

rh

SALARY GUIDE

2019



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CONTENTS

		
ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE	TECHNOLOGY	LEGAL
10 Accounting and finance hiring climate	22 Technology hiring climate	31 Legal hiring climate
12 Accounting and finance salaries	24 Technology salaries	33 Legal salaries
FINANCIAL SERVICES	HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION	
16 Financial services hiring climate	27 Human resources and administration hiring climate	35 Additional benefits
18 Financial services salaries	29 Human resources and administration salaries	37 About Robert Half

Confidence is increasing for businesses in the Middle East. More than two-fifths (42%) of CEOs are very confident in their growth prospects over the next year, and 40% expect the outlook to remain positive over the next three years.¹

Digitisation, automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) continue to transform the world of work and are quickly becoming necessary in meeting the needs of a rapidly evolving market. They are set to have a significant impact on roles, skills and processes, prompting businesses to place more emphasis on soft skills when making new hires.

A digital skills shortage in the Middle East talent market is hindering business growth and evolution. Six out of 10 CEOs say they have concerns regarding the acquisition of professionals with the necessary digital skills. Concerns regarding available talent are causing employers to focus on improving retention. The top two initiatives in place are adding more benefits to remuneration packages and offering flexible working options.

For more information about the remuneration and recruitment trends we are seeing in your local region, please contact us on +971 4 382 6700.

FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



GARETH EL METTOURI

Associate Director, Robert Half UAE

¹ CEO Survey 2018, PwC



KEY TRENDS AFFECTING HIRING

The UAE economy is set for healthy growth in the coming months. According to the latest World Economic Outlook, 3% growth is expected in 2019² due, in part, to successful economic diversification. Out of the 63 centres ranked for the IMD World Competitiveness Centre, Dubai secured a 10th place spot, further cementing its powerhouse status among other developing markets. It's not surprising that the majority of CEOs are feeling confident about growth prospects: 89% expected to achieve growth over the next 12 months.

Over the last 15 years, the fastest growing sectors within the UAE have been hospitality and retail. According to the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, retail is expected to exceed a US\$71 billion sales turnover by 2021, despite the introduction of VAT. The UAE continues to see strong demand from international brands that are looking to open retail outlets, pushing the region into position as the seventh most popular destination for retail expansion.

This increasingly competitive marketplace is shaping workforce options for professionals today. Over half (51%) of business leaders in Dubai and 45% of those in Abu Dhabi say that this is their primary concern in the evolution of the world of work. The speed at which the economy is growing has become a concern for 37% of organisations, which struggle to find qualified talent to help them remain competitive.

² UAE's economic growth to pick up pace from 2019, Gulf News Economy, 2 May, 2018

The hospitality industry continues to go from strength to strength in the lead-up to Expo 2020. In relation to seven other key global cities, Dubai boasts the highest average spend per overnight visitor and is predicted to continue strong and sustained growth, according to the Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing. Hiring within the sector has seen marked improvement, with employment growing by 119% in the last 10 years and accounting for 4.8% of total employment.

The rise of AI and automation

The Middle East³ is not exempt from the impact of AI. It's thought that 2% of the total global benefits of AI will go to organisations in the Middle East – this is the equivalent of US\$320 billion. Annual growth in AI's contribution to the economy will range between 20% and 30%, with the UAE seeing the fastest growth.

The prevalence of AI and automation within workplaces is starting to affect approaches to hiring. Almost a third (31%) of UAE business leaders stated that the evolution of the world of work was something they were concerned about. This was followed by concerns around the implementation of automation, which affected 29% of leaders.

It is predicted that more than 80% of jobs will be affected by automation by 2021⁴. These include roles within human resources, transport and legal services where automation will be able to complete repetitive, manual work and free up capability for more value-added tasks. Despite this, few businesses are able to find the digital skills needed to successfully implement, launch and maintain AI or automation initiatives.

To counter the issue, organisations within the Middle East are attempting to attract more digital talent through a range of workplace initiatives, such as work environment modernisation (86%), training and development (81%) and improved compensation packages (79%). The hiring focus has shifted to soft skills such as collaboration, communication and adaptability, which complement the automation of processes.

War for talent

To achieve the projected growth that CEOs are hoping for, they'll need to fill their ranks with digitally skilled professionals. This is made challenging by the ongoing war for talent. Almost half (49%) of organisations within the UAE said they found it significantly challenging to find qualified professionals. Because of this, they face reduced productivity (31%), limited business

³ The potential impact of Artificial Intelligence in the Middle East, PwC

⁴ Business leaders unprepared for digital transformation, expert says, The National, April 2018

growth (23%) and low team morale (20%). When asked, over a third (39%) of business leaders cited talent management as a top concern for the year.

To combat these concerns, hiring managers are relying on the promotion of company culture and demonstrations of their working environments to attract top talent. Almost a fifth (19%) of organisations admitted to raising the base-level salary for eight out of 10 new hires in an attempt to secure their first choice – typically experienced candidates who meet technical skill requirements.

Hiring times also play an important factor in securing dream candidates – many of whom expect to be contacted within 1–2 weeks and will take a second-choice job if the offer is delivered more quickly. Retention initiatives now focus on increasing benefits and introducing flexible working as a means of keeping existing talent happy and productive.

Training and development

Training has an important part to play in employee satisfaction. A majority (86%) of employers say they feel candidates are likely to walk away from an organisation that is unable to provide them with their requested training. For this reason, it has become the third most employed tactic within retention initiatives and is used by 36% of businesses.

Training can provide businesses with a solution to the war for talent. Digital upskilling is also beneficial as companies launch digital transformation projects and will help ensure that teams have the skills they need to work alongside technology for maximum output. These skills and competencies are being assessed through a blend of self-assessment, colleague feedback and skill audits.

TOP CONCERNS FOR UAE MANAGERS IN 2019



39%

Talent
management



37%

The economic
climate



33%

Globalisation



31%

The evolving world
of work



29%

The implementation
of automation

REMUNERATION TRENDS

The trend for remuneration packages in the UAE is to keep them relatively streamlined. Flexible working continues to be an attractive benefit to employees and – due to workplace digitisation initiatives – is becoming far easier for employers to offer.

Compared with five years ago, 90% of employers believe that candidates are more demanding when it comes to their remuneration packages. Research shows that candidates now expect a higher base salary than what is offered, along with a higher bonus and flexible working hours, although these expectations can't always be matched in reality. For more junior roles, training and development are the most desired job benefits.

Although many businesses feel they need professionals with more tailored skill sets, they aren't always able to offer salaries that are competitive enough. This has led to businesses only offering increased salaries to candidates with must-have skills, rather than those with skills that are considered nice to have. When asked, UAE business leaders stated they would raise the base salary for candidates with excellent technical skills (58%), relevant role experience (55%) and relevant industry experience (46%).

When looking at pay rises for existing employees, research suggests they are awarded based on merit (28%) or are typically awarded to professionals who explicitly ask for them (30%).



For advice on your specific hiring needs,
please contact us via our [website](#) or call:
+971 4 382 6700.

HOW OUR SALARIES ARE CALCULATED

Each year, employers use our salary guide to set remuneration levels for new hires, plan budgets and better understand the hiring environment. Professionals also look at the research to determine appropriate salary and benefits against industry averages and to identify new opportunities for career advancement.

The salary figures in this 2019 edition are based on a number of sources, most notably the significant number of placements our recruiting professionals make each year. Our experts interact with hiring managers and candidates daily, which gives us unique, real-world insights into the latest salary and benefits trends.

The projected salaries for each position reflect starting pay only. Bonuses and other forms of reward, such as expatriate incentives and benefits plans, are not taken into account. We recognise that salary ranges may vary by industry and are influenced by hard-to-find skill sets. Please speak with one of our consultants to discuss specific factors affecting your sector.



5 months

for a new hire to
successfully get up to
speed in a new role.



ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

Accounting and finance hiring climate

Confidence is returning to the hiring landscape in the countdown to Expo 2020, causing employment to trend upwards. Because of this, the leisure, hospitality and entertainment sectors have seen the strongest growth – a trend likely to continue over the coming year. Other industries experiencing growth are construction, oil and gas, healthcare, education and professional services.

VAT implementation had a strong impact on the finance and accounting landscape in 2018 and will continue to do so into the future. The complexity of the job has increased due to tax compliance requirements, which have pushed up demand for accounting and compliance roles. The war for talent makes securing top performers challenging, and demand for mid-level candidates (5–7 years' experience) has now risen.

Automation is predicted to affect accounting and finance roles, and hiring is trending more towards a search for soft skills to complement the new way of working. These include resilience, adaptability and excellent communication. The introduction of automation is prompting a shift towards an increase in strategic and analytics roles, with the most prominent of these being financial forecasting and financial analysis.

CFOs based in the UAE state they feel automation will have a noticeable effect on finance team dynamics: 73% say it will increase collaboration, 67% think it will lead to more effective communication and 57% say it will enhance team spirit. Automation's ability to remove repetitive, time-consuming tasks may be at the root of this positive outlook.

Salary trends

While salaries are rising, some UAE businesses are struggling to move beyond their existing salary bandings. This is especially true for larger organisations. The most popular course of action is to award pay rises to upto 5% of the finance department.

Salaries are staying relatively stable, but as a transient market, Dubai continues to see an influx of new candidates moving to the region. In a bid to attract quality talent, CFOs are focussing on creating more comprehensive, competitive remuneration packages by flexing the benefits and perks they offer.

The offer of flexible working has become a remuneration staple for almost every industry. Candidates have come to expect this benefit as standard and will typically request it if they find it hasn't been offered. Employers are now introducing the option to work from home, or to work to compressed office hours and flexible schedules.



SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS IN DEMAND

- ACCA/CIMA/ACA newly qualified (≤ 5 years' experience)
- ACCA/CIMA/ACA part-qualified
- ERP experience
- Bilingual language skills – Arabic and English
- Effective communication skills



ROLES IN DEMAND

- Finance director
- Financial planning and analysis managers
- Financial analysts
- Financial controller/finance managers
- Management/financial accountants



ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE SALARIES



ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE SALARIES

TITLE	COMPANY SIZE	US\$ MIN	US\$ MAX
Chief Financial Officer	SME	196,100	451,400
	Large Company	228,900	572,200
Finance Director	SME	183,500	228,800
	Large Company	196,200	402,800
Financial Controller	SME	98,000	163,500
	Large Company	140,500	204,300
Chief Accountant	SME	98,000	130,000
	Large Company	110,000	140,000
Financial Planning and Analysis Director	SME	130,800	197,900
	Large Company	154,500	217,800
Financial Planning and Analysis Manager	SME	82,200	123,500
	Large Company	98,000	147,300
Treasury Director	SME	163,500	245,200
	Large Company	196,200	261,600
Treasurer	SME	129,300	173,300
	Large Company	147,100	222,300
Finance Manager	SME	103,000	165,000
	Large Company	98,100	194,500

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE SALARIES

TITLE	COMPANY SIZE	USS MIN	USS MAX
Tax Director	SME	115,500	265,100
	Large Company	137,500	294,300
Tax Manager	SME	92,300	115,200
	Large Company	92,000	141,000
Senior Tax Associate	SME	66,500	75,500
	Large Company	71,200	91,500
Financial Analyst	SME	49,500	93,000
	Large Company	65,400	98,000
Compliance Director	SME	114,500	147,300
	Large Company	130,800	196,200
Compliance Manager	SME	83,500	114,200
	Large Company	106,500	124,200
Audit Manager	SME	136,500	212,500
	Large Company	140,500	255,000
Senior Internal Auditor	SME	81,800	130,800
	Large Company	88,200	147,300
Internal Auditor	SME	57,800	75,300
	Large Company	65,500	81,800

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE SALARIES

TITLE	COMPANY SIZE	US\$ MIN	US\$ MAX
Management Accountant >5 years' experience	SME	90,000	117,800
	Large Company	78,700	128,700
Management Accountant <5 years' experience	SME	63,500	105,000
	Large Company	73,200	98,000
Payroll Manager	SME	78,300	105,000
	Large Company	86,700	117,800
Credit Manager	SME	80,000	111,300
	Large Company	88,200	120,300
Credit Controller	SME	52,200	65,500
	Large Company	57,300	72,000
General Ledger Accountant >5 years' experience	SME	88,200	121,500
	Large Company	90,000	127,500
General Ledger Accountant <5 years' experience	SME	70,200	96,500
	Large Company	74,500	106,000
AP/AR Manager	SME	75,000	117,300
	Large Company	81,300	124,200
AP/AR Accountant	SME	35,000	72,000
	Large Company	40,000	78,500



FINANCIAL SERVICES

Financial services hiring climate

The financial services sector in the UAE has undergone drastic changes in recent months. The implementation of IFRS 9, VAT and Basel III have forced an emerging market to completely overhaul processes and systems in order to remain compliant.

The implementation of IFRS 9 in January 2018 has presented the Middle East with a far greater challenge than other global regions. As an emerging market, a lack of established systems makes reliable data harder to come by. A recent IFRS banking survey has shown that almost half of banks feel they don't have the technical resources needed to successfully complete projects.

The global Basel III regulatory framework has increased demand for compliance professionals and prompted those within the banking industry to ensure all managers are adequately trained. The introduction of capital adequacy regulations in February 2017 also prompted closer attention to roles that support risk and capital management.

In light of new standards, frameworks and regulations, demand has increased for senior executives with a strong understanding of technical statutory and regulatory standards. Demand for compliance managers is also strong, ranking in the top five most wanted roles for the sector. Employers are looking for

professionals who have experience or technical knowledge of IFRS 9 and Basel III, alongside strong commercial and business acumen.

The UAE has embraced the concept of FinTech in the last year, prompting more investment in the sector. The number of FinTech start-ups in the region has grown and businesses are turning to innovation as a means to support rapid growth. A global FinTech report⁵ has shown that 77% of businesses expect to adopt blockchain in the next five years – a move that will shake up roles within the banking and finance sector considerably. The cryptocurrency regulation framework launch in the Abu Dhabi RegTech sector will require talent specialising in assessing the risks associated with crypto activities, such as financial crime, exchange operations, consumer protection and money laundering.

Salary trends

Vacancies are increasing in the financial services sector, exacerbating the ongoing war for talent. The flow of quality candidates is constricted as salaries reach base level and VAT raises the cost of living. Because of this, mid-to-senior level candidates are receiving the highest salary rises. Recruitment experts suggest that the talent shortage can be counteracted by reducing hiring times and ensuring that remuneration packages are as competitive as possible.

⁵ Redrawing the lines: FinTech's growing influence on Financial Services, PwC



SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS IN DEMAND

- ACA/CFA/MBA qualified
- Strong commercial awareness/business acumen
- DFSA authorised
- IFRS 9, Basel III, AML/KYC exposure



ROLES IN DEMAND

- Compliance manager
- Commercial accountant
- Investor relations/business development/fundraising professionals
- Investment banking/M&A associates
- EFX and online FX sales managers



**FINANCIAL
SERVICES
SALARIES**

	TITLE	USS MIN	USS MAX
Private equity and asset management	Director	245,200	310,600
	Vice President	196,200	245,200
	Senior Associate	114,400	179,800
	Associate	98,100	114,400
	Analyst	58,900	81,700
M&A and investment banking advisory	Managing Director	271,400	400,100
	Director	238,700	322,100
	Vice President	160,200	235,900
	Associate	114,600	192,100
	Analyst	58,900	106,800
Governance, risk, and compliance	Head of Compliance	153,700	327,000
	Compliance Manager	114,400	189,600
	Compliance Officer (Onshore)	58,900	94,800
	Compliance Officer (Offshore)	91,600	127,500
	Anti-Money Laundering Specialist	71,900	122,600
	KYC/CDD Manager	71,900	98,100
	KYC/CDD Officer	45,800	62,100
	Chief Risk Officer	294,300	490,500
	Head of Risk Management	163,500	261,600
	Credit Risk Manager	81,700	179,800
	Market Risk Manager	98,100	189,600
	Operational Risk Manager	98,100	156,900
	Risk Analyst	58,800	91,600

FINANCIAL SERVICES SALARIES

	TITLE	USS MIN	USS MAX
Finance and accounting	Chief Financial Officer	277,900	457,800
*For additional finance and accounting roles, please see page 13.	Finance Director	147,100	245,200
	Financial Planning and Analysis	145,200	228,900
	Financial Controller	147,100	238,700
Transaction and wholesale banking	Head of Corporate/FI Banking	295,000	515,000
	Senior Corporate/FI Relationship Manager	145,000	180,000
	Corporate/FI Relationship Manager	99,000	153,000
Global markets (FX, Equities and FICC)	Head of Trading/Portfolio Management	228,800	376,000
	Senior Portfolio Manager	147,100	212,500
	Portfolio Manager	98,100	147,100
	Analyst	58,900	107,900
	Head of FX sales	140,600	196,200
	FX Sales Manager	98,000	124,300
	FX Sales	58,800	91,600
Insurance and reinsurance underwriting	Underwriting Assistant	39,200	55,600
	Assistant Underwriter	49,000	65,400
	Business Development Manager	49,000	98,000
	Underwriter	49,000	196,200
	Head of Underwriting	130,800	294,300

**FINANCIAL
SERVICES
SALARIES**

	TITLE	USS MIN	USS MAX
Insurance and reinsurance broking	Broker Technician	32,700	49,000
	Business Development Manager	65,400	130,800
	Head of Broking	130,800	294,300
Insurance and reinsurance claims	Claims Assistant	32,700	49,000
	Claims Handler	49,000	65,400
	Claims Manager	65,400	130,800
Insurance and reinsurance operations	Customer Services	32,700	49,000
	Operations Assistant	39,200	55,600
	Operations Team Leader	58,900	65,400
	Business Analyst	65,400	81,700
	Actuary	98,100	228,900



TECHNOLOGY

Technology hiring climate

Technology and digitisation continue to drive economic evolution. The UAE has spearheaded the global AI movement and is predicted to generate US\$1.4 billion through this market by 2025⁶. The GCC is also starting to embrace platforms that enable the Internet of Things (IoT) and will be increasing its use over the coming year to enrich both industry and civil life. In order to capitalise on recent successes and remain digital leaders, UAE businesses will need to press ahead with transformation projects, the development of governance and investment in talent. UAE business leaders have suggested that digital transformation roles will take precedence in most hiring strategies in 2019.

As traditional servers are exchanged for data centres and shared service operations, business leaders are expected to begin hiring senior project management professionals. Those with managerial skills will be the most sought after. The retail market has also seen significant growth recently and has forced e-commerce businesses to become much more competitive. For this reason, demand by UAE businesses for CRM and customer experience professionals is on the rise.

The threat of ransomware is a cause for concern in the UAE. The country registered 2.4 million of the 1.7 billion global attacks in the first quarter of 2018⁷. This is due, in part, to digitisation and modernisation plans, which are helping to diversify the economy.

⁶Statista

⁷Cyber security is paramount in GCC's digital transformation, Times of Oman, June 2018

Spending on information security has increased, despite Dubai's new cybersecurity strategy and Saudi Arabia's National Authority for Cyber Security. Businesses are reacting to the threat by hiring individuals with infrastructure and security knowledge.

Salary trends

Hiring for technology departments is a focus for UAE businesses. Irrespective of this, many of them are offering salaries too low to attract top-performing talent. To secure professionals with the critical/niche skills needed to fulfil transformation and security projects, hiring managers need to revise the competitiveness of their salary and benefits packages.

The roles most in demand are managerial, and the majority of businesses are looking to secure professionals with proven experience in project delivery. AI is causing hiring managers to test candidates for excellent communication skills that complement the automation of the workplace. Candidates who are Western educated are also sought after and are typically being awarded the highest salaries.



SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS IN DEMAND

- Core infrastructure
- Management and leadership skills
- Effective stakeholder communications skills
- Digital transformation experience
- Cloud/AWS/Azure certification



ROLES IN DEMAND

- Project managers
- Infrastructure managers
- CRM/customer experience managers
- AX functional consultants
- Mid-level application support professionals



TECHNOLOGY SALARIES



TECHNOLOGY SALARIES

	TITLE	US\$ MIN	US\$ MAX
Leadership	Chief Information Officer	196,200	343,300
	Chief Technology Officer	165,900	320,200
	Chief Digital Officer	170,800	278,900
	Chief Information Security Officer	155,300	277,900
	Chief Architect	160,200	228,900
	Information Technology Manager >10 years' experience	105,000	163,500
	Information Technology Manager <10 years' experience	71,900	130,800
IT security	Security Engineer	82,000	130,200
	Security Analyst	55,600	114,400
Applications	Development Manager	98,100	162,900
	Applications Developer	52,300	125,100
	Techno Functional Consultant	75,200	117,700
	Data Manager	130,800	212,500
	Data Analyst	52,300	91,600
Business analysis and project management	Business Systems Manager	114,400	157,900
	Business Systems Analyst	55,600	135,700
	Business Intelligence Manager	114,400	164,500
	Business Intelligence Specialist	77,700	114,400
	Project Management Officer Head	130,800	179,800
	Project/Programme Manager	91,600	138,100
	IT Business Partner	111,200	163,900

TECHNOLOGY SALARIES

	TITLE	USS MIN	USS MAX
Systems administration	Systems Analyst	46,600	108,800
	Systems Administrator	46,600	78,500
	Technical Support Specialist	52,700	90,000
	Database Administrator	46,600	94,800
Architecture	Enterprise Architect	130,800	196,200
Networking	Network Architect	130,800	169,600
	Network Manager	81,700	147,000
	Network Engineer	62,200	104,600
	Network Administrator	59,100	91,600



HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION



Human resources and administration hiring climate

The UAE continues to top the list of emerging global HR hubs. HR technologies, multicultural workspaces and increased automation are helping them lead best practice globally. There is a rise in the number of businesses using technology to assist HR teams in automating processes and enhancing workplace experiences. Strong economic growth and a continual evolution towards a forward-thinking digital economy has positioned talent acquisition and retention as a main concern for businesses. HR teams are the driving force behind the success of these initiatives.

In 2017, almost two-thirds (64%) of UAE businesses reported cases of employee burnout. Many business leaders said they believed that an always-on employee mentality was the cause. Because of this, renewed focus is being given to employee wellness initiatives, supported by HR teams. This includes work-life balance improvement via flexible working and establishing an employee-first wellness culture.

The cost of living has increased with the introduction of VAT, causing businesses to struggle to retain professionals within the region. HR teams are now responsible for reviewing and streamlining remuneration packages, while maintaining their competitive edge.

Businesses are favouring professionals with GCC and industry experience but appear to be finding most HR and administrative roles a challenge to hire for. A third of businesses find customer service roles difficult to fill, followed by HR analysts and project administrative support.

Hiring plans are slowing but businesses are continuing to rely on HR professionals to fill vacant roles with candidates who typically have 4–5 years' experience. Finding an experienced HR professional to head up the team and lead this initiative is a top priority for UAE businesses.

Salary trends

A rise in innovation/growth business projects has caused high demand for administration and office support professionals. The highest salaries are offered to bilingual candidates with Arabic- and English-speaking capabilities, and those with a Western degree or experience. [Human resources and administrative professionals](#) are typically awarded performance-based bonuses as part of their standard remuneration package, and they value flexible working.



SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS IN DEMAND

- CIPD qualified
- Relevant region/local experience
- Bilingual (English and Arabic)
- Western degree/education



ROLES IN DEMAND

- HR business partner
- Director/heads of HR
- Legal secretary
- Personal assistant/executive assistants
- Office managers



HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION SALARIES



HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION SALARIES

	TITLE	USS MIN	USS MAX
Human resources	HR Director	163,500	255,000
	Head of HR	114,400	147,100
	Regional HR Manager	81,700	114,600
	HR Manager/HRBP	65,400	98,000
	Senior HR Officer/Junior HRBP	45,300	65,400
	HR Officer	30,700	49,000
Recruitment	Head of Recruitment	126,500	147,100
	Recruitment Manager	65,300	98,100
	Recruitment Specialist	39,200	58,900
Learning and development	Head of Learning and Development	130,500	147,100
	Talent/Organisational Development Manager	124,200	130,800
	Learning and Development Manager	76,800	81,700
Compensation and benefits human resources	Head of Compensation and Benefits	147,100	163,500
	Compensation and Benefits Manager	81,700	98,100
	HR Analytics/Rewards Analyst	42,500	49,000
Administration	Executive Assistant	65,400	98,000
	Personal Assistant	49,000	65,400
	Office Manager	65,400	81,700

Please note salaries vary based on sector and coverage with banking, financial services, government, established family businesses and global coverage roles paying slightly higher than market rate.



LEGAL

Legal hiring climate

Law firms are steadily hiring to firm up their core practice areas, and demand is beginning to outstrip supply as the number of professionals looking to move to new roles has decreased.

In-demand professionals are seeing greater potential for work-life balance and are being attracted to new opportunities, so are considering moving from [private practice to in-house positions](#).

Due to the rise in corporate mergers and acquisitions within the region, demand for mid to senior associate level M&A lawyers has grown in demand over the past 12 months – a trend that is expected to continue. Technology, media and telecommunications law practice is also seeing an increase in demand, mainly due to the rise of cryptocurrency and blockchain implementation within the Middle East. As businesses' reliance on technology increases globally, the demand for legal professionals with specialist experience in these areas is expected to grow exponentially.

Within private equity and financial services, firms are preferring in-house counsel for the local knowledge they can offer over private practice firms or relying on legal teams based in international markets. The local knowledge and experience with Dubai Financial Services Authority regulations and hands-on experience working with Dubai International Finance Centre courts is in demand.

Government and semi-government entities both in Dubai and in Abu Dhabi are seeing a steady requirement for legal and general counsel. In general, these are mid-level counsel with corporate commercial experience and lawyers with 3–5 years' post-qualified experience. Paralegals who are Western educated and bilingual are growing in demand as in-house legal departments within multinationals require support in translating and understanding local contract negotiations.

In common with earlier years, demand for banking and finance lawyers as well as litigation specialists remains strong.

Salary trends

While salaries have seen a slight rise in the last 12 months, due to the influx of strong expat talent moving to the region, private practice firms need to consistently benchmark their remuneration packages at the current market rate. Professionals seeking new opportunities within private practice can anticipate a minimum salary increase of 5%.



SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS IN DEMAND

- M&A expertise
- Relevant region/local experience
- Bilingual (English and Arabic)
- Western degree/education



ROLES IN DEMAND

- Mid-to-senior level associates
- Paralegals
- In-house corporate counsel



LEGAL SALARIES

LEGAL SALARIES

	TITLE	US\$ MIN	US\$ MAX
Private practice	Managing Partner/Senior Partner	275,000	400,000
	Partner	210,500	300,000
	Senior Associate	160,000	250,000
	Associate	80,500	175,000
	Junior Associate	55,000	100,000
	Knowledge Manager	63,000	120,000
	Paralegal	40,000	100,000
In-house	Chief Legal Officer/Head of Legal/General Counsel	260,000	425,000
	Regional Legal Counsel	212,500	229,000
	Legal Manager	150,500	204,500
	Legal Counsel 6–9 years' experience	163,500	220,500
	Legal Counsel 3–5 years' experience	89,000	155,500
	Legal Counsel 0–2 years' experience	65,500	98,000
	Paralegal	64,000	91,500
	Legal Assistant	46,000	65,000

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

When salaries remain tight and relatively inflexible, job benefits become paramount in attracting top-performing talent. The trend for UAE businesses is to streamline remuneration packages, while retaining the competitive edge that is crucial in attracting and retaining talent.

Flexible working options remain a most-wanted benefit for the majority of candidates – this is true even for those coming in at an entry level position. The modernisation of workplaces has allowed for flexible working in most cases. Employees are able to use software programs and platforms to work from home in order to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Employers are also offering flexible working in the form of condensed working hours and negotiable schedules.

Flexible working options remain the most-wanted benefit for the majority of candidates



Work from home



Condensed working hours



Negotiable schedules

Top additional benefits

Aside from better bonus options and a higher salary, research shows that candidates are expecting additional annual leave, equity/profit-sharing options, financial support for relocation and childcare benefits. The latter two are particularly important in attracting top performers from overseas to fill the digital skills shortage in the UAE hiring market.



34%
Additional annual leave



32%
Equity/profit sharing



23%
Support for relocation



13%
Childcare benefits

ABOUT ROBERT HALF

Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialised recruitment consultancy and a member of the S&P 500. Founded in 1948, the company has over 300 offices worldwide providing recruitment solutions for accounting and finance, financial services, technology, legal, human resources and administrative professionals.

Robert Half is also the parent company of Protiviti, a global business-consulting firm that helps companies solve problems in finance, technology, operations, governance, risk and internal audit.

Research methodology

The starting salary figures are based on a number of sources, most notably the thousands of placements our recruiting professionals make each year. Our experts interact with hiring managers and candidates daily, which gives us unique, real-world insights into the latest salary and benefits trends.

The figures shown are representative of the national average. Robert Half recommends that employers complete their remuneration package offering by factoring in other benefits and incentives.

This report is based on annual studies developed by Robert Half UAE and conducted by an independent research firm. The study is based on more than 200 interviews with CFOs and 300 responses from hiring managers across the UAE. The results are segmented by size, sector and geographic location.



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