

## EDUCATION: 2,000+ ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES

**Addressing obesity can significantly improve educational attainment, as studies highlight a positive relationship between healthy weight and academic performance<sup>71</sup>:**

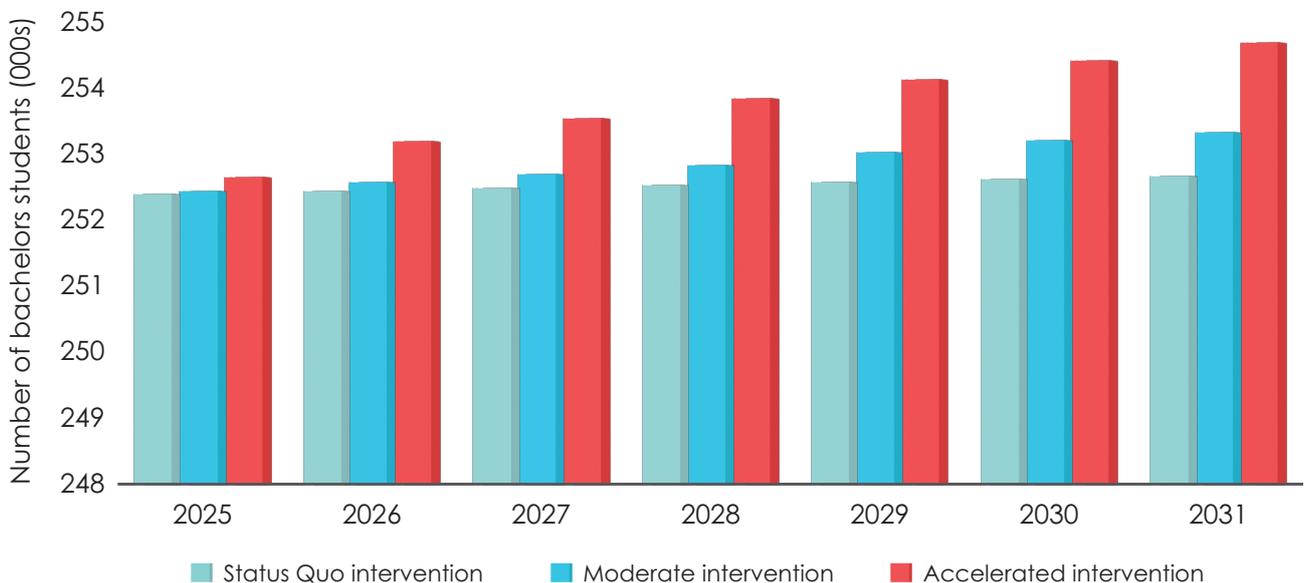
- Obesity is linked to chronic systemic inflammation<sup>72</sup>. Inflammation in brain tissue can worsen memorization skills<sup>73</sup>. Although confounding variables may be at play, students living with obesity have been found to have higher dropout rates<sup>74</sup>.
- By mitigating obesity-related health issues and boosting self-confidence, weight loss interventions help students remain committed to their studies. This can decrease the dropout rate in the UAE, ensuring that more individuals

complete their education and are prepared to contribute to the workforce.

Increasing educational outcomes in the UAE is a priority for the UAE government, which has laid down a National Strategy for Education 2030. Reducing obesity could increase the number of students pursuing higher education, helping achieve the objectives of this strategy as well as helping the UAE become future-ready.

**Weight loss could lead to an increase in the number of bachelor's degrees graduates, as well as average years of schooling, and a reduction in dropout rate.**

**Figure 18: Additional bachelors program enrolments (2025-2031)**



**2,000 additional students could enroll in bachelor's programs in the UAE by 2031**

Without weight loss interventions, growth of students obtaining a bachelor's degree in the UAE is constrained. As young adults start to lose weight, however, their self-esteem is positively impacted, and they are more likely to complete their studies, or enroll in higher education<sup>75</sup>. This is partly due to a physiological mechanism, as obesity is linked

to neuroinflammation, which may lead to a decrease in the capacity of the brain to memorize information, negatively impacting academic results.

Due to these mechanisms, in the accelerated intervention scenario, 2,027 additional students are estimated to enroll in a bachelor's program, and in the moderate intervention scenario, 667 students enroll in a bachelor's program cumulatively, by 2031.

These additional students in higher education will be equipped with the necessary technical and practical skills to drive the economy in both public and private sectors. Around 42% of these students would be Emirati nationals, following Dubai Statistics Center data on university enrollment<sup>76</sup>. Weight loss would contribute to enabling additional students to enroll in higher education. By 2031, in the accelerated intervention scenario, 851 additional Emirati students could enroll, and 280 in the moderate intervention scenario.

**Dropout rate could reduce to 12.64%, preventing 3,200 students from dropping out of college by 2031**

There is also an estimated reduction in the average dropout rate among those living with obesity. At present, the dropout rate for higher education students stands at 14.0%, due to factors such as disengagement, self-esteem issues, and greater absenteeism<sup>77</sup>. With weight loss interventions, the



Losing weight allows promising students like Mariam, who was previously at risk of not being able to enroll in university, to improve their academic performance and muster the self-confidence needed to join university and pursue a degree.

average dropout rate is estimated to reduce to 12.6% in the accelerated intervention scenario and 13.5% in the moderate intervention scenario by 2031. Taken cumulatively, this is equivalent to 3,200 students in the accelerated intervention scenario and 1,300 students in the moderate intervention scenario being prevented from dropping out of college by 2031.

**Table 6 : Education indicators**

Category	Indicator (by 2031)	Measure	Status Quo (2024)	Base Scenario (2031)	Moderate Intervention (2031)	Accelerated Intervention (2031)
 Education	Bachelor's enrolment	#	250,000	253,000	+667	+2,027
	Students dropping out	#	35,000	35,280	(1,200)	(3,000)

### Analysis by Key Demographics

**Weight loss contributes to a significant boost for Emirati and women graduates**

#### Nationality:

- There may be an increase of 900 Emirati nationals graduating from bachelors' programs compared to 1,200 expatriate students, in the accelerated intervention scenario by 2031. In the moderate intervention scenario, there is still an increase of 300 Emirati graduates compared to 400 expatriate graduates by 2031.
- This is an important result as highly skilled Emirati graduates are more likely to be able to gain employment in the private sector, which is one of

the key goals of Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization<sup>78</sup>.

#### Gender:

- Out of the 2,000 additional graduates, in the accelerated intervention scenario, 1,100 are projected to be women, implying a significant increase in female participating in higher education in the UAE.
- This rise can be attributed to improved health outcomes and greater academic engagement among women following weight loss interventions, as well as evolving societal and policy support that encourages women's educational attainment in the UAE.