

2026

# Building Futures Intelligence and Emerging Skills Capability in the GCC

*White Paper* for Saudi Arabia and the  
United Arab Emirates



## **Disclaimer**

This white paper is an independent research and policy analysis document prepared by Green Box in 2026.

The analysis integrates publicly available international labour market data, regional policy frameworks, and Green Box's primary research framework focused on youth capability development in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of any government entity, university, regulatory authority, or corporate partner. All referenced statistics and policy citations are drawn from publicly available sources including, but not limited to, the World Economic Forum, OECD, International Labour Organization, General Authority for Statistics (Saudi Arabia), and official government strategy platforms of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Where primary research is referenced, findings are presented in aggregate form for analytical purposes. No personally identifiable information is disclosed.

This document is intended for educational, policy discussion, and institutional planning purposes only. It does not constitute investment advice, regulatory guidance, or formal accreditation endorsement.

## **Acknowledgment**

Green Box acknowledges the students, educators, institutional partners, and youth participants across Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates who continue to engage in dialogue on future readiness and emerging skills.

## **About Green Box**

Green Box is a UK and KSA-based strategic advisory and capability-building organization operating across the GCC and broader regions. Green Box focuses on:

- Futures thinking and scenario planning
- Human capability development
- Sustainability and green transition advisory
- Policy-to-practice education programming
- Emerging skills ecosystem design

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## Foreword

**“The future of the GCC will be shaped not only by national vision, but by the ability of its youth to navigate uncertainty with confidence and clarity.”**

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are undergoing profound structural transformation. From artificial intelligence and digital governance to sustainability transitions and advanced infrastructure, the region is redefining the foundations of its economies. Ambition is strong. Investment is significant. Policy direction is clear.

Yet transformation compresses time. Skills evolve quickly. Role definitions shift. New industries emerge before pathways are fully visible. In such an environment, young people require more than exposure to emerging topics. They require orientation.

This white paper explores a central question: **Are our youth equipped not just to participate in change, but to interpret and navigate it?**

Drawing on global labour-market evidence, regional policy frameworks, and structured research across the GCC, this paper argues that futures thinking, systems literacy, and emerging skills translation must become embedded capability layers within universities.

The next frontier of education in the Gulf is applied navigation under uncertainty. This document is offered as a constructive contribution to university leaders, policy makers, and institutional partners committed to strengthening human capability for the decades ahead.

**Dr. Mohsen Gul**  
Founder, Green Box



**Hafsah** is studying business in Jeddah. She follows AI announcements. She reads about giga-projects. She sees sustainability mandates reshaping investment. She believes in Vision 2030.

*She is excited.  
She is also unsure.*



[Click for Audio Summary by Hafsah](#)

## “My country is transforming. I just need to know where I fit.”

— Hafsah, 21, University Student, Jeddah

Globally, **39% of core workforce skills are expected to change by 2030**<sup>1</sup>. Employers are prioritizing analytical thinking, adaptability, and technological literacy over static credentials<sup>1</sup>. OECD evidence shows that unequal access to adaptive skills compounds labour-market inequality<sup>2</sup>. Across the MENA region, youth transitions into stable employment remain structurally sensitive<sup>3</sup>.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are not standing still. National strategies in both countries place human capability at the center of economic transformation<sup>4,5</sup>. AI is entering classrooms. Digital systems are scaling. Green transition is accelerating. Hafsah feels this momentum.

But in 2026, when Green Box surveyed **200 university students across Saudi Arabia and the UAE**, her sentiment was common:

- **83%** believe their country is transforming rapidly.
- **76%** want to work in emerging sectors.
- Only **41%** understand the specific skills those sectors require.
- Only **32%** have been exposed to futures or scenario-thinking tools.
- Nearly two-thirds struggle to translate academic learning into employable skill narratives.

*Hafsah is not unmotivated.  
She is navigating without a map.  
She has learned about AI.  
She has studied sustainability.  
She understands theory.*

### What she lacks is structured training in:

- Decision-making under uncertainty
- Understanding how technology, capital, policy, and environment interact
- Converting learning into skill bundles and portfolio evidence

*This is not a curriculum failure.  
It is a navigation infrastructure gap.*

The response must be practical and scalable. **Universities must embed applied capability accelerators that build futures intelligence, systems literacy, and emerging skills translation.** Short, structured, output-driven programs — such as Future Readiness & Emerging Skills accelerator — can measurably strengthen clarity and positioning at scale.

If nearly 40% of workforce skills will shift this decade<sup>1</sup>, youth cannot rely on static knowledge alone.

*Hafsah does not need more ambition.  
She needs orientation.*

Bridging that gap is now a strategic imperative for the Gulf.

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum (2025), *Future of Jobs Report 2025*.

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2025), *OECD Skills Outlook 2025*.

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization (2024), *Global Employment Trends for Youth*.

<sup>4</sup> Saudi Vision 2030 – Human Capability Development Program.

<sup>5</sup> UAE Centennial 2071 & National AI Strategy 2031.

### A Structural Disruption in Workforce Demand

The global workforce is in the early stages of a structural transition unlike previous technological cycles in both pace and scope. The convergence of AI, green energy transition, digital infrastructure, and demographic change is not simply creating new jobs. It is reshaping the cognitive and adaptive requirements of nearly all jobs.

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 projects that 39% of core skills across the global workforce will be disrupted or displaced by 2030. This trajectory is already visible in hiring data, curriculum gaps, and employer surveys across every major economy.

### Employer Priorities Are Shifting

Across sectors, analytical thinking, complex problem-solving, and adaptability now consistently rank above technical credentials. The OECD Skills Outlook 2025 documents a structural divergence between what education systems have historically delivered and what labour markets now demand.

For GCC youth, this divergence is acute. They are entering a labour market that rewards not what they know, but how well they can apply it, navigate uncertainty, and articulate their capability in terms employers recognize.

### The Inequality Dimension

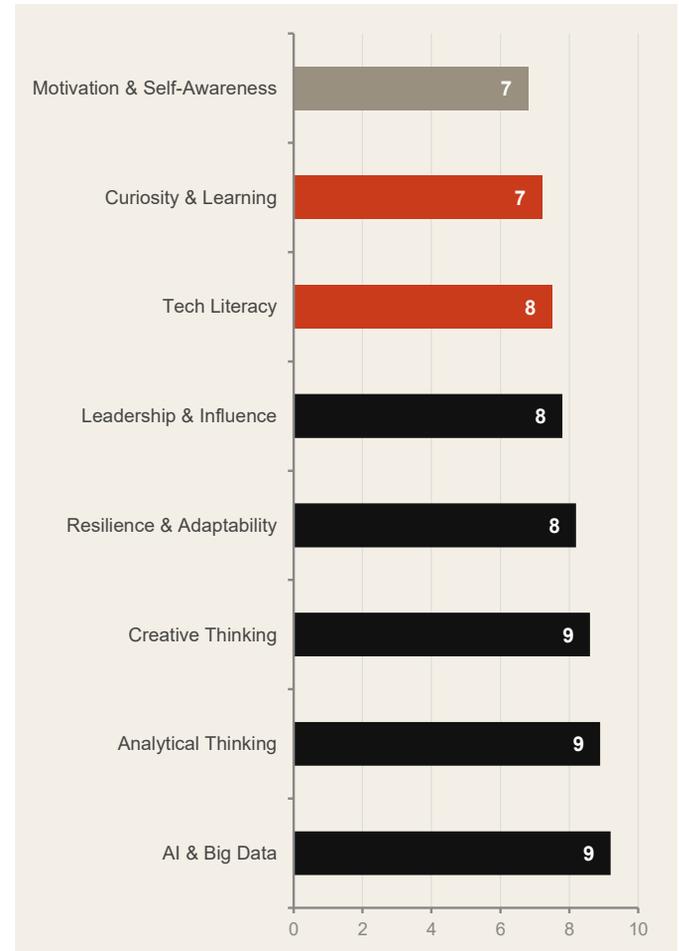
Where structured futures thinking is concentrated in elite institutions, the skills gap compounds existing inequality – a systemic risk for economies pursuing accelerated transformation.

# 39%

of core workforce skills projected to shift by 2030

Source: WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025

### Top employer skill priorities, 2025



Source: World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025. Scores derived from employer survey rankings (1-10 scale).

#### Analytical Fluency

Reason from data, identify patterns, translate insight into decisions.

#### Adaptive Positioning

Reframe skills in response to shifting role definitions.

#### Systems Literacy

Understand how technology, capital, policy, and environment interact.

## A Structural Sensitivity

The ILO's Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 identifies the MENA region as among the most structurally sensitive for youth labour market transitions globally. Young people face high aspirations, improving education attainment, and persistent mismatches between learning systems and labour market demand.

In Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the gap is not one of motivation — it is a gap between academic output and sector-relevant capability positioning.

## The Aspiration–Employment Gap

Young people in the GCC aspire to work in emerging sectors at rates significantly above current absorption capacity — creating a two-sided mismatch: employers cannot find navigation-capable graduates; graduates cannot locate themselves within the sectoral landscape they aspire to enter.

## What Changes the Equation

ILO evidence shows that structured transition programmes — combining labour market intelligence, skills translation support, and peer cohort learning — significantly improve both employment rates and quality for youth in transition economies. Green Box's accelerator design directly mirrors this evidence base.

# 24%

Average MENA youth unemployment rate

ILO, 2024

# 3×

Youth unemployment vs. adult rate in Saudi Arabia

GASTAT, 2024

# 68%

GCC employers report critical skills gaps in graduates

Green Box Survey, 2026

# 2.3M

Projected new jobs in emerging GCC sectors by 2030

WEF / McKinsey, 2025

## Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 represents one of the most ambitious national transformation programmes in the world. With a stated goal of reducing the economy's dependence on oil from 40% to 16% of GDP, Vision 2030 requires simultaneous workforce transformation across virtually every sector. The Human Capability Development Program (HCDP) explicitly targets a generation equipped for the emerging economy. Its strategic objectives include increasing skills-aligned employment, strengthening tertiary education relevance, and building institutional capacity for applied learning. Major investment programmes across giga-projects create multi-decade demand for workers who can navigate complexity. NEOM, Red Sea Global, and Diriyah collectively represent emerging sector employment at a scale that requires futures-capable graduates, not just technically trained ones.

*"Vision 2030 is not just a policy document. It is a generational compact with Saudi youth, requiring education systems to deliver graduates capable of co-creating the economy, not simply entering it."*

## United Arab Emirates

The UAE's Centennial 2071 strategy sets a 50-year horizon for national development anchored in knowledge, innovation, and human capital. The National AI Strategy 2031 positions the UAE as a global leader in AI governance, with human-AI collaboration explicitly identified as a workforce design priority. The UAE's education system has undergone significant reform over the past decade, with particular emphasis on STEM integration, entrepreneurial learning, and innovation culture. However, as Green Box's research framework identifies, institutional progress at the system level has not uniformly translated into individual navigational capability at the student level.

## Three shared regional dynamics

01

### Youth Demographic Weight

Large and growing youth populations entering a labour market simultaneously absorbing new sectors and phasing out legacy roles – creating structural urgency around capability readiness.

02

### Sector Transition Velocity

Pace of sectoral change in the GCC is faster than comparable economies due to deliberate policy acceleration and sovereign investment, compressing available time for skills adaptation.

03

### Navigation Infrastructure Gap

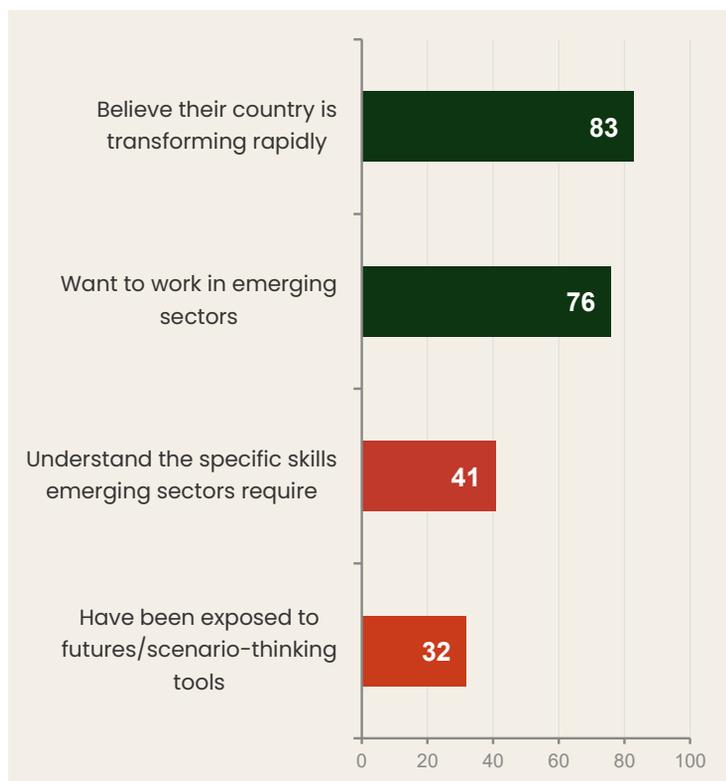
Despite strong policy intent, the institutional infrastructure for futures thinking, skills translation, and career navigation remains underdeveloped relative to the scale of transformation underway.

## Research Findings

# GCC Youth Futures Readiness Survey 2026

Green Box surveyed 200 university students across Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The research assessed four dimensions of futures readiness: awareness of transformation, sector aspiration, skills clarity, and exposure to navigational tools.

### The Readiness Spectrum



*n* = 200 university students, Saudi Arabia and UAE, 2026. Source: Green Box GCC Youth Futures Readiness Survey.

*"Hafsah is not unmotivated. She is navigating without a map."*

### Interpreting the Gap

The research reveals a pattern Green Box describes as the awareness-navigation gap. Students are broadly aware of the transformation occurring around them and are motivated to participate in it. However, this awareness is not matched by navigational clarity: the structured understanding of what specific capabilities are valued, how their learning maps to those capabilities, and how to communicate their development to prospective employers.

**44 pt**

*gap between aspiration and navigation readiness*

Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported difficulty translating academic learning into employable skill narratives. This is not a failure of individual students. It is a structural absence of navigation infrastructure within the educational environment.

## GCC Youth Futures Readiness: Key Data at a Glance

Green Box Survey 2026  
n=200, KSA & UAE

Q1

# 83%

believe their country  
is transforming rapidly

Q2

# 76%

want to work in  
emerging sectors

Q3

# 41%

understand the specific  
skills those sectors need

Q4

# 32%

have used futures  
or scenario tools

Q5

# 65%

struggle to translate  
learning into skills language

76%-32%

# 44 pt

aspiration vs.  
navigation tool gap

## 24%

MENA avg youth  
unemployment

ILO 2024

## 3x

Youth vs adult  
unemployment, KSA

GASTAT 2024

## 68%

Employers report  
skills gaps

GBOX 2026

## 2.3M

New jobs in GCC  
emerging sectors by 2030

WEF 2025

# 39%

of all job-relevant skills will shift by  
2030

WEF 2025

Source: World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025.  
This figure represents the aggregate skills disruption rate  
across all industries and all geographies tracked by the WEF  
Future of Jobs model.

## What GCC Students Say

Selected responses from the Green Box GCC Youth Futures Readiness Survey 2026, n=200

### Awareness without navigation

*"I know my country is changing fast. I watch the news, I follow NEOM. But when I sit down to write my CV, I don't know how to connect what I see out there to what I can offer."*

— Business student, KSA

### Capability without narrative

*"I've done three internships. But I still can't explain clearly why I'm better for this job than someone else. I don't have the language for it."*

— Engineering graduate, UAE

### Knowledge without direction

*"My professors teach me the theory. But nobody teaches me how to figure out which sector is actually growing and where I should be looking. That part I have to work out myself — and I don't know how."*

— Economics student, KSA

### Ambition without access

*"When I read about Vision 2030, I feel proud. But I also feel like I'm watching something I can't quite get inside. Like there's a door but I don't have the map to find it."*

— Media student, UAE

### Application without positioning

*"What I want is someone to help me build the map. Not tell me to build it, but actually help me do it. I would pay for that."*

— Finance student, UAE

### Knowledge without direction

*"I graduated six months ago. I'm working in something unrelated. It's not that there are no jobs — I can see there are jobs in sustainability and digital. I just don't know how to show them I'm the right person."*

— Graduate, KSA

### Awareness without translation

*"I've heard of the Future of Jobs report. I've heard we need to upskill. But nobody has ever shown me how to figure out what 'upskill' actually means for someone in my position, in my field, in this region."*

— IT student, KSA

# The Navigation Gap Framework

Green Box defines the navigation gap as the structural absence of three linked capability layers in the educational experience of young people in the GCC. Each **layer is necessary but insufficient on its own**. Together they form a portable, adaptive cognitive toolkit.

## layers

### 01 Futures Intelligence

The ability to understand and reason about change trajectories, scenario possibilities, and signals of emerging disruption. Includes basic fluency in futures methodologies, trend analysis, and interpretation of global signals for local GCC relevance.

#### *Without this:?*

*Without this layer, students cannot anticipate the sectoral shifts that will define their career environment. They respond to the present rather than preparing for the near future.*

### 02 Systems Literacy

The capacity to understand how technology, capital, policy, and environmental forces interact as interdependent systems. Enables graduates to reason about root causes and indirect effects rather than responding to surface-level symptoms.

#### *Without this:?*

*Without this layer, graduates misread structural forces as isolated events. They see job disruption without understanding why, and cannot identify where genuine opportunity lies.*

### 03 Emerging Skills Translation

The practical ability to map academic and experiential learning onto the capability frameworks used by employers in emerging sectors, and to construct a coherent skills narrative and portfolio evidence base.

#### *Without this:?*

*Without this layer, graduates cannot communicate their value to employers in the sectors they aspire to enter, regardless of their underlying knowledge and capability.*

## Why these three layers must work together

Futures intelligence without systems literacy produces pattern recognition without causal understanding. Systems literacy without skills translation produces analytical capability that cannot be communicated. Skills translation without futures intelligence produces credentials that are accurate to the present but rapidly obsolete.

# Layer 1 Futures Intelligence

## Definition

The ability to understand and reason about change trajectories, scenario possibilities, and signals of emerging disruption. Futures intelligence equips graduates to anticipate rather than react, and to interpret the structural forces shaping their prospective career environments before those forces fully manifest.

## What it includes

### Trend scanning

Systematic identification and categorisation of weak signals, emerging trends, and discontinuities relevant to target sectors.

### Horizon framing

Ability to think in 3-to-10-year timeframes rather than optimising solely for current conditions.

### Uncertainty navigation

Maintaining strategic clarity and action orientation in the face of incomplete information and contested futures.

### Scenario construction

Building plausible future narratives that test assumptions about how sectors might evolve.

### Signal interpretation

Translating global and regional signals — policy shifts, technology announcements, capital flows — into locally relevant implications.

## Why it is currently absent

Only 32% of Green Box's 200 survey respondents had ever been exposed to futures thinking or scenario planning tools. In structured interviews, students consistently described their approach to career planning as "waiting to see" rather than mapping trajectories and preparing proactively.

### Survey finding

# 32%

of respondents had been exposed to futures or scenario-thinking tools

*"I know AI is changing things but I don't know how to figure out what that means for what I should be learning right now."*

— GCC student respondent, 2026

## What good looks like

- A student who can identify three plausible futures for their target sector over the next 5 years.
- A graduate who reads a technology announcement and translates it into implications for the roles they are targeting.
- A young professional who can articulate why they are positioning for a specific role cluster based on directional analysis, not proximity.

### Research evidence

OECD (2025) finds that students with structured exposure to futures thinking tools are 2.4× more likely to report clarity about their career direction and 1.8× more likely to proactively upskill in response to sector signals. This is one of the strongest skill-outcome relationships documented in recent human capital research.

## Layer 2 Systems Literacy

### Definition

The capacity to understand how technology, capital, policy, and environmental forces interact as interdependent systems. Systems literate graduates can reason about root causes and second-order effects, rather than responding to surface-level symptoms. They understand that sector disruption is not random — it follows identifiable system dynamics.

### What it includes (Four system forces)

#### Technology

How AI, automation, and digital platforms are restructuring the skill content and organisational design of roles across sectors.

#### Policy

How regulatory frameworks, national strategies, and international commitments shape what sectors can grow, at what pace, and with what workforce profile.

#### Capital

Where sovereign and private investment is flowing, what sectors it is accelerating, and what that implies for talent demand and role creation.

#### Environment

How climate commitments, resource transitions, and sustainability mandates are reshaping industrial sectors and creating new capability demand.

### Why it is currently absent

In the GCC context, the four forces are interacting with unusual speed and deliberateness. National Vision strategies are deploying capital to accelerate technology adoption in sectors undergoing environmental transition — creating compound disruption. A graduate targeting a sustainability role at a giga-project must understand all four forces simultaneously. Without systems literacy, they see fragments. With it, they see a navigable map.

### Survey finding

# 41%

understand the specific skills their target sectors require

*"I can see that things are changing. What I can't see is why they're changing in that direction, or what that means I should do."*

— GCC student respondent, 2026

### What good looks like

- A student who can map the system dynamics driving a specific sector and identify the roles that sit at force-intersection points.
- A graduate who reads a policy announcement and traces its implications through to talent demand in their target sector.
- A young professional who can explain the structural reason for a market shift, not just describe that it happened.

### Research evidence

WEF (2025) documents that the four forces — technology, capital, policy, and environment — are simultaneously reshaping labour markets in GCC economies at a pace that has no historical parallel in the region. Students without a systems frame for these forces consistently underestimate both the speed and the direction of change.

## Layer 3 Emerging Skills Translation

### Definition

The practical ability to map academic and experiential learning onto the capability frameworks used by employers in emerging sectors, and to construct a coherent, evidence-based skills narrative and portfolio. This is the layer that converts capability into communicable, hireable value.

### What it includes

#### Skills mapping

Structuring demonstrated capabilities against the frameworks employers in emerging sectors actually use to define and evaluate roles.

#### Narrative construction

Building a clear, confident first-person account of capability in the language employers recognise – not the language of academic transcripts.

#### Portfolio evidence

Curating work outputs, projects, analyses, and contributions that substantiate the skills narrative with reviewable, concrete evidence.

#### Gap identification

Identifying the delta between current capability and employer requirements, and building a proactive development plan to close it.

#### Positioning statement

Articulating a distinct, sector-specific professional identity that differentiates the graduate from peers with equivalent academic credentials.

### Why it is currently absent

Nearly two-thirds of respondents – 65% – reported difficulty translating what they had learned into a skills language that employers in emerging sectors recognise. Academic assessment frameworks evaluate disciplinary mastery.

Employer frameworks cut across disciplines and are organised around applied problems. Students are never taught to bridge these two languages.

#### Survey finding

~65%

struggle to translate academic learning into an employable skills narrative

*"We know they've studied the right things. What we can't see is whether they can translate that into applied judgement in our context."*

– Hiring manager, technology company, UAE, 2026

### What good looks like

- A graduate who can articulate their value proposition to any employer in their sector without relying on GPA or degree title.
- A student who has mapped their academic and experiential learning against a sector-specific employer capability framework.
- A young professional who has a curated portfolio of work outputs that substantiate their skills narrative with reviewable evidence.

#### Research evidence

Green Box's 2026 Corporate Partner Consultation Series (n=5, spanning technology, sustainability, financial services, and advanced infrastructure) found that recruiters can identify motivated candidates but consistently struggle to assess applied capability readiness. Skills translation is the bottleneck between aspiration and hire.

# The Navigation Gap is a Solvable Problem

The navigation gap is a solvable problem. It does not require systemic curriculum reform. It requires targeted, practical investment in navigation infrastructure across three groups of actors, each with a distinct and complementary role.

## For University Leaders

Universities are best positioned to deploy applied capability accelerators at scale within or alongside existing academic programmes.

- 1 Audit current offerings for futures thinking, career navigation, and skills translation content.
- 2 Commission or co-design accelerator programmes as co-curricular complements to existing degrees.
- 3 Establish direct employer channels to ensure capability frameworks reflect genuine hiring realities.
- 4 Create institutional recognition for applied capability programme completion.
- 5 Pilot cohort-based futures readiness programmes within target disciplines.

## For Policymakers

Policymakers set the framework conditions. Structural investment in navigation infrastructure – not just technical content – will determine long-term outcomes.

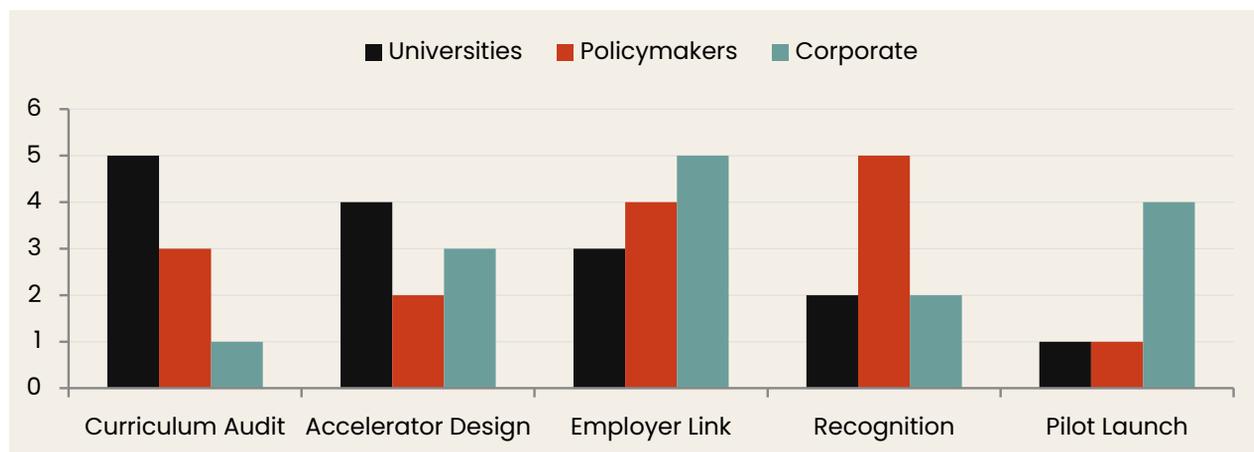
- 1 Develop a national framework for futures literacy as a quality indicator.
- 2 Align HCDP and UAE Centennial investment toward navigation infrastructure.
- 3 Create co-funding mechanisms for joint university-employer capability programmes.
- 4 Commission longitudinal tracking of youth navigation capability metrics.
- 5 Integrate futures readiness outcomes into Vision 2030 and UAE Centennial reporting.

## For Corporate Partners

Employers benefit most directly from graduates with navigation capability. Their direct engagement in programme design is both an investment and a responsibility.

- 1 Co-design skills translation frameworks used in accelerator programmes.
- 2 Create structured early-engagement pathways for accelerator participants.
- 3 Report publicly on navigation gaps observed in graduate applicant pools.
- 4 Sponsor cohort places in Future Readiness programmes at target universities.
- 5 Offer mentoring, project assignments, and talent pipeline access to participants.

## Priority Sequencing by Actor Group



# Hafsah: From Awareness to Navigation

The GCC is not short of ambition. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have articulated some of the most compelling national transformation visions in the world, backed with sovereign investment at a scale that few comparable economies can match.

The 200 students Green Box surveyed in 2026 reflect the broader reality: high awareness of transformation, strong desire to participate, and a structural gap in the tools needed to translate that desire into positioned capability. This is a solvable problem. It requires targeted, practical, output-driven investment in navigation infrastructure – programmes that build futures intelligence, systems literacy, and skills translation as applied complements to academic learning.

The next cohort of GCC graduates will shape the region for decades. Giving them a map is among the most productive investments that universities, policymakers, and employers can make right now.

*"Hafsah does not need more ambition. She needs orientation. Bridging that gap is now a strategic imperative for the Gulf."*

*Hafsah is a composite persona drawn from Green Box's 2026 research. She represents the plurality of motivated, aware, but navigationally underequipped GCC students that the navigation gap framework is designed to serve.*

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
<p><i>Aware but adrift</i></p> <p><b>Her situation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studies business at a Jeddah university</li> <li>Follows AI and sustainability news avidly</li> <li>Aspires to work in a Vision 2030 giga-project</li> <li>Believes her country is transforming rapidly</li> </ul> <p><b>What she lacks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cannot name the specific capabilities her target employers need</li> <li>Has no framework for reading sector change signals</li> <li>Describes her skills in course titles, not applied terms</li> <li>Career plan is 'wait and see what opportunities come'</li> </ul>	<p><i>Building the map</i></p> <p><b>What she does</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joins a Green Box Future Readiness cohort (20 hours)</li> <li>Scans trends in sustainability and digital infrastructure</li> <li>Maps system dynamics in her target sector</li> <li>Identifies three employers whose hiring criteria align</li> </ul> <p><b>What she builds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Translates her dissertation project into a skills evidence case</li> <li>Writes her first skills narrative in employer-facing language</li> <li>Identifies two specific capability gaps to address before applying</li> <li>Builds a portfolio of two sector-relevant work outputs</li> </ul>	<p><i>Positioned with clarity</i></p> <p><b>What she can now do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can explain her value proposition to any employer in her sector</li> <li>Applies confidently to emerging sector roles with specific evidence</li> <li>Articulates why she is targeting this role, in this sector, at this moment</li> <li>Has a personal skills development roadmap</li> </ul> <p><b>What changes for her</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews at Red Sea Global for a sustainability operations role</li> <li>Passes first-round screening on skills demonstration, not just GPA</li> <li>Continues using futures scanning as a standing practice</li> <li>Becomes a cohort mentor in the following programme cycle</li> </ul>

*"I know something big is happening. I just don't know where I fit."*

*"I can see how what I've been learning maps to what they're actually looking for."*

*"Now I don't just believe in Vision 2030. I know where I fit inside it."*

# Research Design & Survey Methodology

## Survey Instrument

The GCC Youth Futures Readiness Survey 2026 was developed by Green Box's research team and administered digitally across Saudi Arabia and the UAE between January and March 2026. The instrument was designed to measure four distinct dimensions of futures readiness across the navigation gap framework.

### D1 Transformation Awareness

"Do you believe your country is undergoing rapid transformation?"

5-pt Likert

### D2 Sector Aspiration

"Do you aspire to work in an emerging sector of the economy?"

Binary + intent depth

### D3 Skills Specificity

"Can you identify the specific skills that sector needs from you?"

5-pt confidence scale

### D4 Tool Exposure

"Have you used futures thinking or scenario planning tools?"

Binary + tool log

## Sample Profile

Total respondents	<b>200</b>
Saudi Arabia	<b>112 (56%)</b>
UAE	<b>88 (44%)</b>
Current students	<b>134 (67%)</b>
Recent graduates (0–2 yrs)	<b>66 (33%)</b>
Male respondents	<b>94 (47%)</b>
Female respondents	<b>106 (53%)</b>
Business / Economics	<b>58 (29%)</b>
Engineering / Technology	<b>46 (23%)</b>
Sustainability / Environment	<b>32 (16%)</b>
Social Sciences / Media	<b>38 (19%)</b>
Other disciplines	<b>26 (13%)</b>

### Research Ethics

All participants gave informed consent. No personally identifiable data is disclosed. Responses are reported in aggregate only. The survey instrument was reviewed by Green Box's research advisory panel prior to deployment.

## Limitations

This survey is a structured indicator study, not a nationally representative probability sample. Findings are directionally indicative rather than statistically generalisable to all GCC university students. Green Box intends to scale the survey to 1,000+ respondents in the 2027 edition to increase representativeness.

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*All Green Box primary research was conducted ethically, with informed consent and aggregate reporting. No personally identifiable information is disclosed in this white paper. For research methodology enquiries, contact [hello@thegbox.org](mailto:hello@thegbox.org)*

# Partner with Green Box?

## Commission an Accelerator

Partner with Green Box to deploy a Future Readiness programme at your institution this year.

## Co-Design Capability Frameworks

Align your sector's hiring criteria with student-facing skills frameworks through Green Box.

## Join the Research Network

Contribute to Green Box's research agenda.

Reach out at:

[hello@thegbox.org](mailto:hello@thegbox.org)



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