

SULGAIMANI MEETS BREMEN



Amidst the heart of a region renowned for its splendid cultural heritage and compelling history, a movement in the creative scene is emerging. In the recent years, a burgeoning enthusiasm towards designing has arisen amongst the Iraqi youth, despite the restricted availability of formal education and professional training in this domain. The desire to create and invent has sparked an outburst of imaginative talent.



Although formal education and training opportunities in design disciplines are scarce, many young Iraqis burn with creative fervour. Few academic programmes or structured design courses exist, and the emphasis is often on technical aspects rather than fundamental design principles. To address the need for academic design education in the country, the Goethe-Institut initiated the founding of the Design Academy Iraq as part of the Cultural and Creative Industries project.

International Collaboration to Promote Academic Design Studies

The Design Academy Iraq is a programme developed by the Goethe-Institut to initiate cooperation between the University of Sulaimani and the University of the Arts Bremen (HfK Bremen). The Goethe-Institut facilitated the establishment of the Design Academy by brokering partnerships and coordinating the collaboration between the German and the Iraqi university. The aim is to equip emerging Iraqi designers with necessary skills for today's competitive market. This academy offers previously unavailable opportunities for young people to gain an academic understanding of design. Together, the three partners worked towards a long-term goal: the establishment of a new design department at the University of Sulaimani.

The successful collaboration between the University of Sulaimani and the University of the Arts Bremen has paved the way for aspiring design professionals to join the new design department at the University of Sulaimani, starting in September 2023 for the 2023-2024 academic year.

The Evolution of Design Academy Iraq

In 2021, the Design Academy Iraq launched its academic curriculum at the University of Sulaimani in cooperation with the HfK Bremen. Over a period of three years, a total of 73 emerging designers underwent extensive training in typography, graphic design, and illustration. The training was facilitated by design mentors from both regional and international backgrounds.

The programme commenced with a three-week summer course held at the University of Sulaimani, which was led by a lecturer from HfK Bremen. In the second year, the programme was expanded to a semester-based system, and in the third year, it was further extended to include designers from Jordan, Lebanon, and Germany. It concentrated not solely on design principles, but also on entrepreneurial thinking and practical experience.

Designing Success: Among the 73 design students, **37 were women**. Notably, **33%** of all design students accessed new markets or sales channels, while **55%** successfully secured new employment or embarked on self-employment ventures. An impressive **77%** reported enhanced income and improved employment prospects.



Did you know that the new design department at the University of Sulaimani is the first academic design faculty in Iraq?

DESIGN ACCADEMY



Key Findings

Needs-Based Training Content is Key: Conducting a needs assessment with relevant stakeholders is important and helps in creating needs-based training content.

Partnerships are Vital: Partnerships with other institutions and the promotion of academic exchange are essential for success.

Fostering Global Design Exchange: Involving more creatives from the region (Jordan and Lebanon) and international experts can facilitate a broader exchange within the design scene.

Internships: Internship opportunities could create additional value for design students. To provide these opportunities, partnerships with local design companies should be considered.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project Cultural and Creative Industries is jointly implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Goethe-Institut on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

It improves employment and income opportunities for creative professionals in six partner countries; Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa and operates mainly in the music, fashion, design and animation sectors. In addition to promoting the development of entrepreneurial, digital, creative and technical skills through training programmes, the project aims to strengthen the framework conditions and the ecosystem of the cultural and creative industries.

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