

Summer school inspires students to a future in microchip industry

[Melanie Swan](#)

Jul 20, 2011



ABU DHABI // Emirati students are being schooled to lead the country's charge into the lucrative global microchip industry.

The Advanced Technology Investment Company (Atic) is running an intensive, three-week summer school to inspire young nationals to enter the field.

The school, which started last Sunday, has 80 students aged between 14 and 18, and is run in association with the American University of Sharjah.

It is hoped some will work in the emirate's first microchip plant, which is due to open in 2015. Atic, which is owned by the Abu Dhabi Government, aims to eventually have 550 Emirati staff.

Amna Al Mansouri, 14, from the Australian School in Abu Dhabi, signed up to find out more about the industry, which is a major part of diversifying the emirate's economy away from hydrocarbons.

"We're learning so much that we wouldn't learn in school, like the technologies we'll have by 2020," Amna said. "It opens many more doors for us."

Topics include mobile phone and smartphone technology, microelectronics in medical technology and practical tasks such as building radios.

Last year, about 25 students attended the summer school. Two have since gone on to study microelectronics at the American University of Sharjah on full scholarships from Atic.

Khalifa Al Naqbi, 17, is in his final year at Al Ittihad Model High School. Instead of accepting a scholarship to study in the US this summer, he thought the school would help him decide what to do next.

"I know the company [Atic] needs locals so I think these three weeks will help me learn about the company, what it needs, and what it will expect from us," Khalifa said.

He said it was likely he would go to university abroad, focusing on microelectronics or alternative energy, both of which are priority areas for Abu Dhabi.

"It's given us a really good idea of what we'd be studying, as well as giving us the history of the industry and showing us how semiconductors relate to the development of Abu Dhabi," he said.

Dr Lutfi Albasha, the American University of Sharjah lecturer who is running the course, said: "They come out familiar with the processes and the industry. They are more familiar with engineering, especially in this field, which is so advanced and one in which things change every day."

Abu Dhabi Polytechnic, founded last year, will take its first 160 higher diploma students in September, guaranteeing well-paid jobs with Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation and Atic.

Atic is also running a summer internship programme at the Globalfoundries microchip plants in Singapore and Dresden.

This year, the project's third, 56 Emirati students are nearing the end of their internship. Six of last year's interns are now working in Dresden, gaining experience for a future in Abu Dhabi.

The interns are taken from the Higher Colleges of Technology, UAE University, the American University of Sharjah and Khalifa University, and others studying abroad.

Dr Robert Yung, the chief technology officer at the US microelectronics company Tessera, spoke at the summer school on the history of the technology.

Dr Yung said it was vital for Abu Dhabi to invest in its young.

"The earlier you engage the students, then the amount they learn grows exponentially," he said, adding it was unheard of for such a young nation to be formulating such a long-term plan to develop an industry.

Dr Mahbub Gani, a lecturer in electrical engineering at King's College London, said the programme was a bold step, but added: "You must also incentivise that talent once it's been nurtured and developed, so you have the retention that's necessary for that growth."

Hanan Harhara, a spokeswoman for Atic, said: "We follow up with all the students, trying to engage them with events and workshops we have."

<http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/education/summer-school-inspires-students-to-a-future-in-microchip-industry>