

Khalifa University Student Accommodation



Middle East

Education

Abu Dhabi Investment Office (ADIO) in collaboration with Khalifa University of Science and Technology (KU), is procuring the Khalifa University Student Accommodation PPP Project – a 3,260-bed student accommodation solution located across the Sas Al Nakhl (SAN) and Main Campus of KU in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

The project is being procured as an availability-payment based PPP. The procurer and the project company have entered into a long-term contract to demolish select existing buildings and services, and to design, build, commission, finance, insure, maintain, and ultimately hand back, the project.

Project facts		
Location Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates	Client Khalifa University of Science and Technology	Our role Co-lead sponsor Co-lead equity investor Financial and commercial arranger 50% FM Co JV member SPV management and financial support
Builder United Engineering Construction Co (UNEC)	Architect and designer MIMAR Architecture & Engineering	Services Plenary BESIX
Financial close August 2024	Completion date December 2026	Contract terms Design, Build, Finance, Maintain contract, administered through an availability and performance based payment mechanism.
Awards <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MENA Social Infrastructure Deal of the Year, 2024 IJGlobal Awards• MENA PPP Deal of the Year, 2024 IJ-Global Awards		

The main campus, which will house 696 student rooms, is located on Abu Dhabi Island at the intersection of Al Saada Street and Old Airport Road.

The SAN Campus, which will house 2,564 student rooms, is located near the Maqta Bridge, which connects Abu Dhabi Island to the mainland.



Khalifa University Student Accommodation render

Design features

The project is set to deliver an exceptional student experience, embracing the “Alone, Together” design philosophy that harmonises privacy with community. By incorporating open plazas, flexible podium areas, green spaces, and vibrant community hubs, the design promotes a lively and active environment across both KU campuses. These elements, paired with thoughtful retail opportunities, encourage engagement while respecting cultural expectations around segregation and privacy.

The design has also been optimized to achieve high environmental and utility consumption savings, expected to far exceed the Estidama PEARL 2 minimum rating. The consortium’s approach not only activates the campuses but creates spaces where students can feel connected while maintaining the personal privacy they need.

Innovations

The project incorporates several key innovations that enhance both design and delivery metrics.

An integrated podium design at SAN Campus, and Plaza spaces at Main Campus, efficiently separate pedestrian and resident traffic from surrounding vehicles, significantly improving safety and accessibility.

By consolidating the student accommodation onto a smaller footprint, we’ve unlocked valuable land for future development opportunities at KU.

The consortium's commercial and financial structuring strategies have allowed us to shorten the construction period by a full year, providing the accommodation 12 months ahead of schedule without increasing KU's payment obligations.

These innovations deliver immediate benefits for students' experience while creating long-term value for KU's growth and development.

Local economic impacts

The project is set to deliver substantial local economic impacts. A UAE-based contractor, UNEC, has been awarded the full EPC contract, unlocking extensive local supply and procurement chains. Additionally, Plenary has partnered with a local Abu Dhabi family investment office, Mazrui International, which has made its first equity investment in a PPP, creating a valuable opportunity for local firms to reinvest in the UAE economy. This project is also the first social infrastructure PPP in the UAE to be exposed to the UAE's In-Country Value (ICV) certification process, with commercial and financial structuring purposefully undertaken to maximise the ICV score across the 23-year concession term, ensuring ongoing economic benefits for the UAE throughout the project's lifecycle.