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Finding the right balance

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My name is Alya Al Shakaki and as a student at HBKU and an employee of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCMC-Q) I feel I have a very special relationship with Education City. In fact, I think of it as my second home. Let me tell you why...



I have been working for Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) as a clinical research coordinator in Genetic-Research Department since 2010. I am working with a highly motivated and talented team. My colleagues and I

work in many interesting research projects that are related to the Qatari society needs. For example, we have studied type II diabetes among the Qatari population and determined the prevalence of diabetic retinopathy among Qataris.

Also, we have been studying the genetic variants in the human genome among people living in Qatar in order to aid physicians in making better decisions in the field of disease prevention and its treatment, which is known as "precision medicine". During my six years of work experience, I have learned a lot, gained a lot of useful knowledge and developed my research skills. On the other hand, I am proud of all my achievements in serving important research projects that are related to the needs of the society.

Being based in Education City means being immersed in a rich atmosphere of learning, and this in turn alerted me to explore the programs being offered by HBKU, specifically those offered by the College of Islamic Studies. I applied to become a master's student at HBKU and, happily, I'm now enrolled in an Islamic studies program that focuses on Islamic thought and applied ethics.

When you are working and studying at the same time I think it can be a great benefit that your studies work in synergy with your working life, and my program relates to my work experience and complements it very well. Actually, I plan to specialize in Islamic bioethics, which aims to answer many of the ethical challenges and dilemmas that are related to the medical field from an Islamic perspective.

I mentioned at the start that Education City is my second home. This is reinforced not only by my work and studies being based in the same very special location but also by the fact that my lovely little nine-year-old son and five-year-old daughter go to Qatar Academy - Sidra School and my husband is a research scientist at Texas A&M University in Qatar (TAMUQ). As a family we enjoy going together every day from our home to Education City - our work and study place.

Maintaining a full-time job while also studying is not easy and requires a huge amount of self-discipline and the ability to manage your time well. However it also relies on outside factors working in your favor, and I am very happy that all of my courses run after 4 pm, meaning that I can give my studies the attention they deserve while still pursuing my job normally.

I'm extremely grateful to be able to have the chance to interact with the high caliber professors at HBKU and to use the University's excellent facilities, and I'm fortunate to receive the support and encouragement of my supervisor in WCM-Q. Without this support, balancing my work obligations and my studies would be impossible. Because of the excellent support I receive both from HBKU and from my workplace, I am currently enriching my knowledge in a way that I know will benefit me greatly in the future, both personally and professionally.