

# The two-day program

Mid-July 2026 · Fully online · 14:00 – 21:00 Damascus time

All sessions are online. Times are in Damascus (UTC+3). Keynotes and forums are bilingual with live interpretation; workshops follow the leader's language with bilingual slides. Two parallel blocks only – both clearly marked.

<https://conference.syria-higher-ed-reform.org>

## DAY 1 – FRIDAY

### From a Syrian Classroom to the World's Frontier

The road is real and walkable. Science, journeys, and the release from fear.

● 14:00–14:30 **OPENING** OPENING CEREMONY

#### Vision, survey findings, the five goals, and how to participate

Format Opening · 30 min    Who it's for Everyone — students, faculty, diaspora, and partners    Language Bilingual · live interpretation

Led by Dr. Othman Soufan (Committee Chair): the conference vision, what the survey of 510 students across 36 universities told us, the five goals, and exactly how you can take part.

#### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Headline findings from the 510-student / 36-university survey
- The five goals that organize the two days
- Concrete ways to participate — talks, workshops, working groups

● 14:30–15:15 **KEYNOTE** KEYNOTE 1

#### Fawwaz Ulaby — My Quest to Fly Satellite Radars: A Personal Story from Damascus to Michigan

Format Keynote · 45 min    Who it's for Students and faculty across engineering and the sciences    Language Bilingual · live interpretation

Fawwaz Ulaby — “My Quest to Fly Satellite Radars: A Personal Story from Damascus to Michigan.” The man who designed the first imaging radar to fly in space tells the personal story behind the science.

#### WHAT TO EXPECT

- A first-person arc from a Damascus classroom to NASA-class instruments
- What it takes to push to a scientific frontier
- Why the road from Syria to the frontier is real and walkable

● 15:15–16:15 **STUDENT SYMPOSIUM** STUDENT STAGE

## Student Lightning Talks — Round 1 (8–10 students × 5 min)

Format Student stage · 60 min · single room Who it's for Students presenting; everyone watching Language Bilingual slides

Round 1 of the student stage — 8–10 students, five minutes each — held directly after the marquee keynote so the spotlight passes straight to students.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Fast, five-minute talks on real student work
- A single shared room so every talk gets the full audience
- A direct on-ramp to the Day 2 student symposium

● 16:15–16:30 **BREAK** BREAK

## “My Reality” — 2-minute student video testimonies

Format Break · 15 min Language Bilingual

A short break with “My Reality” — two-minute student video testimonies — playing throughout.

● 16:30–17:15 **KEYNOTE** KEYNOTE 2

## Shadia Habbal — Chasing the Sun: from a Damascus Classroom to NASA’s Parker Solar Probe

Format Keynote · 45 min Who it's for Students and faculty across the sciences Language Bilingual · live interpretation

Shadia Habbal — “Chasing the Sun: from a Damascus Classroom to NASA’s Parker Solar Probe” (title to confirm). From the University of Damascus to chasing total eclipses around the world and helping shape a mission that flies into the Sun’s atmosphere.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- How a Syrian education led to the corona and Parker Solar Probe
- What sustained curiosity and persistence look like over decades
- Another walkable road from a Syrian classroom to the frontier

● 17:15–18:00 **KEYNOTE** KEYNOTE 3

## Wasim Maziak — The Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies: The Story

Format Keynote · 45 min Who it's for Researchers and anyone building institutions from scarce resources

Language Bilingual · live interpretation

Wasim Maziak — “The Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies: The Story.” How an internationally recognized, NIH-funded research program was built from inside Syria — and what that proves.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- The real story of building a research center under hard conditions
- Direct proof that world-class research can begin from a Syrian institution
- Lessons for anyone starting from scarcity

● 18:00–19:30 **WORKSHOP** WORKSHOP A · PARALLEL BLOCK 1 OF 2

## Using AI in Your Studies and Research — Practically

Format Workshop · 90 min · parallel block 1 of 2 Who it's for Students and early-career researchers

Language Workshop language · bilingual slides

“Using AI in Your Studies and Research — Practically,” led by Dr. Othman Soufan & Dr. Rami Jomaa. Hands-on, concrete, and grounded in real student and research workflows.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Practical AI workflows you can use the same week
- Where AI helps in studying and research — and where it doesn't
- Worked examples, not hype

● 18:00–19:30 **WORKSHOP** WORKSHOP B · PARALLEL BLOCK 1 OF 2

## From Idea to Product: Project Management for Student Builders

Format Workshop · 90 min · parallel block 1 of 2 Who it's for Student builders and aspiring founders

Language Workshop language · bilingual slides

“From Idea to Product: Project Management for Student Builders,” led by Dr. Ayham Zaza. How to take an idea and actually ship it.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- A lightweight project-management approach for small teams
- How to move from idea to a working product
- Tools and habits that keep student projects alive

● 19:30–20:30 **EXPERT FORUM** EXPERT FORUM 1

## From Goodwill to Lasting Channels: How the Diaspora Plugs In

Format Expert Forum · 60 min · moderated panel Who it's for Diaspora academics, partners, and anyone wanting to contribute

Language Bilingual · live interpretation

“From Goodwill to Lasting Channels: How the Diaspora Plugs In” — a moderated panel addressing Goal 2: turning scattered goodwill into durable, structured channels of contribution.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- How to move from one-off goodwill to lasting channels
- Concrete models for diaspora contribution
- Where new contributors can plug in right now

● 20:30–21:00 **PODCAST** PODCAST + NETWORKING

## “My Educational Journey” interview + regional networking with the Mentorship Matching Board

Format Podcast + Networking · 30 min Who it's for Everyone Language Bilingual

A short “My Educational Journey” interview, followed by regional networking rooms with the Mentorship Matching Board.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- A short, personal educational-journey interview
- Regional networking rooms to meet peers and mentors
- The Mentorship Matching Board to find a match

## DAY 2 — SATURDAY

# Rebuilding from Within & The Student Stage

Building institutions, the student stage, and outcomes that outlive the conference.

● 14:00–14:45 **KEYNOTE** KEYNOTE 4

## Fouad Fouad — From the Ministry of Health to LSTM: What Thirty Years of Syrian Public Health Has Taught Me

Format Keynote · 45 min Who it's for Students and faculty in health, public health, and beyond Language Bilingual · live interpretation

Fouad Fouad — “From the Ministry of Health to LSTM: What Thirty Years of Syrian Public Health Has Taught Me.” Three decades spanning both sides of the system — inside Syria’s Ministry of Health and at the frontier of global health research.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Hard-won lessons from thirty years in Syrian public health
- What it takes to rebuild systems after conflict
- Who will do the rebuilding — and how

● 14:45–15:30 **KEYNOTE** KEYNOTE 5

## Aula Abbara — Health, Conflict and Recovery: Rebuilding Medical Education in Syria

Format Keynote · 45 min Who it's for Medical students, educators, and health-systems people Language Bilingual · live interpretation

Aula Abbara — “Health, Conflict and Recovery: Rebuilding Medical Education in Syria” (title to confirm). One of the most influential voices on Syrian health and the rebuilding of its medical institutions.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- The state of medical education and the health workforce in Syria
- What recovery and rebuilding actually require
- Where students and educators fit in

● 15:30–15:45 **BREAK** BREAK

## Student video testimonies + recorded greetings from invited scholars

Format Break · 15 min Language Bilingual

A short break with student video testimonies and recorded greetings from invited scholars.

● 15:45–16:45 **EXPERT FORUM** EXPERT FORUM 2

## From Classroom to Career: Linking Universities, Industry & Innovation

Format Expert Forum · 60 min · moderated panel Who it's for Students near graduation, early-career builders, and faculty Language Bilingual · live interpretation

“From Classroom to Career: Linking Universities, Industry & Innovation,” with Dr. Mustafa Abduljabbar (AMD), Dr. Gharib Gharibi (Archia.io), and Dr. Mohammed Al Daas.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- How universities, industry, and innovation actually connect
- What employers and founders look for in graduates
- Bridges students can start crossing now

● 16:45–18:30 **STUDENT SYMPOSIUM** SYMPOSIUM TRACK A · PARALLEL BLOCK 2 OF 2

## Research & Projects — engineering · sciences · social

Format Student Symposium · 105 min · parallel block 2 of 2 Who it's for Student researchers and project teams Language Bilingual slides

Track A — Research & Projects (engineering · sciences · social), chaired by Dr. Rami Jomaa & Dr. Adnan Abi Sen.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Student research and projects across disciplines
- Feedback from experienced chairs
- A real stage for serious student work

● 16:45–18:30 **STUDENT SYMPOSIUM** SYMPOSIUM TRACK B · PARALLEL BLOCK 2 OF 2

## Startup & Innovation Pitches + live mentorship

Format Student Symposium · 105 min · parallel block 2 of 2 Who it's for Student founders and innovators Language Bilingual slides

Track B — Startup & Innovation Pitches with live mentorship, featuring Dr. Gharib Gharibi, Dr. Mahmoud Abdulhamid & Dr. Ibrahim Kalaji.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Live startup and innovation pitches
- On-the-spot mentorship from founders and operators
- A path from pitch to next steps

● All day **STUDENT SYMPOSIUM** VIRTUAL POSTER GALLERY

## Virtual Poster Gallery — runs async all day

Format Virtual Poster Gallery · async all day Who it's for Everyone Language Bilingual

A virtual poster gallery that runs asynchronously throughout the day — browse and comment whenever you like.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Student and research posters available all day
- Asynchronous browsing and comments
- No scheduling conflict with the live sessions

● 18:30–18:45 **BREAK** BREAK

## Refreshment break

Format Break · 15 min Language Bilingual

A short refreshment break before the closing sessions.

● 18:45–19:15 **SPECIAL** SPECIAL

## Best Syrian Faculty Excellence Award — ceremony, with a citation for each recipient

Format Special · 30 min Who it's for Everyone Language Bilingual · live interpretation

The Best Syrian Faculty Excellence Award ceremony — a citation read for each recipient, honoring teaching and mentorship that changes lives.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Recipients named with a citation for each
- Recognition for faculty who shape students
- A celebration of teaching done well

● 19:15–20:00 **ACTION** ACTION

## Recommendations & Working Groups — published synthesis + live sign-up

Format Action · 45 min Who it's for Anyone ready to keep working after the conference Language Bilingual · live interpretation

Recommendations & Working Groups (Goal 3): a published synthesis of the two days, plus live sign-up for student- and faculty-led working groups that carry the work forward.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- A published synthesis of the two days
- Live sign-up for student- and faculty-led working groups
- Concrete next steps, owners, and channels

● 20:00–20:30 **CLOSING** CLOSING

## Closing & Farewell — prizes, financial-ledger preview, roadmap, networking

Format Closing · 30 min Who it's for Everyone Language Bilingual · live interpretation

Closing & Farewell: student symposium prize announcements, a public financial-ledger preview, the post-conference roadmap, and farewell networking.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Student symposium prize announcements
- A public financial-ledger preview and the roadmap ahead
- Farewell networking to keep the connections going

# Five tracks structure the conference

Every session belongs to one of these tracks. Pick the one that fits how you want to contribute, then tell us on the registration form.

- **Keynotes**

Five keynotes (45 min) from senior Syrian academics and diaspora leaders. Recorded openly and published after the conference.

- **Workshops**

Hands-on sessions (60–90 min) for educators and researchers. Limited seats; participants leave with something concrete.

- **Expert Forums**

Moderated panels — four speakers and one moderator, sixty minutes — different perspectives on one question.

- **Podcasts & Personal Journeys**

Stories, not lectures. Conversational interviews released as an open podcast feed after the conference.

- **Student Symposium**

Student-led research, projects, and pitches — six competition categories with prizes for student winners inside Syria.

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