking place virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cover key global issues, including food security; the responsibilities of diplomats during global crises; humanitarian assistance; health diplomacy; climate change; sustainability, the Abraham Accords and the U.S. Foreign Policy, as well as peace and stability.

The guest speakers include His Excellency Yousef Al Otaiba, UAE Ambassador to the US and Minister of State; Her Excellency Mariam Almheiri, UAE Minister of State for Food Security; His Excellency Stephen Harper, Former Prime Minister to Canada; His Excellency Omar Ghobash, UAE Assistant Minister of Public and Cultural Diplomacy and Former Ambassador to Russia and France; His Excellency Ali Obaid Al-Dhaheri, UAE Ambassador to the People's Republic of China; Dr Pedro L. Alonso, Director of the World Health Organisation Global Malaria Programme in Geneva, Switzerland; Her Excellency Dr Nariman Al Mulla, Consul General of the UAE in Melbourne; His Excellency Omar Al Shamsi, UAE Ambassador to Italy, as well as Avi Berkowitz, Assistant to the U.S. President and Special Representative for International Negotiations.

The upcoming sessions, which are built on a more futuristic approach, will bring together local and international experts, who discuss new trends and ways to improve diplomacy for the next half century. The creative-themed inspirational talks shed light on various topics — from politics, education, and technology — to healthcare, economy, and even, arts and culture.

The Academy also conducts its annual Student Trip Programme, where students head-off to high-profile international governmental institutions, UAE Embassies and Missions, and engage with foreign counterparts. Ambassadors and experts from around the world provide AGDA's students with exclusive access to their daily missions, political measures, as well as an

insight into the challenges faced by diplomats. The latest trip took journey the students to Brussels, Luxembourg, Beijing, New Delhi, New York City, Washington, D.C., Moscow and Vienna.

AGDA's success story has also allowed the Academy to be ranked among Top Think Tanks in Middle East and North Africa from 2019 to 2021, by The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Programme (TTCSP)—thus reaffirming it as a globally recognised influencer of diplomacy that builds capabilities to meet the political objectives of the UAE.

As recent times have unquestionably revealed the urgent need for diplomacy and cooperation to help overcome turbulent and unforeseen crises — including a deadly pandemic, economic struggles, severe climate change, and war and conflict — AGDA's outlook for the road ahead is to build dynamic diplomats, that not only help achieve the UAE's aspirations, but also, put their knowledge into great humanitarian work.

Today, the Academy has one goal on its mind — and that is to guide and empower passionate and driven students to serve a world that is in grave need of diligent and transparent leaders, who can put their words into effective action.

Conclusion

Diplomatic training nowadays requires a multidisciplinary and interactive approach where we learn from best practices in other fields in a thought-provoking environment. Since its establishment the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy strive to this ideal with a collaborative spirit setting up partnerships with other academies, organizing forums where best practices can be shared and as well having a distinguished academic and training foundation to all its activities with a main focus addressing the challenges to be a successful diplomat in the 21st century.