Partner Institute

Industry Partner

2nd Industry – Academia Roundtable

Shaping the Future Talent Engine for Global Finance & Technology

21st May 2026 | 1100 – 1300 hrs. | Hotel Sofitel BKC, Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Background & Context:

As India strengthens its position as a global hub for financial services, FinTech, GCCs, and technology-driven enterprises, GIFT City Ltd. continues to emerge as a strategic centre for international finance, innovation, and high-value employment generation.

In this context, **GIFT City Ltd.,** in partnership with **FICCI – Gujarat State Council** as the **industry partner**, convened the **2nd Industry–Academia Roundtable** in Mumbai to deliberate on building a globally competitive and future-ready talent ecosystem aligned with the evolving needs of FinTech, GCCs, AI-driven enterprises, and international financial services. The discussions also gained significance amid ongoing geopolitical uncertainties and the Middle East crisis, highlighting India's opportunity to position GIFT City as a stable, globally trusted financial and technology hub.

Objective:

The roundtable aimed to facilitate a shift from a placement-driven approach to a Research-Based Industry Integration Framework by focusing on:

- Aligning academic outcomes with industry requirements
- Building a globally competitive workforce
- Embedding AI, innovation, and digital fluency into learning
- Strengthening academia–industry collaboration
- Promoting experiential learning and industry immersion
- Supporting the large-scale expansion of GIFT City's ecosystem

Key Deliberations & Strategic Discussions:

GIFT City Ecosystem & Growth Potential – Participants highlighted the rapid expansion of GIFT City, which today hosts (approx.): 1,150+ operational entities, 40+ Banks, 400+ Fund Management Entities, it's a a rapidly growing GCC ecosystem.

The ecosystem is expanding beyond traditional banking into:

- FinTech
- GCCs
- AI-driven enterprises
- Semiconductor ecosystem
- Technology consulting
- Digital infrastructure and analytics

Strong emphasis was laid on the increasing role of GCCs as strategic innovation and decision-making centres, driving demand for talent in:

- AI & Machine Learning
- Cyber Security
- Data Analytics
- FinTech
- Regulatory and compliance frameworks

Participants also acknowledged the growing importance of GIFT IFI and FinTech-focused learning ecosystems in developing specialised talent pipelines.

Talent & Employability Challenges:

Industry leaders observed that employability today extends beyond academic qualifications and increasingly depends on:

- Adaptability
- AI readiness
- Digital literacy
- Communication skills
- Problem-solving ability
- Regulatory awareness

A significant gap was noted between academic expectations and real-world corporate environments, particularly regarding work culture, performance expectations, and operational discipline. Participants stressed the need to prepare graduates for high-performance, globally integrated workplaces from Day One.

Talent Retention & Liveability:

Retaining talent, particularly mid and senior-level professionals, emerged as a major concern. Key challenges discussed included:

- High attrition and job-hopping
- Talent poaching
- Limited social and lifestyle infrastructure
- Need for better residential, educational, and recreational facilities

Participants emphasised that GIFT City's long-term sustainability will depend on creating a vibrant and liveable ecosystem with world-class social infrastructure and community development.

Regulatory & Compliance Challenges:

Industry representatives highlighted the operational burden arising from dual regulatory compliance requirements involving:

a) International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)
b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

Suggestions included streamlining coordination mechanisms, simplifying procedural frameworks, and improving regulatory clarity to strengthen GIFT City's global competitiveness.

Skill Gaps & Future Talent Needs:

Critical talent shortages identified included:

- Cyber Security
- AML/CFT specialists
- AI & Machine Learning
- Data Analytics
- FinTech professionals
- Regulatory and compliance experts

Participants stressed the need to integrate the following into mainstream academic curricula:

- AI literacy
- FinTech foundations
- Data Analytics
- Cyber Security
- Compliance frameworks
- Digital financial systems

Special mention was made of GIFT IFI's initiatives in Cyber Security, AML/CFT, and FinTech Essentials programmes.

AI & Human Intelligence:

The discussions highlighted that AI adoption across banks, GCCs, and technology firms is inevitable and essential. Key focus areas included:

- Computer literacy
- AI familiarity
- Digital adaptability
- AI-assisted workflows

At the same time, participants emphasised that AI cannot replace:

- Human judgment
- Ethical reasoning
- Critical thinking
- Strategic decision-making
- Emotional intelligence

A balanced approach integrating AI capabilities with human intelligence was strongly advocated.

Academia–Industry Integration:

Participants unanimously agreed that deeper Industry–Academia Integration is critical for future workforce development. Recommendations included:

- Co-designed curriculum
- Industry-led electives
- Corporate mentorship
- Live projects and simulation labs
- Research-driven learning
- Faculty immersion programmes

A proposal was also made to establish an Industry Advisory Board comprising GIFT City, industry leaders, academia, banks, GCCs, and FICCI representatives.

Internship & Practical Exposure:

Participants recommended replacing short-duration internships with structured long-term industry immersion programmes of 5 months or more to ensure meaningful practical exposure and workplace readiness. The objective, participants noted, should be to create graduates who are not just *"Employable"* but truly *"Adaptable."*

Government Policy Support:

The importance of the Government of Gujarat's GCC Policy (2025–30) was highlighted as a key enabler for:

- GCC expansion
- Skill development
- Industry–academia collaboration
- Infrastructure creation
- Global investment attraction

The policy was recognised as instrumental in strengthening GIFT City's long-term talent and innovation ecosystem.

Conclusion:

- The roundtable underscored that the future of talent development lies in Talent Co-Creation, not Talent Supply.
- The success of GIFT City Ltd. will depend on building a globally competitive, adaptable, and future-ready talent ecosystem.
- Participants emphasised the importance of:

    a) Co-designed curriculum
    b) Industry-integrated learning
    c) Research-driven collaboration
    d) Continuous upskilling
    e) Stronger academia–industry partnerships

- Sustained collaboration between industry, academia, regulators, and policy stakeholders was identified as essential for strengthening India's future financial and technology workforce.

Key Actionables:

- Establish an Industry Advisory Board comprising GIFT City, industry leaders, academia, GCCs, banks, and FICCI.
- Develop a centralised GIFT City Talent & Opportunity Portal to map industry requirements with academic talent pipelines.
- Introduce long-duration industry internships and structured immersion programmes.
- Strengthen AI, FinTech, Cyber Security, AML/CFT, and Data Analytics integration within academic curricula.
- Create AI Labs, FinTech Sandboxes, and corporate simulation environments for applied learning.
- Launch continuous faculty upskilling and industry immersion programmes.
- Strengthen ecosystem liveability through improved social, educational, recreational, and residential infrastructure to enhance talent retention.

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Photographs of the roundtable



From left to right: **Ms. Suresh Dhaka,** GM, GIFT City Ltd. (GIFTCL), **Mr. Avichal Khera,** CFO, GIFT City Ltd. (GIFTCL) & **Mr. Rohan Verma,** Senior Assistant Director, FICCI – Gujarat State Council.





Thank you.