

# The Westford Communiqué

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## TEDx WestfordUniSharjah

# Where Innovation Meets Inspiration

On July 7th, TEDxWestfordUniSharjah 2024 took place at the Dubai Knowledge Park Auditorium, with its theme "FUTURE SPECTRA." The event featured a diverse and dynamic lineup of speakers who offered unique insights into future potential through technological, cultural, and societal perspectives.

**Munira Rahman**, Director at Al Haramain Perfumes, shared her journey from restrictive societal expectations to becoming a leading advocate for women's empowerment, inspiring others to overcome obstacles and pursue their dreams.

**Avinash Babur**, CEO of InsuranceMarket.ae, discussed "Building Tomorrow: Leadership in a Changing World," illustrating how his early experiences and strategic thinking shaped his approach to leadership in the insurance sector.

**Mona Ataya**, Founder Mumzworld.com, Pharmaciaty.com, Co-founder Bayt.com a pioneering digital entrepreneur, spoke about "The Road Less Travelled: The Path to Fulfilment," recounting her entrepreneurial journey and the sacrifices made to create influential digital platforms.

**James Knight-Paccheco**, a celebrity chef, presented "The Vesuvius Effect," addressing personal trauma and mental health in the hospitality industry, and the need for supportive communities within it.

**Reem Al Marzooqi**, an Emirati inventor, shared her journey from skepticism to innovation with her "Lower Extremity Vehicle Navigation Control System," highlighting her contributions to STEM and accessibility.

**Abdallah Abu-Sheikh**, Founder of Astra Tech, explored "Funding vs. Finding Purpose," and discussed how understanding industry bubbles and focusing on genuine purpose can lead to impactful innovation.

These speakers exemplified the essence of "FUTURE SPECTRA," demonstrating that the future is not just an abstract concept but a canvas for transformation and growth.

“ Their stories of resilience, leadership, and innovation offered a powerful reminder that by embracing change and pushing boundaries, we can shape a future that is inclusive, innovative, and inspiring ”

Westford remains committed to igniting meaningful conversations and fostering a culture of curiosity and exploration. By hosting events like TEDxWestfordUniSharjah, Westford not only provides a platform for visionary thinkers but also inspires a community eager to engage with the possibilities of tomorrow. The event left the attendees with a renewed sense of purpose and a clearer vision of how to navigate and contribute to the ever-evolving spectrum of possibilities that lie ahead.



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# Workshop on Transitioning from a Student to a Professional!



Arushi Bhambani  
BSc (Hons) Business  
Psychology with HRM  
LJMU

As a certified trainer and passionate HR professional, Taher's insights into the world of recruitment were invaluable. With over eight years dedicated to the field, he has a proven track record of hiring and training thousands of individuals. His ability to connect with his audience and make complex topics relatable was truly remarkable. Taher's workshop was highly interactive, and his personal experiences added depth and authenticity to his message. He shared stories of the challenges he faced in his own career, inspiring us to persevere and never give up on our dreams.

One of the highlights of the workshop was Taher's "reality check." He dispelled the myth that success can be achieved overnight, emphasizing the importance of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. By encouraging us to set realistic goals and aspirations, Taher provided us with the tools we needed to succeed in our careers. He stressed the importance of creating a comfortable and open environment where employees feel valued and heard. By fostering such relationships, HR professionals can gain valuable insights into employee needs, concerns, and aspirations. When employees feel supported and understood, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated in their work.

Taher's workshop reinforced the idea that empathy is not just a soft skill but a fundamental aspect of effective human resource management. It is a powerful tool that can help create a more positive and productive workplace for everyone involved. Overall, Taher's workshop was a truly inspiring experience. His passion for his work was evident, and his insights were invaluable. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn from such a talented and experienced professional.





**W**ith kids making special cameos on Zoom calls, it’s common knowledge that working parents are doing the impossible right now. Balancing work with childcare and schooling!

Among the Best Workplaces making pivots, many are helping moms and dads manage triple duty. Westford is proud to be one such workplace and has won SILVER at the Employee Happiness Awards 2024. The award recognizes companies in the UAE that offer exceptional benefits, policies, and programs to make the workplace more productive for parents.

Acknowledging the achievement, Hanil Das, CEO of Westford University College, said “As we celebrate this milestone, we remain steadfast in our dedication to continuously improving and providing an exceptional workplace experience for all our employees. We will continue to listen, support, and champion the needs of working parents, ensuring that they have every opportunity to succeed and thrive.”

We know that having a family can be not only rewarding, but also challenging, and we work hard to ensure our workplace is the best it can be, and we're thrilled that our efforts are paying off. We're proud of our culture where people can grow professionally while being supported in all aspects of their lives. We believe that having a supportive workplace is essential for parents and other employees who need flexibility due to various circumstances.



Dr. Arpita Mehrotra, Associate Dean, emphasizes the company's deep commitment to its workforce, stating, "Being a part of Westford University College has allowed me to have smooth transition into parenthood while balancing my career goals. I am proud to work with the management who understands and supports the needs of working parents, allowing me to multitask my personal and professional life with adequate flexibility. I can personally attest to how deserving this award is for Westford!"

"We're so thrilled to be recognized as one of the Top Workplaces in UAE for parents to work. As I've learned over the past few years, once kids are in the mix the way we work has to change. There's no doubt we can be just as productive, but more flexibility and planning are needed," Marjorie Briones, Manager Admissions and mother of one, said of the win. "As a company that seeks to employ people of all backgrounds, knowing that we're a place where parents can thrive warms my heart."

The UAE is currently attracting more worldwide talent than ever. In this era of opportunity and ambition, companies are increasingly recognizing that top-class facilities and social responsibility are non-negotiable. Thank you to our amazing team for making Westford one of the Best Workplace for Parents in the UAE 2024! Together, we are shaping a brighter future for all.

## RESEARCH & LEADERSHIP BOOTCAMP FOR MBA STUDENTS OF ABERTAY UNIVERSITY



The MBA curriculum at Westford includes a series of workshops designed to enhance essential knowledge and critical skills, which are vital for succeeding in the 21st century. Our wide range of workshops form the backbone of any serious career strategy by ensuring that MBA graduates are prepared to meet the challenges of the competitive global business environment. On July 6th, 2024, Westford hosted an exclusive Research Boot Camp, tailored for Abertay University UK MBA students at the Al Zahia Campus. The primary objective of this event was to empower students and unlock their research capabilities. The boot camp featured informative sessions, delving into diverse facets of research and its practical applications in the business realm.

The initial session, led by Dr. Renaldo De Jager, Assistant Dean, centered on “Unleashing Research Potential in Your Company.” This segment emphasized the significance of choosing a compelling research topic aligned with students’ career goals and areas of expertise. Dr. Renaldo highlighted the value of research in forensically analyzing the type of benefits that employees truly value and restructuring your employee value proposition to allow the flexibility to include these.

In the subsequent session, titled “Identifying Research Gaps in Industry,” Dr. Rasha Aladine, a distinguished DBA alumna, shared insights. She explored the methodology of pinpointing research gaps within an industry, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive research to identify areas lacking existing knowledge or solutions. Participants gained insights into recognizing and leveraging these gaps as opportunities for further research. The session incorporated case studies and practical examples, illustrating how identifying research gaps can pave the way for groundbreaking innovations and a competitive edge.

Leadership and team building play a vital role in the success of any organization. The third segment of the Boot Camp, concentrating on this pivotal aspect, was led by Prof. Alan Lukose, Senior Faculty. Designed to be both enjoyable and informative, the session sought to elevate participants' leadership abilities and promote teamwork. Through a series of interactive activities and group exercises, participants gained insights into effective leadership strategies and the significance of cultivating robust and unified teams.



The Research Boot Camp emerged as an extremely enlightening and advantageous endeavor for its attendees. The diverse array of topics, spanning the significance of research in the business realm to hands-on research methodologies and leadership competencies, provided participants with valuable insights. This experience afforded participants a more profound comprehension of how research acts as a catalyst for innovation and plays a pivotal role in steering their companies toward success.





## An Immersive Learning Experience for Building Agile and Resilient Organizations



On July 4, 2024, Westford for Business hosted their flagship event- Bounty of Bathay, at the Dhow Ballroom in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai. This immersive experience was a hit among senior business leaders and C-suite executives, offering a fresh take on learning through a gamified simulation.

The day kicked off with a warm welcome and registration, where participants were introduced to their teams and given a sneak peek into the day's adventure. The buzz of excitement was palpable as attendees mingled and prepared for what lay ahead. Dr. Soofi set the stage with an inspiring introduction, while Dr. Renaldo and Mr. Alan Lukose transported everyone back to the early 1800s for a thrilling voyage to the mythical Island of Bathay.



## BOUNTY OF BATHAY



Dressed in period costumes, teams got on board on their journey, navigating through various ports, making strategic decisions, and managing resources. The interactive scenarios were designed to enhance core management skills, keeping everyone engaged and on their toes. Teams tackled everything from production to trading, adjusting their strategies based on real-time feedback and shifting conditions.

As the game wrapped up, participants had a chance to reflect on their experiences over lunch. Many shared enthusiastic testimonials, highlighting the value and fun of the day. The afternoon was dedicated to team presentations, with facilitators offering insightful feedback to help everyone recognize their strengths and pinpoint areas for growth.

The day concluded with a closing ceremony, where certificates were presented and group photos were taken, marking the end of a memorable and collaborative experience. By 5 pm, the event ended, leaving everyone with a sense of accomplishment.

Overall, Bounty of Bathay was a fantastic success. The unique format not only made for a fun and engaging day but also delivered real value in leadership development and team building. The glowing feedback from participants underscores how effective and enjoyable this immersive approach can be in honing essential business skills and preparing leaders for future challenges.

## WESTFORD'S FIRST EVER MOVIE NIGHT

**W**estford's Media Club just pulled off an epic first-ever movie night, and it was nothing short of a blockbuster!

As the proud president of the Media Club, I can say this night was something special. Our goal? To bring students together for a night of fun, laughter, and, of course, a great movie. And boy, did we deliver!



But let's rewind a bit. How did we choose the movie? Well, we didn't want to pick just any film. We wanted something that everyone would love. So, we got the student body involved! We sent out a form asking for movie suggestions, and after sifting through all the great ideas, we narrowed it down to the top five. Then, the final decision was left in the hands of the students. 'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani' won by a landslide—cue the excitement!

Now, no movie night is complete without snacks, right? Enter our awesome sponsors, Tiffany Foods, who hooked us up with 200 packets of popcorn. That's right—200! And we didn't stop there. We had a budget for decor and drinks, so we transformed our auditorium into a cozy cinema, with a vibe that was all about good times and great friends.

One of our media students even designed custom tickets. These weren't just any tickets—they were keepsakes, capturing the essence of the night. Everyone who attended got to take home a little piece of the night as a souvenir.

As the big day approached, the buzz around campus was unreal. Students couldn't stop talking about it, and by the time the night rolled around, the excitement was through the roof. We were expecting a decent crowd, but what we got was way beyond that. The turnout was amazing, with more students showing up than we ever imagined.

The atmosphere was electric. Laughter, cheers, and a few spontaneous bursts of dance numbers filled the room. When the credits finally rolled, the applause was deafening. But the best part? Everyone was already asking, "When's the next movie night?!"

Our first movie night wasn't just an event; it was an experience—one that brought our student body closer together and left everyone hungry for more.

The Media Club can't wait to roll out the red carpet again and make the next movie night even bigger and better!

Sharanya Hejmady

BA (Hons) in Media, Culture and Communication – LJMU



# Developing Young Leaders with Leadership and Entrepreneurial Skills

## YOUTH BUSINESS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**W**estford proudly celebrates the completion of the first batch of the Youth Business Leadership Program (YBLP) 2024, reaffirming its commitment to nurturing future leaders.

The program attracted enthusiastic high school and college students from around the world, eager to enhance their leadership, personal development, and business skills. The YBLP provides a unique platform for students to engage in skill-based activities, collaborative learning, and global social interaction. By creating a dynamic and inclusive environment, the program ensures that participants develop crucial skills while forming lasting connections across cultural boundaries.

The programme featured renowned industry experts from around the world who led in-depth discussions on these topics. Through interactive sessions, challenging weekly tasks, and dynamic discussions, students were empowered to rethink their approaches, embrace new ideas, and equip themselves for the challenges of the future. These sessions not only enabled students to network with and learn from game-changers in their respective fields but also provided them with a vision of their future selves. By engaging with these experts, participants could envision their potential and set the foundation for their personal and professional growth. The completion of the first batch of YBLP 2024 showcases the enthusiasm and dedication of the young generation, who are prepared to navigate the complexities of tomorrow's world.

Every YBLP is structured as an intensive four-week programme, with each week dedicated to a distinct theme designed to guide participants through a comprehensive learning experience. This thematic approach allowed students to delve deeply into each area, building a solid foundation of knowledge and skills.



## WEEK 1: PERSONAL BRANDING

The first week focused on Personal Branding, where students explored the art of crafting a strong personal identity in both professional and personal spaces. Expert speakers in branding and marketing led sessions that helped participants understand the significance of a personal brand and how it can be utilised for future success. Notable speakers of this week included:

Ms. Neha, a seasoned psychometric consultant with extensive experience in talent management and leadership solutions, delivered an insightful session on "Unlocking Your Personality Blueprint." Her expertise in Lumina Learning and Hogan Assessments provided attendees with valuable tools to better understand their unique personality traits and how to harness them for personal & professional growth.

Ms. Veronica Knight, with her diverse international career spanning Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, captivated the audience with her session on "The Road to Self-Improvement: Crafting Your Personal Development Plan." Her journey through various sectors, from education to HR, enriched her perspective on personal development. Veronica's practical insights on creating a personal development plan inspired participants to embark on their journeys of self-improvement.

## WEEK 2: DIGITAL TOOLKIT

The second week focused on the Digital Toolkit theme, equipping students with the digital skills needed to thrive in today's interconnected world. Specialists in digital marketing, social media strategy, and online communication shared their insights, providing practical tools & techniques that students could immediately apply.

Ms. Nasreen Abdulla, a Special Correspondent at Khaleej Times with over a decade of experience in digital media, started the week with her session on "Digital Literacy: Essential Skills for the Modern Workforce." She delved into the importance of understanding digital tools and platforms, emphasising how proficiency in these areas can open doors in the modern job market. Nasreen also shared her experiences in content creation and digital marketing, offering practical advice on how to navigate and excel in the digital landscape.

Mr. Naval Varghese, a seasoned expert in multimedia marketing, continued with his session on "Empowerment through Media: Marketing, Vlogging, and YouTube for Youth." Naval discussed the growing influence of digital media and how young people can harness platforms like YouTube and vlogging to build personal brands, share their stories, and drive change. His insights inspired participants to view media not just as consumers but as empowered creators.

Mr. Bryan Soriano, a Certified Management Accountant and accomplished community leader, concluded the week with "Leading with Financial Intelligence: The Blueprint for Effective Leadership." Bryan highlighted the critical role financial literacy plays in leadership, teaching participants how to make informed decisions that drive both personal and organisational success.

### WEEK 3: DECODING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In the third week, the focus shifted to Decoding Entrepreneurship. Participants were guided through the entrepreneurial journey by experienced business leaders and innovators. These sessions included areas such as idea generation, business model development, and pitching, giving students hands-on experience in what it takes to launch and sustain a business.

Dr. Debbie Stanford-Kristiansen, General Manager at Exhibition World Bahrain and an award-winning leader in the global events industry, led a session on "Team Synergy: Leadership in Building Stronger Teams." Drawing from her 30+ years of experience in venue management and entertainment, Dr. Debbie shared insights on fostering collaboration and synergy within teams, highlighting how effective leadership can drive business growth and development.

Mr. Keswin Suresh, a healthcare innovator and Forbes 30 Under 30 honouree captivated the audience with his session titled "Young and Bold: A Fireside Chat with a Forbes 30 Under 30 Leader." Keswin shared his journey of creating DarDoc, a platform inspired by his personal experiences with an autoimmune disorder. His discussion emphasised the importance of innovation and bold thinking in tackling real-world challenges.

Ms. Sonali Raman, a seasoned fashion professional and faculty member at VCUarts Qatar, presented "Fashion Fusion: Leading with Diversity & Style." With her extensive experience in fashion design, retail buying, and consultancy, Sonali discussed the importance of embracing diversity in fashion and how it can lead to more inclusive and innovative design solutions.

### WEEK 4: BUILDING LEADERSHIP

The final week centred on Building Leadership, a critical skill for any aspiring professional. Leadership coaches and industry veterans shared their expertise in leading teams, making strategic decisions, and inspiring others. Students were encouraged to take up leadership roles in group activities in schools or colleges, which will help them practice and refine their leadership abilities for their future careers.

Ms. Audrey R. Hametner, CEO of The Bedrock Program and a global leader in career coaching, began the week with her session, "A Day in the Life of a CEO: Insights into Effective Leadership." Drawing on her vast experience in coaching and well-being in education, Audrey provided participants with a behind-the-scenes look at the daily challenges and responsibilities of a CEO, emphasising the importance of resilience, decision-making, and strategic vision.

Mr. Edwin Duria, Managing Director of PLAY Middle East and Chairman of the Philippine Business Council in Dubai and the Northern Emirates, followed with his session titled "A Walkthrough to Effective Leadership: Navigating the Path to Success." Edwin shared his journey of leading a consultancy firm and mentoring entrepreneurs, offering valuable insights on how to navigate leadership roles with confidence and integrity.

Ms. Anastasiia Pukas, an HR Director with over 13 years of experience, concluded the week with her session on "Cultivating Authentic Leadership: The Psychology of Self-Leadership and Personal Growth." She highlighted the crucial link between self-care and high performance, teaching participants how to prioritise mental and physical well-being to achieve sustained success in both their personal and professional lives.

Over the four weeks, the programme's diverse themes and expert-led sessions provided a toolkit for the youth to navigate the complexities of modern leadership, entrepreneurship, and personal development. As they move forward, the lessons learned and the connections made will serve as a strong foundation for their ongoing journey toward success and positive impact in their communities and beyond. Each theme was supported by a lineup of speakers who brought specific expertise relevant to the week's focus, ensuring that participants received a well-rounded education. These experts imparted knowledge and inspired students to think critically about their future roles as leaders, entrepreneurs, and change-makers.



### **Nandu Sreelal**

BA (Hons) Sports Business, LJMU

Being a speaker at the YBLP programme, organised by Westford, was a deeply enriching and transformative experience for me. The programme provided an invaluable platform where corporate leaders shared insightful lectures and real-world life lessons that gave me a fresh perspective on both career and personal growth. YBLP is a fantastic opportunity for high school graduates to step into a new world, allowing them to gain a better understanding of what lies ahead as they transition into adulthood and the professional realm. I was truly delighted to interact with these eager young minds, engage in meaningful discussions, and witness their passion and curiosity. The exchange of ideas and experiences was mutually inspiring, and I walked away feeling just as enriched by their enthusiasm as they did by the programme. YBLP played a significant role in shaping the person I am today, equipping me with the confidence, resilience, and clarity needed to pursue my goals. I'm grateful to Westford for this incredible opportunity and for allowing me to contribute to the growth & learning of the next generation."

# ElevateX 2024

## An Initiative of Westford Entrepreneurship Club

**E**levate X 2024, held on July 11th and hosted by the Westford Entrepreneurship Club, was a powerful showcase of creativity, innovation, and business acumen. This highly anticipated competition provided a unique platform for aspiring entrepreneurs to test their skills, develop strategic thinking, and pitch their ideas in front of experienced industry professionals.

The competition was structured into four distinct levels, each designed to challenge participants in different aspects of the entrepreneurial journey. The event kicked off with Level 1: Mad Ad, where teams were tasked with creating and presenting a creative advertisement for a fictional product. This level tested participants' creativity, marketing skills, and ability to think on their feet. The diverse and imaginative ads showcased the teams' ability to capture attention and convey a compelling message in a short amount of time.

Moving on to Level 2: Mystery Box, the teams faced a challenge that required them to develop a business idea using only the items provided in a mystery box. This level tested their innovation and resourcefulness as they worked to craft viable business concepts from unexpected materials. The teams' ability to quickly adapt and think creatively under pressure was evident in the unique and practical ideas they presented.

Level 3: Negotiation brought a new level of intensity to the competition. Participants were put in a scenario where they had to negotiate deals with a panel of judges acting as potential investors or partners. This level tested their communication skills, persuasive abilities, and strategic thinking. The negotiations were intense, with teams working hard to strike the best deals while maintaining their vision and business goals.

The final stage, Level 4: The Surprise Challenge, introduced an element of unpredictability with a quiz focused on general business knowledge and entrepreneurship. Teams had to rely on their quick thinking and broad knowledge base to answer a range of questions, adding an exciting twist to the competition's conclusion.



**Muhammed Khubaib**

BA (Hons) Sports  
Business, LJMU







**Ayaat Shaikh**

BSc (Hons) Business with International Business Management - LJMU

Participating in Elevate X for the second time was such an exciting adventure! We kicked off with the Mad Ad challenge, creating a fun ad for a mystery product on the fly. The real challenge came with the Mystery Box round, where we had to invent a new product from random items. Pitching our idea to "an investor" and judges was intense but rewarding. The final Business Quiz tested our real-world knowledge. Ending up in second place felt amazing. The competition was both fun and a great learning experience, boosting our business skills and confidence. Big thanks to Westford for this unforgettable opportunity!

## A Milestone Meeting for Westford Toastmasters Club

Meeting No. 95 of our Toastmasters club was a milestone moment, marking the debut of our new Executive Committee. It was an evening brimming with fresh perspectives and delightful memories. Our enthusiastic Toastmaster of the Day, Nandu, set the stage with the theme "Occasions of the year," sparking lively conversations as we explored a range of events, from the familiar to the wonderfully obscure.

The atmosphere was instantly welcoming, especially for our two new guests who felt at home. The theme created a perfect setting for sharing personal stories and favorite occasions, making the evening even more special.

One standout moment was TM Faatin’s Icebreaker speech. Her engaging story, filled with intriguing and unexpected details, captivated everyone and set a high bar for future presentations. TM Khubaib followed with a powerful speech on emotions, guiding us through the full range of human feelings with remarkable empathy and skill. TM Emaan then transported us through the history of fashion, offering a captivating look at how past influences have shaped the trends we see today.



Shaima Siddiqua  
BSc (Hons) in Business Management – CCCU





Our evaluators, TM Saad and TM Kavisha, provided thoughtful and supportive feedback. TM Saad's detailed critique highlighted both strengths and areas for growth, while TM Kavisha's insights were equally valuable, fostering development and improvement. I, TM Shaima, had the privilege of evaluating one of the speeches, and I'm pleased that my feedback was well-received and helpful.

The evening's Table Topics segment, led by TM Saad, was full of energy and fun. His engaging approach encouraged everyone to jump in and share their thoughts on a variety of spontaneous topics. The session ended on a high note with a lively game of Dumb Charades, also organized by Nandu, themed around "Occasions of the Year." This game added a perfect touch of fun to the evening, making it one of the most memorable parts of the night.

“ Education met fun with smiles and connections that will last. Excited for what's next! ”

## IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE... PLAY ON...PLAY ON

**W**estford and DeMont Institute hosted an inspiring online unwind session, blending creativity and connection through the theme "If MUSIC be the Food of Love... Play On... Play On." The session explored music's profound influence on our personal and professional lives. Tuan kicked off the session with introductions and engaging anecdotes about music, setting the stage for an immersive experience.

Dr. Poonam emphasized that music transcends cultural boundaries, acting as a universal language that directly resonates with emotions. Attendees engaged in an icebreaker, selecting queen songs that mirrored their moods, which sparked excitement and highlighted how music reflects emotional states.

**The Magic of Music** The session delved into the psychological impact of music, exploring its ability to evoke deep emotions and release feel-good hormones. Music acts as a social glue, creating shared experiences and fostering connections. It's not only entertaining but also therapeutic, playing a vital role in cultural, social, and cognitive development. Music influences brain function, improving memory, reducing anxiety, and enhancing happiness.

Children's development was also discussed, with a focus on how music enhances memory, attention, and problem-solving skills, making it an essential learning tool. A lively spot quiz on popular music kept participants engaged and highlighted their collective passion for music.

The session concluded with a reminder of music's transformative power, encouraging participants to continue engaging with music as a source of joy and well-being. The team's enthusiasm was palpable, reaffirming the idea that if music is the food of love, we must keep playing on.

The poster features a dark red background with a faint image of a building. At the top, the text "Westford Unwind" is written in a large, bold, yellow font, with "Our Workplace Hangout" in a smaller white font below it. A vertical yellow bar on the left side contains the word "SPEAKERS" in white. Below this, two speaker portraits are shown: Poonam Heryani on the left and Tuan Mubarak Saideen on the right. Under each portrait is their name and title in white text. At the bottom, the date "JULY 19 2024" is displayed in large white font, followed by a clock icon and the time "01 PM". To the right of the time is the Zoom logo. At the very bottom, the website "www.mywestford.com" is written in a small white font.

# HOW YOUR WARDROBE INFLUENCES YOUR MOOD & SELF-IMAGE

**F**ashion isn't just about what we wear; it's deeply tied to how we feel and see ourselves. Our clothing choices can lift our spirits, boost our confidence, and impact our overall well-being. The colors and styles we choose can influence our mood in surprising ways. For instance, wearing bright colors like yellow or red can make us feel more energized and happier, while darker shades might help us feel calmer and more reflective.



Adiva Asif

BA (Hons) Fashion: Design & Communication - LJMU



When we wear clothes that fit well and reflect our personal style, it can really boost our self-esteem and how we view our bodies. On the other side, ill-fitting or uncomfortable clothes can make us feel insecure and less confident. There is a concept called "encloded cognition" that explains how the symbolic meaning of our clothes can affect our state of mind. Wearing professional attire might make us feel more confident and focused, whereas casual or messy clothing might make us feel relaxed but less driven.

Fashion also plays a key role in how we connect with others and shape our identity. By choosing outfits that align with our values and the social groups we are part of, we can build a sense of belonging and acceptance that is crucial for our mental health. So, paying attention to what we wear can be a powerful way to boost our mood and self-perception.

# NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

## BELGIUM

Belgium's National Day, celebrated on July 21st, holds great significance for us. It commemorates the day in 1831 when Leopold I took the constitutional oath as the first King of Belgium. This day showcases Belgian pride with vibrant parades, concerts, and various public events across the country.

For my family and me, it's a time of reflection and joy. We come together to savor traditional Belgian foods, watch the fireworks, and immerse ourselves in local festivities. The palpable sense of community and national pride makes this day truly special for all Belgians. I am also thankful to Westford University College for fostering an environment of inclusive diversity, which enriches our community and celebrates the diverse cultural heritage of all its members.



**Asmaa El Arfani**  
MBA with Healthcare  
Management,  
Abertay University

## EGYPT

Every year on July 23rd, Egypt celebrates its National Day, marking the anniversary of the 1952 Revolution that led to the end of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic. This day is a profound moment of reflection and pride for Egyptians, symbolizing freedom, national unity, and the resilience of our people.

The day is filled with patriotic fervor, starting with official ceremonies where leaders lay wreaths at the Unknown Soldier Memorial. Streets are adorned with Egyptian flags, and public spaces come alive with parades, concerts, and fireworks. Families gather to celebrate with traditional feasts, sharing stories of the revolution and its significance.

For my family, National Day is a time to reconnect with our roots. We spend the day together, visiting historical sites in Cairo, reminiscing about our country's rich history. It's a day that reminds us of the sacrifices made by our ancestors and reinforces our commitment to contributing to Egypt's future.

National Day in Egypt is not just a celebration of the past but a moment to look forward with hope, embracing the values of freedom and unity that define us as a nation



**Amr Mohamed  
Mahmoud Elaggan**  
MBA with Healthcare  
Management,  
Abertay University

# BURUNDI

On July 1st, the people of Burundi celebrate the anniversary of their independence, marking their liberation from colonial rule in 1962. This significant event, achieved through protests and courageous resistance, is now a beloved holiday celebrated with great pride and enthusiasm.

The path to freedom was tough. With leaders like Prince Louis Rwagasore, the people of Burundi worked hard to win their independence. Even though they faced many challenges, their strong determination resulted in a United Nations-supported vote that led to independence on July 1st, 1962.

Independence Day is a time for celebration, unity, and reflection. The festivities begin with a flag-raising ceremony and the national anthem, followed by a speech from the president. Colorful parades showcase the country's strength and rich culture, along with music and dance performances. People wear traditional clothes to show pride in their shared heritage and connections to their roots.

The 2024 celebration marked the 62nd Independence Day and was celebrated in Gitega, the political capital of Burundi, with the theme "Economic Independence, the Basis of National Sovereignty." The main events took place in a stadium that hosted a large audience and were attended by the presidential couple, the President of Chad, national leaders, and members of the defense and security forces.

The day also sees communities coming together for gatherings where loved ones enjoy meals and reinforce their bonds. The celebrations reach a crescendo with an awe inspiring fireworks display illuminating the night sky.

In 2024 Burundi observed its Independence Day, in Gitega under the theme "Economic Independence; The Foundation of National Sovereignty."

The activities featured a ceremony to lay a wreath an inspection of the troops and speeches, by members of the military and police. The festivities this year showcased Burundi's progress, towards self-rule. Served as a reflection of the determination and sense of national identity that characterize the people of Burundi.



Jolie Dorothe Eben Ngwal  
Epse Nyanding  
Doctorate of Business  
Administration - UCAM



# MY LEARNING EXPERIENCE AT WESTFORD HAS BEEN BOTH EDUCATIONAL & ENJOYABLE

**W**hy did you choose to study at Westford University College?

I chose Westford because it offers a high-quality education at an affordable price. The teaching approach is flexible and student-centered, which makes learning both accessible and engaging.

Which activities in the classroom do you enjoy the most?

I particularly enjoy group projects that involve practical pitches and speaking opportunities. These activities not only enhance my teamwork and communication skills but also provide real-world experience.

How is Westford different from other universities?

Westford stands out due to its relaxed yet professional atmosphere. The faculty and staff are approachable and supportive, creating a friendly environment that encourages students to thrive.

How would you describe the college atmosphere?

The college atmosphere at Westford is welcoming and culturally diverse. Students from various backgrounds come together, fostering a rich and inclusive learning environment.

How has your learning experience been so far?

It has been a journey filled with valuable knowledge, practical skills, and a few challenges that have helped me grow academically and personally.



Sousi Garabet Hawanjian  
BSc (Hons) in Business  
Management - CCCU



# LIFE AFTER LIFE - MY JOURNEY IN MUSIC

Whether it was my father's love of country music, my mother's love of pop and disco, or even my brother's love of nu metal, we always had something to keep us going. By the 2010s, the era of dubstep and EDM started to boom and ushered in a new generation of fans. While I did enjoy the screeching riffs and the bottomless bass of the genre, I was never fully invested. And when the hype died, so did my interest.

I started my music journey pretty late, toward the latter part of my teens. It wasn't until I heard the "Stories" album, a compilation of Eric Clapton's top hits, that my eyes were opened to the vast world of music. Influences like The Beatles, Eric Clapton, Mark Knopfler, and Fleetwood Mac led me to pick up my brother's old, dusty guitar. Little by little, I mastered the basics, setting me on a path I would have never seen coming.

Playing in church was the first gig I ever got and gave me an opportunity to socialize and share ideas with like-minded people, contributing to the knowledge I had previously acquired. Time flew by, and before I knew it, I was in college.

Being part of Westford's music band has been an unforgettable experience. Songs from bands like Greta Van Fleet, The Lemon Twigs, James Taylor, and Gordon Lightfoot heavily influenced me during this time. Performing, competing, and learning with the band has been a wonderful journey for which I am immensely grateful. The camaraderie and shared passion within the band have enriched my musical journey, and I look forward to what lies ahead.



Elijah Michael Peter  
Higher National Diploma  
Computing - Pearson



# I EXPLORED OPTIONS FROM MULTIPLE UNIVERSITIES WORLDWIDE, BUT WESTFORD FELT LIKE THE PERFECT FIT

After years of gaining valuable work experience and advancing in my career within the engineering and industrial sectors, I realized that upgrading my knowledge and skills had become essential. The evolving demands of the digital age and the need for new-world skills made it clear that a fresh educational pursuit was necessary.

Juggling daily work and home responsibilities made finding the right degree and university challenging. Westford's presence in my country, the UAE, with its campus in Sharjah, made it a tangible option rather than just a virtual entity. The university's collaboration with renowned UK institutions offered a well-rounded curriculum, and its certificates are recognized by governments in the UAE, UK, and beyond.

Even after verifying the university's credibility, I still had reservations about the quality of the coursework. However, from the very first session of Engineering Management, I was impressed. The content was spot-on, bridging the gaps I had encountered in my professional experience. It's been a real game-changer for my career development.

Each session, though around 4 hours a week, pushed me to dive deep into research and tackle assignments comprehensively. Westford's support—through study materials, access to an extensive online library, and direct interactions with professors and administrators—ensured I could deliver my best work.

Choosing Westford has proven to be the right decision. As I move forward, I'm excited about the robust leadership skills I'm developing. As Albert Schweitzer once said, **"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."** I'm confident that my journey with Westford will lead to significant and positive outcomes.



**Mounia Seddiki**

MBA with Engineering Management  
Abertay University

# NEW WESTFORDIAN ON THE BLOCK



**Hafil Khan Shaheela Begum**  
Officer Student Service

**Mantra @ Work** : Always stay focused and productive.

**Quote you live by** : No matter what hardships come in life , face it with fearless courage & never give up.

**Creative Vent** : Singing, Toastmaster Public Speaking, reading articles & books, Researching, exploring & learning new things.



**Sandhya Dsouza**  
Assistant Accountant

**Mantra @ Work** : Precision, Integrity, Growth

**Quote you live by** : Live. Learn. Improve.

**Creative Vent** : Watching movies, creative storytelling, finding new places and experiences, and spending time with friends and family.

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