About The Africa Institute

The Africa Institute in Sharjah, UAE, is an interdisciplinary academic research institute dedicated to the study, research, and documentation of Africa: its people and cultures; its complex past, present, and future; and its manifold connections with the wider world.

As the only institution of its kind located in the Gulf—the historical nexus of African-Arab cultural exchange—The Africa Institute is uniquely positioned to illuminate African and Gulf ties and to expand understanding of African and African diaspora studies as a global enterprise. Injecting fresh thinking into the existing body of scholarship that largely conceives of the Gulf and Africa as separate entities, The Africa Institute seeks to shed light on important yet overlooked historical linkages that shaped the past and influence present events, including forced and voluntary migratory patterns, market-based economic fluctuations, and local and global political changes.

The Africa Institute's curriculum of postgraduate studies offering Master's and PhD degrees has been designed to train the next generation of critical thinkers in African and African diaspora studies. Through its programme of regular international symposia and conferences, visual art exhibitions and artist commissions, film and performance series, and community classes and outreach events, the Institute is expanding public understanding of Gulf and African exchange within the local Sharjah community, the region, and around the globe.

Established in its current form in 2018, the idea for The Africa Institute was conceived in 1976 as the result of the first "Symposium on African and Arab Relations" hosted by the Emirate of Sharjah, to which forty-five of the most influential and forward-thinking African and Arab scholars of the day were invited. The Africa Institute is currently housed in Africa Hall, which was inaugurated during the 1976 symposium and which is currently undergoing a renovation and major expansion designed by renowned Ghanaian-British architect Sir David Adjaye to accommodate the Institute's expanded mission. Anticipated to open in its enlarged campus in 2023, The Africa Institute is located at the major crossroads of Government House Square adjacent to the Sharjah Architecture Triennial headquarters, and will feature an array of public programming, cafes, and shops open and accessible to all those who live, work, and visit Sharjah.