

## A forensic course in Dubai just like in movies

Muaz Shabandri - Reporter / 14 April 2015

*Varsity's programme helps students acquire skills to investigate offences and help identify, apprehend criminals*

Collecting evidence, finding clues and investigating crimes can sound like a scene out of any Hollywood thriller. Pouring magnetic dust over a fingerprint detail in a forensic laboratory, Sarah Tariq Khoory is one of the few Emirati students learning forensic science at **Amity University's Dubai** campus.

"There are very few Emirati women forensic scientists and that's one of the reasons I wanted to join the course. I have also trained with Dubai Police and worked with them during the summer," she said.

Studying as part of a special Emirati scholarship, the student was recently on a tour to Milan to work alongside forensic scientists in Italy.





Students from **Amity University, Dubai Campus**, at a staged crime scene in Milan during a study tour. — Supplied Photo

"I was excited to see a real autopsy and when we had a chance to get our hands on a crime scene, it was really nerve-racking. Even when collecting fingerprints, we had to be extremely careful with the procedure and how it is applied in the real world, said Sarah.

Sharon Ann Philip, an Indian student was also among the group of students taking part in the two-week study tour which concluded last month.

"When I went to Milan it was very different. The day we were collecting evidence it was raining and we had to solve a staged robbery crime scene. We were asked to collect fingerprints and DNA evidence to understand the nature of crime and how the criminals would have operated," said Sharon.

At the university, students are taught everything from ballistics to anthropology, better known as the study of humans. Hagi Fernandes, an Indian student at the university, says the world of forensics is different from what people see in movies.

"Forensics is not just about murder and mystery. It also involves money laundering, financial crimes and a lot of other things. People think forensics is just about dead bodies. What actually happens in the real world is very different and if you work in this field you have to think differently. You need to have a gut and be way ahead in thinking," said Hagi.

Solving crimes may not be an easy task but the group of students take pride in their work. Academics at the varsity help students acquire skills to investigate criminal offenses and help identify, apprehend and prosecute criminals.

Rahim Mahtab, a final-year student narrated the experience of a live autopsy performed at a crime lab in Ras Al Khaimah.

"We were a group of 20 students and it was the first time we witnessed a real autopsy. I clearly remember the way they pierced the skin, opened the skull and then examined the brain. A few students had to walk out of the lab before the whole procedure would be completed," he recollected.

The course has remained popular with transnational students too, with no other private university offering a similar programme in the Middle East. Mercy Sheila Abia, a student from Nigeria, travelled to Dubai for the course in forensics.

"I came to Dubai only to study forensic science and it has been fun. Solving a crime scene and applying what you've learned in class is one of the best experiences I will take back with me after finishing the course," said Mercy.

Kimberley George, an Indian student, explained the nuances of solving a crime in real life and how the task at hand on a crime scene would require attention to the last detail.

"Learning in theory is very different from what happens in the real world – especially when solving crimes. For example, if you have a gun on a crime scene, you are taught to take it and put it in an evidence box and pad it with cotton so it doesn't move. At a real crime site, it can be very different. You have to check the gun, whether it is loaded or not, and make sure you hold it in a way which does not destroy the evidence. The fingerprints have to remain intact and what looks like an odd five minute job can even take you half an hour," she said.