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Haytham Abushaban, MBA (2008)

"The attitude to teaching in the Business School, and the general atmosphere on campus, were both very sociable and welcoming."

Previously the Operations Officer at the Bank of Palestine in Gaza, Haytham left his job to pursue an MBA in International Business from the University of Birmingham in 2008, in order to work with SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) in ICT (Information and Communications Technology). He now works with a number of international corporations, universities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) including Oxfam and Mercy Corps in Gaza, Palestine.

My career

Many graduates, business people and young entrepreneurs in Palestine find themselves without jobs because of the total collapse of the formal Gazan economy as a result of the Israeli blockade, the destruction of industrial estates and seizure of large percentages of farming land. We recently caught up with Haytham to find out how the MBA has helped him make a positive change in Gaza.

After graduation I secured a role in the ICT sector with entrepreneurs. It enabled me to develop the skills of new and existing entrepreneurs in Gaza, especially those who have had few opportunities, by contributing to the upgrading of the ICT sector in Palestine.

The ICT sector is not affected by the blockade- it is without borders and can be exported. With the prestige of my international education and the knowledge I have acquired from my MBA, I am in a position where I can really influence change. The community has developed on a small scale through the building of business skills, leading to more resilient and sustainable development.

The MBA has given me transferable knowledge; it is essential to my job that I had experience in working in an international environment as I work on projects funded by international development agencies operating in developing countries. By meeting both lecturers and students from different professional, cultural and academic backgrounds, I learnt how to listen to diverse opinions and manage people to make the most of their skills.

Why Birmingham Business School?

Birmingham Business School is in the top 100 universities in the world which was hugely influential in my decision. The standard of living in Birmingham itself was exceedingly good and I was also particularly attracted to the course which was extremely flexible and allowed me to choose specific modules of interest from an array of possibilities.

The teaching approach and general ambience on campus was very sociable and welcoming. Lecturers always had their doors open to students and the group work we participated in was enjoyable as I met new people and learnt about their ideas.

"The University of Birmingham and Birmingham Business School remoulded my way of seeing things."

Challenges

Adapting to a new environment and demanding curriculum was not easy for me at the beginning. Thanks to the friendly and diverse atmosphere and support from staff, it took me only three weeks to feel as though I had integrated in the UoB community. The Guild of Students also helped me settle in by holding various activities to welcome new students.

The Careers in Business team was also a great support as they taught me the professional way to approach employers. They provided MBA students with the chance to meet a variety of employers, creating a wonderful networking and educational opportunity.

Tips and advice

Use the flexibility of the course to your advantage; discuss your strengths with your tutors and use this knowledge to select modules which will be best for you and your education. Most importantly, relax, enjoy yourself and believe in what you are doing. You will have a wonderful experience.

Find out more

MBA International Business (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/taught/business/mba.aspx)

The Birmingham MBA (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/business/mba/index.aspx)

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