Academic Affairs

MBZUAI Admission policy

MBZUAI-AF-ADM- POL-V1

Effective Date: 3/3/2024

Table of Contents

1. Document Control Information

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Policy Review

Person responsible	Workflow	Date
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2. Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
CGPA	The cumulative grade point average is calculated by dividing the sum of the quality points earned in all terms and semesters by the credit hours attempted in all those terms and semesters. This average is used to assess the student's overall academic standing at the university.
Course	A unit of study that may utilize lecture, discussion, laboratory, recitation, seminar, workshop, studio, independent study, internship, or other similar teaching formats to facilitate learning for a student.
Credit	Number (#) of credit a student receives for attending a course which corresponds to the hours per week spent in that course.
EmSAT	The Emirates Standardized Test (EmSAT) is a national system of standardized computer-based tests, based on United Arab Emirates national standards.
Grade Point	The numerical value associated with each grade.

Graduate Record Examination	The graduate record examination (GRE) is a standardized exam used to measure one's aptitude for abstract thinking in the areas of analytical writing, mathematics, and vocabulary.
IELTS	The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) measures the language proficiency of people who want to study or work where English is used as a language of communication.
Schedule	A list of courses offered during a semester that specifies the days, hours, locations of classes and the names of the instructors.
Semester	Either of the two 16- week periods of instruction followed by an examination period into which the academic year is divided.
Supervisor	The person who advises a student about course registration and supervises the student's research.
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a standardized test to measure the English language ability of non-native speakers wishing to enroll in English-speaking universities.

3. Introduction

This policy describes the requirements and principles governing admission to academic programs at MBZUAI.

4. Objective

This policy aims to:
- Provide guidance to prospective students on the criteria for admission to programs at MBZUAI and information pertaining to scholarships**.**

5. Scope

This policy applies to:
- All credit-bearing graduate programs offered by MBZUAI.
- All students, faculty, and staff.
- The MBZUAI Student Careers team, students, and alumni of MBZUAI, MBZUAI staff, and employers hosting MBZUAI interns or recruiting MBZUAI students and alumni.

6. MBZUAI Admission Policy

6.1. Admission – Masters Programs

6.1.1. To be considered for admission to a Master of Science program at MBZUAI an applicant must provide evidence of the following:

o A completed bachelor's degree in a STEM field such as Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Mathematics, Physics or other relevant Science or Engineering major.

OR

o Academically Distinguished Student Portfolio
Bachelor's degree in a STEM field, plus each applicant must submit evidence including, but not limited to, the following:
- Research Capability & Output.
- Technical Skills.
- Graduation from a highly ranked university.
- Minimum CGPA 3.0/4.0 or equivalent.

6.1.2   Applicants must provide their complete degree certificates and transcripts (in English) when submitting their application. Senior-level students can apply initially with a copy of their transcript and must submit an official complete degree certificate/transcript upon admission.

Department	Academic Affairs	Approval Date	03/03/2024
Policy Number	MBZUAI-AF-ADM- POL-V1	Revision Date	03/03/2026
Policy	MBZUAI Admission policy	Policy Owner	Head of Admission

6.1.3   Knowledge, skills and competencies in the following areas:

- Programming skills such as Python, C, C++, or MatLab.
- Math skills such as:
  - Data Structures and Algorithms.
  - Linear Algebra.
  - Probability and Statistics.
  - Calculus

6.1.4 A minimum undergraduate CGPA of 3.2 or equivalent (on a 4.0 scale).

6.1.5 An English Language Proficiency Certificate which must remain valid during the application process. Minimum requirements are:

- TOEFL iBT with a minimum total score of 90, or
- IELTS Academic with a minimum overall score of 6.5, or
- EmSAT English with a minimum total score of 1550.
- Waiver requests from applicants who undertook all their schooling (K-12) plus a bachelor's degree in English in a reference English speaking country (e.g., UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand) may be processed in accordance with the Admission Procedure.
- Applicants must submit notarized copies of their documents during the application stage and attested documents upon admission. Waiver decisions will be given within seven days after receiving all requirements.

6.1.6 A minimum of two letters of recommendation from mentors, supervisors, or others with good knowledge of the applicant's qualifications are mandatory; at least one should be from a previous course instructor or faculty/research advisor and one from a current or previous work supervisor.

6.1.7 Selected applicants will be invited to participate in an entry exam to assess their knowledge and skills:

- Math and programming for CV, ML, and NLP
- Math, programming**,** and machine learning for CS and Robotics

6.1.8 A Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Score may be optionally submitted.

6.1.9   Statement of Purpose: In a 500-to-1,000-word essay, the applicant should present his/her motivation for applying to the university. It may include information regarding the applicant's personal and academic background as well as his/her chosen career path, goals as a prospective student, graduation plans, and other details that will support the application.

6.1.10 All applications for admission to Master of Science programs must be submitted online, providing all required documentation.

Related: [Admission Procedure](#)

Department	Academic Affairs	Approval Date	03/03/2024
Policy Number	MBZUAI-AF-ADM- POL-V1	Revision Date	03/03/2026
Policy	MBZUAI Admission policy	Policy Owner	Head of Admission

6.2. Admission –PhD Programs

6.2.1 To be considered for admission to a PhD program at MBZUAI an applicant must provide evidence of the following:

6.2.2 For CV, ML, NLP**,** and Robotics, a Completed Degree - either:

- Bachelor's degree in a STEM field such as Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Mathematics, Physics, or other relevant Science or Engineering major which demonstrates academic distinction in a discipline appropriate for the doctoral degree. Students should have a CGPA of at least 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) or equivalent and valid Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores of at least 150 (Verbal Reasoning), 150 (Quantitative Reasoning) and 3 (Analytical Writing). Note, the GRE can be waived if the applicant is an academically distinguished student, as specified below.

OR

- Master's degree in a STEM field such as Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Mathematics, Physics, or other relevant Science or Engineering majors Students should have a minimum CGPA of 3.2 or equivalent (on a 4.0 scale). The GRE submission is optional for applicants with both Bachelor's and Master's degrees, although submitting a GRE will be considered a plus during the evaluation.

OR

- Academically Distinguished Student Portfolio

  - Bachelor's degree in a STEM field appropriate for the doctoral degree or Bachelor's and Master's degrees in a STEM field,

  Each applicant must submit evidence including, but not limited to, the following:
  - Research Capability & Output.
  - Technical Skills.
  - Graduation from a highly ranked university.
  - Minimum CGPA 3.0/ 4.0 or equivalent.

  The GRE submission is optional for applications via the Academically Distinguished Student Portfolio pathway, although submitting a GRE will be considered a plus during the evaluation.

6.2.3 For Computer Science, a Completed Degree in Computer Science either:
- Bachelor's degree in Computer Science with a minimum of 50% Computer Science content. Students should have a strong background in both applied and theoretical aspects of computer science with a CGPA of at least 3.5 or equivalent (on a 4.0 scale)

or equivalent and valid Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores of at least 150 (Verbal Reasoning), 150 (Quantitative Reasoning) and 3 (Analytical Writing). Note, the GRE can be waived if the applicant is an academically distinguished student, as specified below.

OR

- Master's degree in Computer Science which demonstrates academic distinction. Students should have a strong background in both applied and theoretical aspects of computer science with a minimum CGPA of 3.2 or equivalent (on a 4.0 scale). The GRE submission is optional for applicants with both bachelor's and master's degrees although submitting a GRE will be considered a plus during the evaluation.

OR

- Academically Distinguished Student Portfolio
  Bachelor's degree in Computer science with a minimum of 50% Computer Science content, or
  Bachelor's and Master's degrees in computer science, plus each applicant must submit evidence including, but not limited to, the following:
    - Research Capability & Output.
    - Technical Skills.
    - Graduation from a highly ranked university.
    - Minimum CGPA 3.0/ 4.0 or equivalent.

  The GRE submission is optional for applications via the Academically Distinguished Student Portfolio pathway, although submitting a GRE will be considered a plus during the evaluation.

6.2.4 Applicants must provide their complete degree certificates and transcripts (in English) when submitting their application. Senior students can apply initially with a copy of their transcript and, upon admission, must submit an official complete degree certificate/transcript.

6.2.5 Knowledge & Competencies: Demonstrate evidence of skills acquired in the following areas:
- Programming skills such as Python, C, or C++.
- Math skills such as:
    - Data Structures and Algorithms.
    - Linear Algebra.
    - Probability and Statistics.
    - Calculus.

6.2.6 Knowledge of basic machine learning algorithms such as linear regression, decision trees, and support vector machines.

6.2.7 English Language Proficiency Certificate (for applications submitted from Fall 2021 intake onwards). Minimum requirements are:
- TOEFL iBT with a minimum total score of 90; or
- IELTS Academic with a minimum overall score of 6.5 or

Department	Academic Affairs	Approval Date	03/03/2024
Policy Number	MBZUAI-AF-ADM- POL-V1	Revision Date	03/03/2026
Policy	MBZUAI Admission policy	Policy Owner	Head of Admission

- EmSAT English with a minimum total score of 1550.
- TOEFL iBT, IELTS Academic and EmSAT certificates should be valid during the application process.
- Waiver requests from applicants who undertook all their schooling (K-12) plus a Bachelor's degree and/or a Master's degree, as applicable, in English in a reference English speaking country (e.g., UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand) may be processed in accordance with the Admission Procedure.

6.2.8   Applicants must submit notarized copies of their documents during the application stage and attested documents upon admission. Waiver decisions will be given within seven days after receiving all requirements.

6.2.9   Three (3) letters of recommendation from mentors, supervisors, or others with good knowledge of the applicant's qualifications are mandatory. At least one letter should be from a previous course instructor or faculty/research advisor, and one from a current or previous work supervisor.

6.2.10   Selected applicants will be invited to participate in an entry exam to assess their knowledge and skills in Math, programming and Machine learning.

6.2.11   Statement of Purpose: In a 500 to 1,000-word essay, the applicant should present his/her motivation for applying to the university. It may include information regarding the applicant's personal and academic background as well as his/her chosen career path, goals as a prospective student, graduation plans, and other details that will support the application.

6.2.12   Research Statement: a 1–3-page document that provides a high-level overview of the applicant's past research experience and the research he/she is interested in working on, including his/her motivation for wanting to investigate this area. Note that applicants are expected to write a research statement completely independently. The admission committee will review an applicant's research statement and use it as one of the measures to determine if an applicant's interests and experience make them a good fit for MBZUAI's research programs. MBZUAI faculty will NOT help applicants write a research statement for the purpose of the application. It is recommended that the statement contains a few sections, including an introduction, literature review, problem definition, methods (optional), timeline, and a list of references.

6.2.13   All applications for admission to PhD programs must be submitted online, providing all required documentation.

6.3. Conditional and Provisional Admission

6.3.1   Master of Science applicants with a recognized Bachelor's degree and iBT TOEFL score of 71, or an overall academic IELTS score of 5.5, or an EmSAT English score of 1250 may be

Department	Academic Affairs	Approval Date	03/03/2024
Policy Number	MBZUAI-AF-ADM- POL-V1	Revision Date	03/03/2026
Policy	MBZUAI Admission policy	Policy Owner	Head of Admission

considered for conditional admission in special circumstances. Such a student must meet the following requirements by the end of their first registered semester or be subject to dismissal:

- obtain valid scores from standard exams of any of the following by the end of their first registered semester: TOEFL iBT with a minimum total score of 90, or IELTS Academic with a minimum overall score of 6.5, or EmSAT English with a minimum total score of 1550.

- Register for a maximum of six credit hours in the first semester of study and must achieve good academic standing on the registered courses.

6.3.2 Master of Science applicants with a recognized Bachelor's degree and a lower CGPA score (minimum 2.5 out of 4.0 or equivalent) may be granted provisional admission in special circumstances. Such a student must take a maximum of nine credit hours of courses studied for the graduate program during the period of conditional admission and must achieve good academic standing by the end of their first registered semester or be subject to dismissal.

6.4. Transfer Admission and Credit Transfer

6.4.1 MBZUAI does not accept transfer students.

6.4.2 Admitted students who wish to transfer credits should comply with the following:
- Only credits from a university accredited or recognized by the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) will be considered.
- The limit for the number of transfer credits that may be accepted for a specific degree program is 25% of total Credit Hours for MSc and PhD programs.
- Transfers will only be permitted for students in good academic standing and eligible to return to their current or former institution.
- MBZUAI will accept the transfer of credits only for courses relevant to the degree that provide equivalent learning outcomes and in which the student earned a grade of B (3.0 on a 4.0 scale) or better.
- The grade of the transfer credit course will be recorded as a "TC" on the transcript record. The approved transfer credits will be calculated towards the credit hours but not included in the GPA calculation.
- The course transfer credits may not have been used previously in any graduate program to fulfil the requirement of any other graduate degree.
- The course credits must have been completed no more than a maximum of (2) years prior to the student's acceptance into the MBZUAI program.

6.4.3 The MBZUAI Academic department will have the ultimate right to accept or reject transfer requests for any student.

Department	Academic Affairs	Approval Date	03/03/2024
Policy Number	MBZUAI-AF-ADM- POL-V1	Revision Date	03/03/2026
Policy	MBZUAI Admission policy	Policy Owner	Head of Admission

6.4.4 All applications for transfer credit to MSc or PhD programs must be submitted online, providing all required documentation**.**

6.5. Recognition of Prior Learning

6.5.1 MBZUAI does not recognize prior learning and does not award credit for informal and non-formal learning that has taken place prior to admission into its academic programs, other than the credit specified in the admission policy and associated procedures.

6.5.2 Prior learning in the form of professional certification, training programs, credit-bearing courses of non-accredited degrees, and other similar programs will not receive any credit towards academic degree programs.

6.6. Progression and Applicants for Second Degree

Progression
6.6.1 MBZUAI MSc students in their final university semester may apply for PhD studies by submitting their application through the online application portal within the application deadline specified in the Official Academic Calendar and meeting the program-specific requirements.

Applicants for a Second Degree
6.6.2 MBZUAI alumni applying for a second degree (MSc / PhD) must submit their application through the online application portal and meet the program-specific requirements to be considered for admission.

6.6.3 Holders of a degree awarded by MBZUAI are considered to have already satisfied the MBZUAI English language proficiency requirements.

6.7. Attestation and Certificate of Recognition

6.7.1 Applicants from universities accredited or recognized by the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) may be eligible for admission.

6.7.2 Admitted students must submit the following within their first semester at the university:

- Degree certificate and transcript attested by the MoE for those who completed their previous degree/s in the UAE.

- Authenticated degree certificate and transcript and a certificate of recognition from MoE for those with degree/s acquired outside the UAE. The authenticity of the academic documents may be obtained from the UAE Embassy in the country of study or through MoE's trusted

partners as mentioned on their website:
https://www.moe.gov.ae/En/EServices/ServiceCard/pages/UniversiyCertificateEquilization.aspx

6.8. Confidentiality and Privacy of Application Records

6.8.1 The admission team is responsible for maintaining the prospect's and applicant's electronic records in a system with restricted access to ensure their privacy and confidentiality in compliance with the related policies and regulations of MBZUAI.

6.8.2 MBZUAI will comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and standards in the Abu Dhabi and UAE emirates, governing the privacy and integrity of applicants' information.

7. Related Documents

Section	Related Document(s)
6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8	Admission Process

8. Version History

Version number	Person responsible	Date of change	Comments
V0.0	Head of Admissions	12 Oct 2023	Previously, the Admission policy was part of the Student Affairs Policy. It has been separated as it may need more regular updates due to the new programs planned.
V1.0	Head of Admissions	29 Nov 2023	Four new policies were added to address the MOE requirements and comply with the CAA standard