PEOPLE
OPPORTUNITIES
BRIGHTER
TOMORROWS

UAE UNIVERSITY APPLICATION GUIDE

Your Pathway to Opportunity in the UAE and Beyond

EXPLORE
PREPARE
APPLY
SUCCEED

A Brighter Future Starts Here

EXPLORE
UAE University options

PREPARE
A strong application

APPLY
With confidence

SUCCEED
Your future in the UAE and beyond

Studying at University in the UAE: A Guide for Students and Families

The UAE is home to a wide range of high-quality universities, offering both local and international qualifications. Whether you're aiming for an Emirati institution or a branch campus of a global university, there are exciting opportunities right here at home. This guide will help you explore your options and understand how to apply — from choosing the right university to preparing for student life in the UAE.

Why Choose the UAE?

- Internationally recognised degrees – Earn qualifications from top UK, US, Australian, or Indian universities right here in the UAE.
- World-class campuses – Study in state-of-the-art facilities in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and beyond.
- Cultural familiarity – For many students, staying close to home while gaining a quality education is a major benefit.
- Internships & career links – The UAE's growing economy offers strong connections between education and industry.
- Flexible options – Choose from local public universities, private institutions, and international branch campuses.

Types of Universities in the UAE.

The UAE offers a wide variety of universities, catering to different educational systems, languages, and career goals. Understanding the three main types of institutions can help you decide which path suits your needs best.

1. **Federal (Public) Emirati Universities**

These are government-funded universities primarily designed for Emirati citizens.
Key Institutions:

- United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) – Al Ain
- Zayed University – Abu Dhabi & Dubai
- Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) – Nationwide campuses

Pros:

- No tuition fees for Emirati nationals
- Arabic and English language programmes
- Strong focus on national development and public service careers

2. **Private UAE Universities**

These are locally established universities that operate under UAE regulations. They often follow international curricula (especially American or Canadian models) and attract both Emirati and international students.
Examples:

- American University in Dubai (AUD)
- American University of Sharjah (AUS)
- University of Sharjah
- Canadian University Dubai

Pros:

- Multinational student population
- Globally recognised degree programmes
- Flexible admissions and rolling intake in some cases

Things to Note:

- Tuition fees vary and can be high
- Check accreditation status internationally (CAA – Commission for Academic Accreditation)

3. **International Branch Campuses**

Many leading universities from the UK, US and Australia, have established campuses in the UAE are are KHDA/MOE accredited e.g.

- Heriot-Watt University Dubai (UK)
- University of Birmingham Dubai (UK)
- Middlesex University Dubai (UK)
- Wollongong University Dubai (AUS)

Pros:

- Graduate with a foreign university degree
- Taught in English, with international curriculum standards
- Often offer exchange or transfer options to the main campus abroad

Applying to Private/International Universities in the UAE.

When?

- Private and international universities: Many operate on rolling admissions, so you can apply throughout the year — but early application is recommended.
- Aim to apply by March/April for a September start.

What documents do I need?
Most universities will ask for:

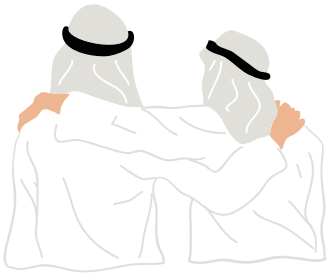
- School transcripts (Years 10–12)
- Final or predicted exam results
- Copy of passport/Emirates ID
- Passport-sized photo
- English language test results (IELTS/TOEFL - if applicable - always check with the university -)
- Personal statement or motivation letter
- Letters of recommendation

How?

- Most universities have simple online portals where you can create an account and upload documents.
- Some institutions (especially branch campuses) will also allow you to apply in person during open days and may offer discounts.
- Expect to pay a non-refundable application fee, typically around AED 200–500. Some institutions waive this fee during open days or early admissions windows.
- You may need to sit entrance tests, have an interview or submit a portfolio. Placement tests after receiving an offer are also common.

What next?
You'll usually receive a conditional or unconditional offer by email or via your applicant portal.
✓ Accept your offer formally
✓ Pay the registration deposit
✓ Start preparing for enrolment!

Applying to Public Universities in the UAE.



For Emirati nationals, applying to federal higher education institutions is coordinated through NAPO — the National Admissions and Placement Office, under the Ministry of Education.

NAPO is a centralised application system used by Emirati students to apply for:

- United Arab Emirates University (UAEU)
- Zayed University
- Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT)
- Abu Dhabi Polytechnic
- Khalifa University (selected programmes)
- Emirates College for Advanced Education (ECAE)
- Other government-funded institutions

Students submit a single application through NAPO to be considered for multiple institutions and programmes.

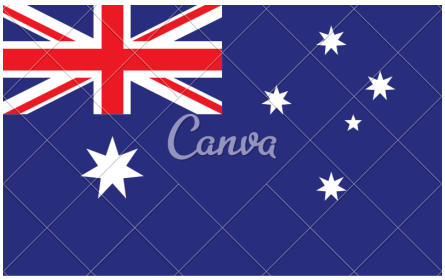
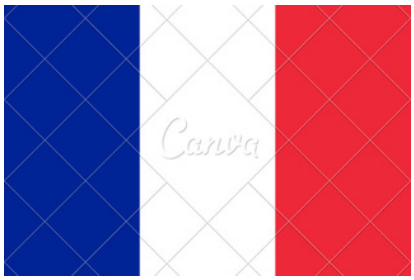
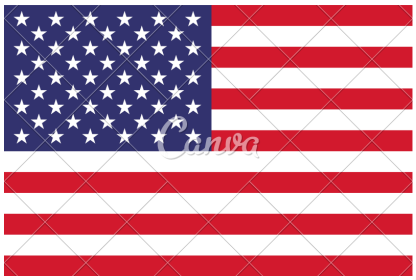
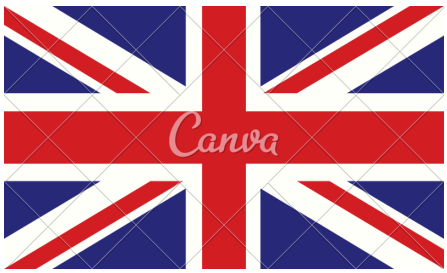
Applications typically open in January and close in May/June for September entry.

Some examples are listed here:

University	Location	Specialities	Notes
United Arab Emirates University (UAEU)	Al Ain	Engineering, Science, Medicine, Humanities	UAE's oldest and top-ranked federal university
Zayed University	Abu Dhabi & Dubai	Business, Media, Arts, IT	Offers programmes in Arabic & English
Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT)	Nationwide	Applied Sciences, Health, Business	Campuses across the UAE, strong job-focused education
Khalifa University	Abu Dhabi	Engineering, AI, Medicine, Aerospace	Research-focused, top-ranked in the region

EXAMPLES OF INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUSES

University	Origin	Notable Programmes
University of Birmingham Dubai	UK	Business, Computer Science, Law, Psychology
Heriot-Watt University Dubai	UK	Engineering, Architecture, Business
Middlesex University Dubai	UK	Media, Law, Accounting, Psychology
Murdoch University Dubai	Australia	IT, Media, Business, Cybersecurity
Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi	France	Humanities, Languages, Law, Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)	USA	Engineering, Business, Computing
University of Wollongong in Dubai	Australia	Engineering, Business, IT
Curtin University Dubai	Australia	Business, Engineering, Health Sciences
Canadian University Dubai (CUD)	Canada	Engineering, Business, Media, Architecture
La Roche University Dubai	USA	Hospilality Management
SAE Institute Dubai	Australia	Creative Media, Animation, Audio, Film

EXAMPLES OF PRIVATE UAE UNIVERSITIES

University	University
American University in Dubai (AUD)	American University in Dubai (AUD)
American University of Sharjah (AUS)	American University of Sharjah (AUS)
Abu Dhabi University	Abu Dhabi University
Ajman University	Ajman University
Mohammed Bin Rashid University (MBRU)	Mohammed Bin Rashid University (MBRU)