

# The Iraqi Young Educators Programme

**The Iraqi Young Educators Programme (IYEP) is an initiative launched by the RCP Iraq Network in early 2025, with the aim of empowering Iraq's next generation of educators and equipping them to drive meaningful and sustainable reform within the national educational system. Dr Meryem Al-Saffar, head of the RCP Iraq Network's junior medical education subgroup, shares the programme's aims and recent presentation at the RCP Iraq Network's 5-year anniversary celebration.**

The programme is delivered in collaboration with several medical colleges. IYEP is structured into three main phases. The first phase, recruitment, focuses on selecting individuals who demonstrate passion, commitment and a genuine desire to contribute to systemic improvement. The second phase, core training and mentorship, consists of interactive workshops and a comprehensive capacity-building course delivered online through a dedicated learning platform.

The third and current phase, implementation, centres on translating knowledge into action. Participants are designing and leading projects within their respective colleges to identify, analyse and address specific educational challenges, with the goal of generating measurable impact in their institutions and communities in the coming months.

Dr Dween Shkak, IYEP participant said: 'My journey in IYEP was more than just attending sessions; it truly changed the way I see education. I joined wanting to improve my teaching skills, but I ended up understanding the real responsibility of being an educator. Through planning lectures, writing clear objectives, and learning how to give proper feedback, I became more organised and confident. The experience helped me grow not only academically but also personally and as a leader. Completing IYEP feels like an important step toward becoming the kind of doctor who doesn't just treat patients, but also teaches and inspires others.'

## 5-year anniversary celebration

During the RCP Iraq Network's 5-year anniversary celebration, a group of programme participants was given the opportunity to showcase their learning and achievements. They maximised this platform by delivering a dynamic session composed of four integrated mini-sessions.

The session began with an overview of the programme,

followed by a data-driven presentation illustrating the programme's impact on participants. This was complemented by a panel discussion on peer-assisted learning, and the session concluded with an engaging debate exploring whether modern learning systems should entirely replace hybrid models within Iraq's educational environment.

All components were fully conceptualised, designed and delivered by the participants themselves. The session was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees, reflecting both the quality of the work and the transformative potential of the programme.

Dr Mohammed Resan, IYEP participant: 'During the network's 5-year anniversary, we presented a debate through IYEP on traditional versus modern medical education and its future in Iraq. We worked as a team from different universities to build strong arguments and shared key perspectives in front of UK and Iraqi leaders in a positive atmosphere. The debate ended in a tie, reflecting the strength of both sides and our shared hope for a better future in medical education.'

## Testimonials: the value of a network of young educators

Dr Meryem Al-Saffar, head of the RCP Iraq Network's junior medical education subgroup said: 'The programme itself added to my personal and career development, but what I found rather exciting yet nerve-racking was the experience of taking over organising a whole session without the contribution from senior members of the network. That for me, was a moment where I had no choice but trusting the process and waiting for the hours of rehearsals to pay some good results.'

'I had the trust in that wonderful group of young educators and the potentials each and every single one of them had and eventually, the results were fantastic! And the great feedback we received from the attending RCP members will always be a personal core memory for me.'

'It is an experience that I would definitely repeat, as I would love to have more opportunities offered for a greater number of the new generation of educators to show their capabilities and have a positive impact in their communities.'

Other IYEP members have similar positive feedback to offer:

### **Dr Hassanien Al-Hahsimi:**

‘Standing just before the debate began, I felt a real sense of nervous excitement, but I chose to turn that tension into motivation and fully embrace the challenge. As the discussion progressed, I focused on presenting my arguments with confidence and clarity, using humour and storytelling to keep the audience engaged and smiling. I also aimed to respond to the opposing team’s points in a thoughtful way that gently exposed weaknesses while keeping the debate respectful and enjoyable.

‘The supportive feedback from RCP members and Medical Training Initiative colleagues made the experience even more meaningful. The warm applause from senior faculty at the end was a memorable moment that reflected the positive energy and shared appreciation throughout the event.’

### **Dr Tema Ezzadin:**

‘It was such an honour to take part in the IYEP with the RCP–Iraq Network. Teaching has always been a passion of mine, as I have always associated it with helping others grow and succeed. As someone who was very careful with her studies yet sometimes needed extra time to fully grasp certain topics, I found immense joy in mastering a concept and gaining the confidence to apply it. Being able to make that learning journey clearer and shorter for someone else has always inspired me, from shadow teaching at the International School of Choueifat since sixth grade to mentoring throughout university. This programme transformed teaching from a simple passion into a field where I have developed strong competence, confidence and a refined set of skills.’

### **Dr Mohammed Baqir:**

‘Participating in IYEP shifted my mindset from a student to a professional educator. Presenting to the RCP proved that Iraqi medical students are hungry for formal pedagogy. By sharing evidence-based results, I showed how better teaching creates a stronger healthcare system. This experience has officially redefined my future role as both a clinician and a mentor.’

### **Dr Aren M Omar**

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**Find out more about the work of the RCP Iraq Network on [their website](#) and read a [Commentary interview with Dr Mustafa Zubaidi, a resident doctor who is training in Iraq.](#)**

**This feature was produced for the April 2026 edition of [Commentary magazine](#). You can read a [web-based version](#), which includes images.**

