

# The History of the Foundation Program—Part I: The Founding of Qatar University

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In autumn 1973, the first tertiary educational institution, the Qatar Teacher-Training College, was opened in Madinat Khalifa North. It was later renamed the College of Education. Two government secondary schools were repurposed for the teachers' college: one for male teacher-trainees and one for female teacher-trainees. These teachers' colleges were located approximately one kilometer apart.

The Qatari government, with the support of UNESCO, then made plans to establish a university and thus, in 1977, Qatar University was founded. There were three colleges: The College of Education, The College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and The College of Science. The College of Sharia and Islamic Studies was later opened in 1978.

As the number of students

increased, the government decided to construct a modern, purpose-built campus. A suitable site was selected in the desert, on the then outskirts of Doha. The site was geographically interesting, consisting of a low ridge with a narrow wadi (dry river bed) flanking the southeastern side and plenty of space for expansion. As the site was somewhat elevated, one could see the bay, the city of Doha and the iconic Sheraton Hotel in the distance.

Construction of the campus began in the early 1980s and the new university was inaugurated in autumn 1986. It was connected to the suburbs of Markiya and Dafna by a new dual carriageway, appropriately named University Street. The campus consisted of a series of buildings which were inspired by Islamic and tradition-



Qatar University: Photograph courtesy of Mike Richards

al architecture. These buildings were designed by Egyptian architect, Kamal El Kafrawi. Although originally envisioned to be a co-educational campus, it was decided to separate the two campuses. A wall was constructed at the rear of the last corridor on the men's side, thus effectively creating a partitioned university with a men's campus and a women's campus.

Up to this point, there was no tertiary teaching of English language in Qatar, apart from courses run by the British Council in Ras Abu Aboud and a few private language institutions. With the establishment of the College of Engineering (1980) and the College of Business and Economics (1985), the university decided to open a department on the new cam-

pus to teach English language courses in 1986 to prepare students for programmes offered in English in these colleges.

A College of Technology was established in 1987. This college offered both part-time and full-time courses; many of the students were already working full time for the government. Classes were taught in the old Qatar University buildings in Madinat Khalifa North, one campus for women and one for men. The original men's campus now houses a boys' secondary school opposite Landmark Mall.

The new university buildings won widespread praise for their novel and striking architectural features. The buildings' architect was acclaimed internationally.



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