
Hamad Bin Khalifa University Students Explore World Cup Legacy in Canada Through Years of Culture



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Ten-day academic exchange connects Qatar 2022 expertise with Canadian approaches to sport policy, social impact, and post-tournament legacy

15 August 2026 – Toronto, Canada and Doha, Qatar: Graduate students from the Sport and

Entertainment Management programme at Hamad Bin Khalifa University's (HBKU) School of

Economics and Management have completed a ten-day academic exchange in Canada, examining how major sporting events can create lasting social, institutional, and educational value.

Delivered as part of the Qatar Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture, the programme brought together students, academics, researchers, and sport-sector specialists at the University of Toronto and Western University. Taking place just weeks after Canada hosted FIFA World Cup 2026 matches, the exchange offered a timely opportunity to place Qatar's experience from the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ in conversation with Canada's post-tournament experience.

As part of their studies, the students explored the strategic, social, and economic dimensions of sport. In doing so, the exchange provided an opportunity to connect classroom learning with international perspectives and real-world experiences, while illustrating the university's commitment to supporting programmes, research, and initiatives that contribute to the development of the sports sector in Qatar and beyond.

“Years of Culture is about turning cultural exchange into practical and lasting relationships. By connecting emerging sport professionals from Qatar with academic institutions and researchers in Canada, this programme creates opportunities to share knowledge, compare experiences, and establish cooperation that can continue well beyond 2026. Sport provides a particularly powerful platform for this exchange, combining education, community development, and long-term

national legacy,” said Dr. Kamilla Swart, Associate Professor and Director of the Master of Science in Sport and Entertainment Management programme, HBKU.

Across the universities, students explored Canadian sport policy, mega-event legacy, Olympic studies, sport-for-development, as well as social impact measurement.

The exercise combined academic exchange with first-hand exposure to Canada’s sporting culture. Students met faculty and graduate researchers, visited university sport and recreation facilities, and toured MLSE LaunchPad to explore how community sport can support youth development, inclusion, and wider social outcomes. At the University of Toronto, they also joined presentations and dialogues on current sport management research.

The Toronto programme included a Blue Jays game, a tour of the Rogers Centre, and a visit to the Hockey Hall of Fame. At Western University, participants examined Olympic archival material, discussed the social impact of the FIFA World Cup 2026, and explored opportunities for future academic and research collaboration between HBKU and its Canadian partners.

Canadian faculty who hosted the Qatar delegation welcomed the exchange as a meaningful academic dialogue and opportunity for long-term collaboration between institutions in both countries.

Dr. Simon Darnell, Professor, Sport for Development & Peace and Director, Centre for Sport Policy Studies, Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education, University of Toronto, said: “I was very pleased to meet and host the students from Hamad Bin Khalifa University during their visit to Toronto. They showed a genuine interest in the various subjects and topics that make up Kinesiology and brought a thoughtful and collegial approach. It was a very positive experience.”

Dr. Adam Ali, Assistant Professor in the School of Kinesiology at Western University, said: “Having this unique opportunity to meet and exchange knowledge about the legacy of sport mega-events like the FIFA World Cups in Qatar and Canada with the talented scholars from Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) is vital to forging long-lasting partnerships between our programmes and for further advancing our respective research on the global impacts of sport. The seminar on the history of Western’s International Centre for Olympic Studies (ICOS) and the rich discussions between HBKU’s and the Sport and Social Impact Research Group’s graduate students were particularly significant. I am confident this academic exchange will lead to more fruitful opportunities for collaboration between our programmes for years to come.”

Beyond the ten-day programme, the exchange was designed to support academic mobility, comparative research, and stronger institutional relationships between Qatar and Canada.

Through initiatives such as this, Years of Culture demonstrates how cultural diplomacy can move

beyond formal engagement to create practical opportunities for people to learn together. Using sport as a common language, the exchange has established connections that can continue to grow beyond 2026.