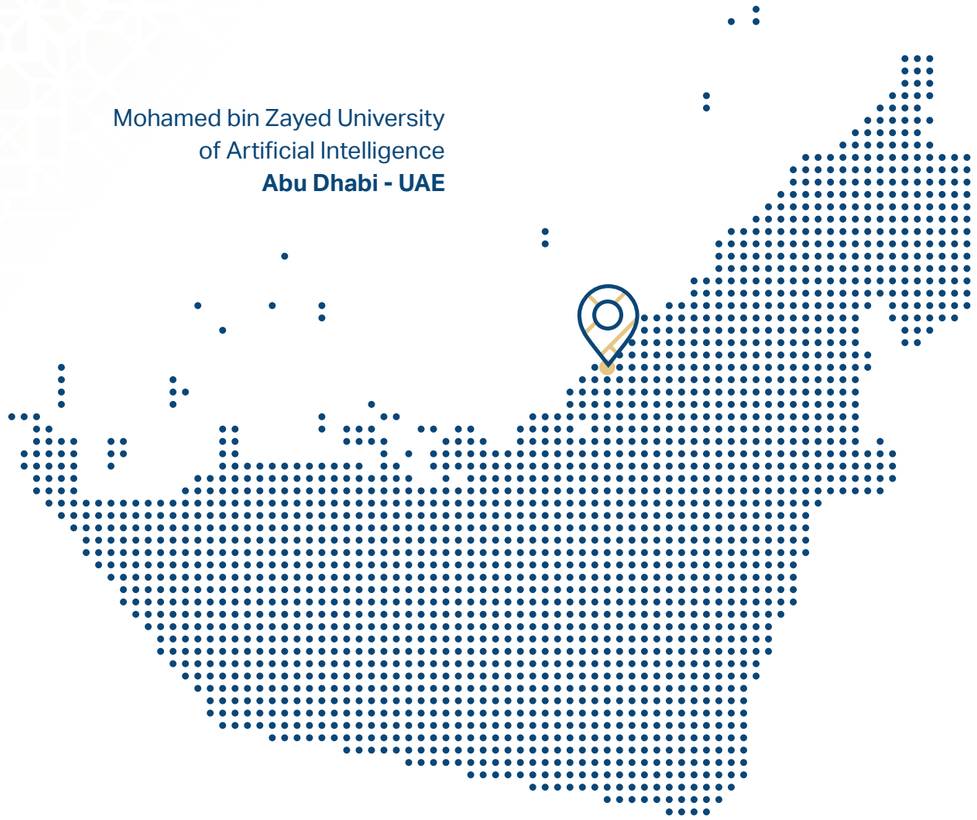
جامعة محمد بن زايد
للذكاء الاصطناعي
Mohamed bin Zayed University
of Artificial Intelligence

MBZUAI
COMMENCEMENT
PROGRAM

دفعة عام
Class of 2026

Mohamed bin Zayed University
of Artificial Intelligence
Abu Dhabi - UAE



UAE NATIONAL ANTHEM

ISHY BILADI

Live my country, the unity of our Emirates lives
You have lived for a nation
Whose religion is Islam and guide is Quran
I made you stronger in God's name, oh homeland
My country, my country, my country, my country
God has protected you from the evils of the time
We have sworn to build and work
Work sincerely, work sincerely
As long as we live, we will be sincere, sincere
The safety has lasted and the flag has lived oh our Emirates
The Symbol of Arabism
We all sacrifice for you, we supply you with our blood
We sacrifice for you, we supply you with our blood
We sacrifice you with our souls, oh homeland

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Chairman’s message

Congratulations to the Class of 2026

As the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence marks its fifth year, it is an honour to congratulate the Class of 2026 as part of these milestone celebrations.

Today reflects not only your individual journeys, but also your collective contribution to the advancement of this University. Guided by the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, MBZUAI has evolved from an ambitious idea into a globally-recognized centre for advanced research and talent development in artificial intelligence.

This graduating class – the largest to date – represents 23 countries, reflecting a richness of perspectives that has prepared you to engage creatively and collaboratively with the complexities of our time. Among this year’s class, we are immensely proud of our homegrown talent: 30 Emirati graduates, who are already championing global progress and innovation.

In the presence of His Highness Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, it is especially significant to celebrate, for the first time, graduates from the Computer Science, and Robotics programs, marking an important expansion in the breadth and impact of MBZUAI’s academic mission.

With guidance from His Highness Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technology Council, the UAE has built a dynamic ecosystem for AI research, development, and talent. Today, as MBZUAI graduates, you become an important part of that story – a growing global alumni community shaping the future of artificial intelligence.

In the years ahead, your work will be defined not only by its contributions to advancing technology, but by its ability to guide innovation as a responsible force that supports sustainable human progress.

On behalf of the University’s Board of Trustees, congratulations on all that you have achieved. We take great pride in your accomplishments and look ahead with confidence to your continued success.

Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak
Chairman of MBZUAI’s Board of Trustees

President’s message

Dear Class of 2026

Your credentials and experience were made for this moment. While you have been deep in study, the world has awoken to how much it needs what you do. Artificial intelligence is moving faster than at any point in its history, and the decisions being made now – in labs, in companies, and in governments around the world – will shape how it serves humanity for generations. You leave our campus with the technical depth to build, the judgment to know what is worth building, and a clear-eyed view of where the field is headed.

That readiness is the product of an institution built with extraordinary care and vision. In just five years, MBZUAI has earned a place among the world's leading institutions in AI – a rise made possible by the steadfast support and visionary leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, whose belief in AI and advanced technology as a foundation for the UAE's future is the bedrock on which this university continues to grow.

Class of 2026 – you embody our vision and mission as builders and innovators who will shape the future through discovery and bold thinking. Dream big, push the boundaries of science and technology responsibly, and use what you have learned to build, to lead, and to lift others up. Whatever path you take, you will always be part of the MBZUAI family. The future is yours to shape, and I have no doubt it will be extraordinary.

Eric Xing
MBZUAI President and University Professor

Class of 2026: key facts

The Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) **Class of 2026** is the **largest and most diverse cohort to date**.

140 students

37.9% female students

62.1% male students

23 nationalities

21.4%
Emirati students: 11 male, 19 female (the largest single nationality)

129 M.Sc. graduates

- **28** graduates in computer vision
- **45** graduates in machine learning
- **31** graduates in natural language processing
- **17** graduates in robotics
- **8** graduates in computer science

11 Ph.D. graduates

- **4** graduates in computer vision
- **6** graduates in machine learning
- **1** graduate in natural language processing

Inaugural cohort of **M.Sc.** graduates for robotics and computer science. R CS

Female **Emirati** graduates have more than doubled since last year.

2025 **8** › 2026 **19**

All graduates completed internships at organizations including leaders in industry such as **Adobe**, **Meta**, **Bloomberg**, **AIQ**, **ADNOC**, **Amazon**, **Dubai Future Foundation**, **Etihad Airways**, **Inception**, and **John Hopkins University**, as well as **startups** including **LibrAI**, and **LabibAI.**

Homegrown talents are the largest nationality with **30 UAE nationals**, highlighting a national commitment to **AI leadership**, followed by **Egypt**, **China**, **Kazakhstan** and **India**. The Class of 2026 includes our **first graduates** from **Nepal**, **Australia**, **Brazil**, **Georgia** and **Thailand.**

Our story

Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) is a world-leading university dedicated to advancing AI as a global force for good. The UAE's visionary leaders established MBZUAI to educate and develop top talent, conduct advanced research, foster an innovation ecosystem, and act as a strategic think tank for the public and private sectors.

The University has a vital role to play in many of the UAE government's strategic objectives, with AI identified as a critical component of future growth and prosperity. MBZUAI's own strategic vision and mission work in parallel to position Abu Dhabi as a hub for the international AI community.

The University attracts world-class thinkers and doers in computer science, AI, bioscience, humanities and beyond. Our groundbreaking academic research initiatives are working on developing future solutions that will impact the world and change the way we imagine things.

Quick facts

2019
Year of launch

10th Globally ranked in AI, CV, ML, NLP, ROB, and Comp. Bio (CSRankings)

128 Faculty (50+ from top 100 academic institutions)

47 Average faculty h-index

254 Researchers and postdocs

~ 3,000 Publications in top journals and conferences

653 Enrolled students

28% Female students

59 Countries represented in student body

458
Alumni

Speaker

Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak

Chairman of MBZUAI's Board of Trustees

As a leading UAE government policymaker and influential international business leader, Khaldoon Al Mubarak has been at the forefront of the UAE's economic transformation for more than two decades; playing an integral role in advancing the nation's sustainable economic diversification agenda.

Khaldoon is the Chairman of the Executive Affairs Authority, the specialized government agency that provides strategic policy advice across a wide range of sectors - including advanced technologies - to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates.

Since 2004, Khaldoon has served as a member of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council. He is also a member of the Supreme Council for Financial and Economic Affairs. Both government entities are longstanding advocates of innovation as a cornerstone of a stable, prosperous society, endorsing policies and legislation that attract and enable a globally-competitive, technologically-driven economy.

As the Secretary General of the Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technology Council (AIATC), and a member of the Abu Dhabi Advanced Technology Research Council, Khaldoon is instrumental in expanding all aspects of the UAE's advanced technology ecosystem.

Khaldoon is also the Managing Director and Group CEO of Mubadala, the $385 billion sovereign investment firm committed to investing and partnering at the leading edge of global growth and innovation to continuously create opportunities for future generations.

In November 2020, Mubadala announced its investment in the Abu Dhabi-based, global AI champion G42, with Khaldoon appointed a member of the board. He became Vice-Chair of the UAE's MGX when it was established by its founding partners G42 and Mubadala in March 2024. MGX's mission is to accelerate global investment in AI and advanced technologies, and in doing so to deliver positive economic and social impact.

Khaldoon is also Chairman of Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, and serves on the Boards of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), and L'IMAD Holding Company.

He was instrumental in establishing New York University Abu Dhabi and serves on the New York University Board of Trustees. Khaldoon is also member of the Advisory Board of Tsinghua University School of Economics and Management.

Speaker

Eric Xing

MBZUAI President and University Professor

Professor Eric P. Xing is the President of Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence, Professor of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University, and Co- Founder and Chief Scientist of GenBio AI. He completed his undergraduate study at Tsinghua University, and holds a Ph.D. in molecular biology and biochemistry from Rutgers University, and a Ph.D. in computer science from the University of California, Berkeley.

His main research interests are the development of machine learning and statistical methodology, and large-scale computational system and architectures, for solving problems involving automated learning, reasoning, and decision-making in artificial, Biological, and social systems.

Xing has served on the editorial boards of leading scientific journals including the Journal of the American Statistical Association, Annals of Applied Statistics, PLOS Journal of Computational Biology, IEEE Journal of Pattern Analysis and Machine Intelligence, Machine Learning Journal, and Journal of Machine Learning Research. He was elected as a Fellow of AAAI, ACM, ASA, IEEE, and IMS.

He is a recipient of the National Science Foundation Career Award, the Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship, the United States Air Force Office of Scientific Research Young Investigator Award, the IBM Open Collaborative Research Faculty Award, and the Carnegie Science Award.

Valedictorian

Hanoona Rasheed

Ph.D. in Computer Vision

Hanoona Rasheed is the Class of 2026 valedictorian at Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI), where she earned both her M.Sc. (Class of 2022) and Ph.D. in Computer Vision (Class of 2026) as part of the University's inaugural cohorts.

She has built an exceptional research profile, with more than 5,800 citations and over 7.8 million downloads of her open-source models.

Her work focuses on multimodal and foundation models that integrate visual and language understanding, enabling real-world AI applications across sectors.

During her doctoral studies, she had six papers accepted at premier conferences including CVPR, NeurIPS, ICLR, and WACV, underscoring both consistency and influence at the highest levels of the field.

She contributed to leading industry teams at Meta and Adobe in San Francisco during simultaneous internships, co-authoring high-impact models such as PerceptionLM and the Perception Encoder, both recognized at NeurIPS.

Dr. Rasheed's journey reflects both personal and institutional growth. She credits MBZUAI's research-first environment and strong mentorship for shaping her into an independent researcher.

Despite opportunities in Silicon Valley, she remains at MBZUAI as a postdoctoral researcher, continuing to explore impactful AI research. She is committed to contributing globally while giving back to the UAE ecosystem that shaped her.

5

نـحتفـي بـالذكـرى الـخامسـة

CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS

2020-2025

MBZUAI's fifth commencement, our largest and most diverse to date, is an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the tremendous achievements of our **Class of 2026**, as they embark on a journey of promise and optimism.

Power from **knowledge** to **serve**

This captures the University's spirit. It's a principle to guide all of us. It reminds us that through knowledge we have the power to serve and help others.

Master of Ceremonies (MC)

Rawdha Almeraikhi,
Assistant Vice President,
National Engagement and Outreach

Procession

Flag bearers

Muhammad Maaz,
Class of 2026, Ph.D. in CV

Zainab Aldhanhani,
Class of 2026, M.Sc. in CV

Mace bearer

Dezhen Song,
Vice Provost of Student and Postdoctoral Affairs and Professor of Robotics

Valedictorian

From first cohort to valedictorian: Hanoona Rasheed's rise at MBZUAI

After six years of remarkable research and global impact, the Class of 2026 valedictorian stays on – choosing discovery over Silicon Valley

When Hanoona Rasheed arrived at Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI), she stepped into the unknown – joining the inaugural cohort at the world's first AI research university as it was still defining itself.

Six years later, she leaves as the Class of 2026 valedictorian, with a research record that rivals seasoned academics: more than 5,800 citations, 7.8 million-plus model downloads, and papers accepted at the world's most prestigious conferences including CVPR, ICCV, NeurIPS, and ICLR.

And she's not done yet. Despite opportunities from Silicon Valley, Hanoona will remain at MBZUAI as a postdoctoral researcher – continuing to explore where ideas take shape.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that staying in familiar surroundings means she has taken an easier route, however. Working at the frontier of multimodal AI is as demanding as it is exhilarating, she says.

"It is a fast-moving and deeply competitive space, one where research groups go head-to-head with the world's largest AI labs and where the pace is relentless and timing is everything."

That intensity is what she calls "fun" – offering a sense of her character: one that is committed, focused, and driven by purpose

Growing alongside a university

Hanoona's journey mirrors MBZUAI's own rise. She joined as part of the first master's cohort in 2021 and chose to stay for her Ph.D. in Computer Vision – growing not just academically, but personally.

Arriving without a research profile, she says MBZUAI made her an independent researcher.

"During my time here, I was able to build my profile through work, mentorship, and consistency," she says.

"That growth is not something I see only as a personal achievement. I see it as an example of what this University makes possible. It shows how much can happen when students are given the right environment and then rise to meet it."

She says the best advice she received about doing impactful research is to choose the right problem at the right time, and to care deeply enough to do it well.

Now, Hanoona no longer requires an introduction at conferences – her research speaks for itself, positioning herself within the global AI community alongside MBZUAI.

Being accepted into the AI research community as a young Ph.D. candidate is what she says she is most proud of.

Research that reaches the world

Hanoona's work sits at the forefront of multimodal AI foundation models; integrating visual and language understanding while addressing challenges that are both timely and consequential for real-world AI applications.

Even at this early stage of her career, she has built a stand-out publication record that is remarkably strong for a recent Ph.D. graduate.

GLaMM and Video-ChatGPT are among her most impactful works, widely cited and helping shape subsequent research in multimodal AI.

She was head-hunted for internships at Meta and Adobe in San Francisco, where she co-authored state-of-the-art models such as Perception Encoder (NeurIPS oral) and PerceptionLM (NeurIPS Spotlight) – part of a broader body of research that has drawn wide attention

for its quality and influence, generating more than 7.8 million downloads.

Impact, for her, is measured not just in publications or surpassing benchmarks, but in real-world adoption.

"There are people who have told us: I got a promotion because I used your model," she says. "It is about contributing something that others can build on, use, and carry forward."

By ensuring her work is reproducible and accessible, she has helped shape tools that others can build on for medical, transport, safety, and more – amplifying their reach far beyond the lab.

Work fast, remain patient

Her six-year journey unfolded against a backdrop of global disruption. Yet through it all, her focus never wavered.

Research demands patience, resilience, and the ability to work through uncertainty. For Hanoona, that mindset became essential.

"We have learned to quickly move on, and not wonder, 'Oh, why did that happen?'" she says.

Rather than being derailed by external challenges, she stayed grounded in the work – keeping pace in a field where timing can define success.

"If you take six months and you're working on something hot, it might already be too old," she explains. And in multimodal foundation models, that is not an exaggeration.

What has kept her work relevant and impactful, she says, is the hunger in the room: strong collaborations with faculty and fellow students built on a shared refusal to settle, where everyone around you is driven, committed, and pulling in the same direction.

That, she says, is the culture their labs have built at MBZUAI, and it is their recipe for keeping up.

Choosing to stay, and why it matters

Hanoona moved to the UAE from India when she was four and considers it home. She has abundant gratitude – for the institution, the UAE, and the vision that created both.

"Places like this do not exist by accident," she says. "They are built through vision, belief, and investment in people. That has opened doors that may not otherwise have been possible."

She says MBZUAI offers something rare: an ecosystem designed to remove friction and enable focus.

"I know how rare it is to find an environment that is so focused on excellence, where people around you are ambitious, sharp, and genuinely committed to doing meaningful work," she says. "Being surrounded by that kind of energy pushes you to do better yourself."

For many students, studying abroad comes with layers of complexity – housing, finances, and logistics, to name a few. At MBZUAI, those burdens are minimized, allowing students to focus entirely on research.

That foundation allowed Hanoona to push further than she imagined possible.

Mentorship and collaboration that shapes outcomes

While being named valedictorian means a great deal to Hanoona, she resists the idea of individual success.

"None of this happens alone – it is shared success," she says.

Her work is shaped by supervisors, collaborators, lab mates, co-authors, and peers.

"Research is never individual," she says. "Impactful work is always, in one way or another, a collective effort."

Hanoona credits finding the right mentors for her success and says her supervisors Dr. Salman Khan and Professor Fahad Khan, made all the difference.

"MBZUAI's faculty are active researchers, and they want you to truly learn and succeed at their level," she says.

Now a mentor herself, she hopes to give others the same opportunity. In the meantime, Silicon Valley can wait.

Computer Science

Speaking the language of AI

Computer Science master's graduate, Lara Hassan, explains how a passionate approach to life and work has helped her build systems that can make people's lives easier.

Lara Hassan, a recent graduate of the master's in Computer Science program at MBZUAI, grew up in an environment that set the stage for her interest in science and technology and a career that already spans healthcare, large tech companies, and startups. Hassan's father is a professor in the Faculty of Engineering at Alexandria University in Egypt, and her mother works at the school as well. "I was raised in a home full of researchers," she says.

While she has always been drawn to technical subjects, Hassan also holds a deep love for languages and cultures. She speaks Arabic, English, French, and a bit of Spanish. And she says that she has a slightly different personality when she speaks each one: "I'm a more delicate person when I speak French, and a funnier person when I speak Arabic."

One of the great benefits of studying languages and cultures, she says, is that doing so helps train the mind to approach the world from different perspectives. This flexibility has served her well not only when she is traveling or meeting new people, but also when she needs to come up with creative ways to solve technical problems. "My passion for languages and cultures has shaped all the tiny decisions I have made in my life, often without me noticing it," she says.

Learning by doing

Hassan's father is a hardware engineer who she often watched as he tinkered with circuits and the like in their home. But during her undergraduate studies at Alexandria University, she was drawn to software. This led to an opportunity to travel to the United States for an internship at the University of Louisville, where she worked on a prototype of a web-based software application for the pathology department at a university hospital.

When she began the internship, she wasn't familiar with the fast-paced clinical setting that doctors and

other clinicians work in. But the experience taught her how complex applications can be designed to serve the practical needs of users. This was before OpenAI's ChatGPT was released in the fall of 2022.

"I was able to learn so much when I was working on the project because there was no ChatGPT back then," she says with a laugh. A later iteration of the application won first prize in a research competition, and a study about it was published in a top journal.

Hassan interned at Microsoft Egypt, focusing on a web analytics product called Microsoft Clarity. Her time with one of the world's largest tech companies broadened her perspective and gave her insight into the mechanics of how technology corporations operate. She also had an internship at a legal technology company based in Dubai called Clara Technologies, gaining more hands-on experience with AI and techniques such as retrieval augmented generation (RAG), which sharpened her interest in AI.

Bridging language and vision

During her undergraduate studies, Hassan also came to Abu Dhabi for an internship at MBZUAI, where she developed an application that used natural language processing to analyze news stories. The experience encouraged her to pursue a degree in AI.

Hassan chose the master's in Computer Science program at MBZUAI because it let her combine her interests in natural language processing and computer vision. "It gave me the opportunity to work in everything all at once because they both fall under the umbrella of algorithmic optimization," she says.

Hassan is a member of the first cohort to graduate from the University with a master's degree in Computer Science and is advised by Abdulrahman Mahmoud, Assistant Professor of Computer Science. The program has helped her become proficient in a variety of

subjects relevant to recent developments in AI and has helped her gain more practical experience, interning as a backend engineer for ByteDance in their Dubai office. "At MBZUAI, I got so much more support than I could have expected, and I wouldn't have gotten this experience anywhere else," she says.

Hassan's master's thesis relates to an application for dermatology that uses a multimodal language model to process image and text data users provide about skin conditions. The goal of her research is to determine if the model pays more attention to the image or to the text when it analyzes inputs. "Does it really look at the image, or does it overly rely on the text," she says. This is important because gaining a better understanding of how AI models process data will help to mitigate failures and help researchers develop more faithful models that can be trusted, she says. Mahmoud and Jianing Qiu, Assistant Professor of Personalized Medicine, supervised the thesis, and Hassan was recently interviewed by Meta about the project.

From research to the real world

Now that she has finished her master's studies at MBZUAI, Hassan is looking forward to her role at Astra Tech, a G42 company, in Dubai. She acknowledges that the rapid pace of technological innovation of recent years can seem intimidating, but it is also the beginning of an era in which people can feel empowered because they have access to much more information today than they did in the past.

AI is becoming more democratized, and it can help people with many different tasks, whether it's drafting emails, brainstorming new ideas, or learning a new language. "These tools can make our lives easier and make our businesses grow faster," she says. "We just need to learn how to not get overwhelmed by the huge amount of information we have access to."

When asked to provide advice to those who may be interested to pursue a career in AI, she says that people should pick topics that aligns with their interests. "I have a passion for building things that can help people and make their lives easier. Find topics that you are passionate about, and you will find yourself happy in your work."

Computer Science

08
Master's students

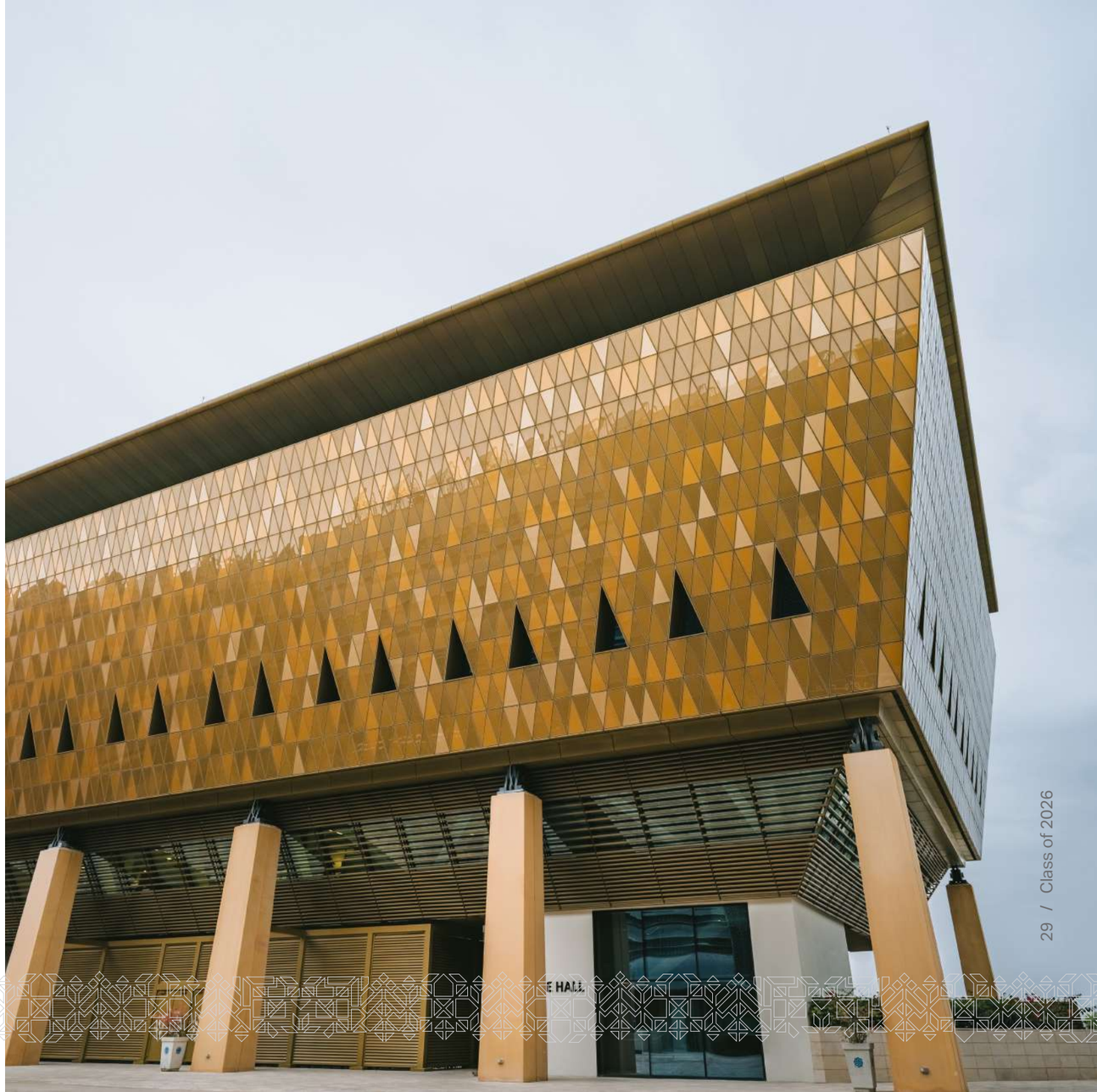
Master's

Abdulaziz Mousa Ibrahim Alblooshi – United Arab Emirates
Ali Omar Aljaberi – United Arab Emirates
Esraa Bayomi* – Egypt
Dastan Bekmukhanbetov – Kazakhstan
Mohamed El Zeftawy – Canada
Lara Hassan – Egypt
Arina Kharlamova* – Russia
Arham Riaz – Pakistan






* Not pictured



Computer Vision

Why Ahmed Alshamsi sees field experts and youth as the real builders of the future

MBZUAI computer vision graduate and Y71 founder believes AI's greatest value emerges when domain experts, students, and institutions are enabled to turn real problems into practical solutions

Ahmed Alshamsi isn't focused on what artificial intelligence (AI) can replace. He's focused on who it can enable.

As AI reshapes industries and societies, graduates such as Alshamsi represent a new kind of builder: one who sees the technology less as a destination and more as a tool that gains its real value when placed in the hands of people who understand real-world problems.

"AI will not replace those who adapt," he says. "It amplifies their impact, in medicine, engineering, and environmental work."

For him, the future of AI will not be defined by software developers alone. It will be shaped by doctors, engineers, educators, environmental specialists, policymakers, creatives, and young innovators who bring deep field knowledge.

A conversation on governance, society, and culture

Alshamsi recently took part in a session at the Hili Forum titled "Friend or Foe: AI and the Future of Governance, Societies and Culture," alongside H.E. Khalid Alnuaimi, Director General of the Federal Youth Authority; H.E. Dr. Saeed Al Dhaheri, Director of the Center for Futures Studies at the University of Dubai; and Waheeda Al Hadhrami, Creative Industries Consultant. The session was moderated by ECSSR researcher Saqer Alnuaimi.

His contribution centered on a clear idea: that education, culture, and identity remain the building blocks of society, and AI should strengthen these foundations rather than weaken them.

He pointed to how different countries are already shaping AI around their own priorities. China, for

example, has built its own search engines, local platforms, language models, and policy frameworks. For Alshamsi, this raises a question every society must answer: how do we ensure AI systems respect our own ethics, values, and community expectations?

In his view, AI should be a tool to strengthen education, family connections, and identity preservation, not weaken them.

Education and project-based learning

As he graduates with a Master of Science in Computer Vision from Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI), Alshamsi argues that education itself must evolve to spark creativity and welcome questions.

Pairing large language models (LLMs) and AI with project-based learning, he says, makes learning practical and engaging.

“Students should not just learn about AI,” he says.

“They should use it to build, test, and create – turning the classroom into a place where ideas are tried out rather than only studied.”

Alshamsi credits MBZUAI with providing the foundation for both his technical and entrepreneurial growth.

“MBZUAI equipped me with advanced AI knowledge, research experience, and hands-on skills in building and deploying intelligent systems,” he says.

Beyond academics, the University’s collaborative environment and access to cutting-edge resources shaped his experience.

“The campus became my second home,” he says. “The people I met along the way, and the strong sense of community… I will miss that the most.”

Working alongside peers and faculty from around the world helped him refine his approach to problem-solving.

Digital trust in the age of deepfakes

He adds that while AI is an enabler, powerful technologies require responsible governance.

He highlights deepfakes as one of the clearest challenges. As AI-generated content becomes more realistic, societies need reliable ways to verify what is authentic and what has been altered.

He points to C2PA, the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity, as a standard worth adopting. It embeds verifiable information into media, showing who created a piece of content and what was edited, helping authenticate content and protect digital integrity.

For Alshamsi, the goal should be to see similar standards built into devices themselves, so authenticity is established at the source rather than added after the fact.

The larger point, he said, is simple: technical progress must be matched with governance, ethics, and accountability.

Enabling field experts to build

Beyond the forum, Alshamsi's central belief is that the people closest to a problem are best positioned to solve it.

A doctor understands healthcare challenges more deeply than someone outside the field. An environmental specialist understands pollution and public health risks. An engineer knows operational constraints from experience. An educator understands how students actually learn.

“What's changed is what these experts can now do with that knowledge,” he says.

“Software development has never been easier. Prototyping, research, and data analysis have become more accessible, and ideas that once required large technical teams can now move from concept to working prototype in a fraction of the time.”

For Alshamsi, this doesn't replace technical specialists. It creates a stronger model of collaboration, where field experts, young builders, and AI tools come together around real problems.

From university projects to real solutions

A central part of his message is about youth, and about how academic work can carry far greater value when connected to real-world needs.

He believes many promising ideas already exist inside universities, hackathons, and graduation projects. “It's whether those ideas are matched with the right problem, the right field expert, and the right pathway beyond the classroom,” he says.

His own experience reflects this, beating more than 300 applicants to win first place at the GCC Cybersecurity Hackathon 2024. His team built on work that was originally part of a university project – showing that with the right framing and a real problem to solve, what begins as academic work can become something more.

For Alshamsi, this points to a practical opportunity for universities, government entities, and companies to share real industry challenges as thesis topics, graduation projects, or prototype briefs. This would allow students to choose problems that match their interests, and give industries access to fresh thinking and early-stage solutions, he suggests.

This is also the spirit behind his startup. Y71 takes its name from youth, and its original mission was to empower young national talents to create solutions to real-world problems – not within one narrow sector, but across whatever fields matter.

“Youth should be trusted to build," he says, "with field experts in the loop.”

Recognition and the UAE ecosystem

Throughout his journey, Alshamsi has received meaningful moments of recognition that he sees as part of the UAE's broader commitment to supporting youth and innovation.

He was honored to receive an award for impact in AI from His Highness Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan and expresses his thanks to Sandooq Al Watan and the organizers who created the platform.

During GITEX, he was recognized by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum.

He was also honored to meet His Highness Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan – a moment that reinforced his commitment to keep building.

What comes next

While many graduates leave with research alone, Alshamsi enters the next phase of his career with his startup already in motion. And looking forward, he is focused on scaling his impact.

The greatest value, he reiterates, comes when young builders are empowered with AI tools while field experts stay closely involved to guide solutions with real-world knowledge.

“National entities create the environment,” he says. “Universities develop the talent. Field experts define the problems. Youth bring the energy and curiosity.”

Computer Vision

04
Ph.D. students

28
Master's students

Ph.D.

Muhammad Maaz – Pakistan
Chao Qin – China
Hanoona Rasheed – India
Asim Miqdad Ukaye – India

Master's

Karina Abubakirova – Kazakhstan
Ghazi Shazan Ahmad* – India
Omar Hussain Alawadhi – United Arab Emirates
Zainab Ali Ahmed Aldhanhani – United Arab Emirates
Khawla Ali Hasan Ali Almarzooqi – United Arab Emirates
Alya Almsouti – Syria
Ahmed Khamis Alshamsi – United Arab Emirates
Aamna Alshehhi* – United Arab Emirates
Ahmed Atef Ahmed Aly – Egypt
Jason Banks – United States
Gustavo Bertolo Stahl – Brazil
Abdul Ahad Butt – Pakistan
Nazira Dunbayeva – Kazakhstan
Sensen Gao – China

* Not pictured

Computer Vision

04
Ph.D. students

28
Master's students

Master's

Minghao Guo – China
Seung Hun Han – Australia
Ahmed Heakl – Egypt
Kevin Henry – India
Beknur Kalmakhanbet – Kazakhstan
Yuyang Liu – China
Liang Ma* – China
Hazza Mahmood*
Ilmuz Zaman Mohammed Zumri – Sri Lanka
Amal Saqib – Pakistan
Muhammad Abdullah Sohail – Pakistan
Baheyeldin Tharwat – Egypt
Yongqiang Yu – China
Haoze Zhao – China

* Not pictured

Machine Learning

Embracing the opportunity, owning the responsibility

Powered by a relentless curiosity in AI's potential, Abdulla Almansoori seized the opportunity to progress machine learning research at MBZUAI – and give back to the institutions that made his journey possible.

Abdulla Almansoori's path to AI research didn't begin in a lecture hall or a laboratory. It began with curiosity. Boundless, self-started curiosity.

In 2013, just as he was starting his undergraduate studies in industrial engineering, Almansoori came across early discussions of what would later be known as the deep learning revolution. At the time, it all still felt like something from a science fiction movie. But what caught his attention was not the futuristic promise of AI. It was the mathematics.

"When I saw the math, I felt like, okay, this is something principled," he recalls. "There's a foundation to this field."

That moment sparked a quiet but enduring ambition. Without formal training in the field, Almansoori began teaching himself programming and exploring AI independently. His early studies even led him to a deep examination of good old-fashioned AI (GOFAI) symbolic approaches "that nobody learns nowadays" – a detour he now sees as valuable context for understanding how we got to where we are.

But despite his rapidly growing interest in AI research, Almansoori's future in the field was far from certain.

Bound by scholarship constraints and unable to switch majors, he committed to completing his industrial engineering degree at Purdue University – while preparing for the transition to computer science. And he was soon where he wanted to be, pursuing a master's degree from the University of Southern California (USC). But with foundational gaps to fill and a lack of research experience, the shift was "very challenging." Research opportunities in AI remained out of reach.

After completing his studies and returning to the UAE in 2019, Almansoori found himself at a crossroads. AI was gaining global momentum, but the local ecosystem was still emerging. Determined to stay close to the field, he joined a bioinformatics lab at New York University Abu Dhabi. Here, Almansoori found that the

principal investigator “was very supportive of [his] AI background” and eager to apply machine learning in her research. At last, he was applying AI techniques to real-world problems – with a keen collaborator.

Starting a new chapter in collaboration

That milestone was soon eclipsed by an even bigger development. For Almansoori – and the UAE.

The announcement of the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) marked a new chapter in the country’s ambitions for AI leadership. And for Almansoori, the opportunity aligned perfectly with his years of preparation, persistence, and belief.

“The right time, the right place,” he says, recalling the launch of MBZUAI’s graduate program in 2021. “I'm very fortunate.”

At MBZUAI, Almansoori finally found the freedom to explore his passion for machine learning and grow as an AI researcher. And so began a new journey, with a PhD focused on collaborative learning – showing how machine networks can work together to solve a common task – and personalization that allows systems to adapt solutions to individual contexts.

His work also explores efficient methods for training these systems, particularly through the use of adapters. These small components can be added to fine-tune models without requiring extensive computational resources.

Underlying all of this is a broader vision: designing intelligent systems that are not only powerful, but practical – capable of operating in complex, real-world settings.

So perhaps it’s no surprise to find that collaboration and individuality live at the heart of Almansoori’s research story. A naturally independent spirit, he would often

choose to build projects from the ground up in order to fully understand each stage of the process. But he learned to appreciate and embrace the importance of collaboration in modern AI.

His internship experience with Meta drove this lesson home. It was here that he saw how large organizations enable rapid innovation through shared knowledge and open communication. The ability to draw on collective expertise becomes a powerful driver of progress.

“They record all their collaborations and open source everything,” he recalls. “So you have a pool of easily-accessible information that makes it easy to solve any problem.”

Almansoori sees this as part of a larger shift toward a team-oriented approach to modern research. Where having more than two authors contributing to a math paper was once highly unusual, math projects now regularly bring together tens or hundreds of skilled mathematicians. “These projects are bigger and more complex,” he notes. “At this level, you cannot do it by yourself.”

Yet Almansoori’s growth as a researcher will never entirely be measured solely by large-scale, group-oriented technical achievements. Just as many of the defining moments on his journey have been more personal in nature “where [he] felt something click” and reaffirmed his natural fit in the field.

One such moment came when a leading researcher in Japan invited him to join their lab after a single conversation. Another came unexpectedly, when he received a best reviewer award at the International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML) – recognition for work he had undertaken simply out of a passion for reviewing research.

That unique balance between collaboration-minded research and his own curiosity-fueled explorations will undoubtedly continue to power Almansoori’s progress well into the future.

Knowing the real work begins now

For all the personal and academic highlights of his research experience, Almansoori is resolutely looking forward as graduation approaches. “I look at it as the start of my journey in research,” he declares with confidence and self-belief. “The PhD was just a training program.”

So now the real work begins – powered by Almansoori’s innate curiosity and tireless dedication to asking and answering questions about the world around us. And the world he’s helping to build.

Despite his interest in industry players like Anthropic and OpenAI, and the idea of working in a powerful industrial research lab, Abdulla’s heart remains with research and MBZUAI. Here, he plans to continue formulating problems and modeling solutions for the love of research – and the country that made it all possible. “I realize how lucky I am,” he reflects. “There are so many things that are easy for me because I'm Emirati.”

Almansoori sees this gift as a profound responsibility. He’s determined to give back to the institutions and systems that made his journey possible, contribute to the UAE’s growing AI research ecosystem, and help create opportunities for others in the future.

That sense of intentionality extends to AI’s potential impact on the wider world. Almansoori believes the future of AI isn’t just about what can be built, but about how it should be built – and how it can be used to serve humanity in meaningful ways.

As MBZUAI continues to grow as a global center of AI research and innovation, a graduate like Almansoori shows the world exactly why. He’s not only using his curiosity and resilience to carve out his own path. He’s thinking critically to find the best way forward for all of us.

Machine Learning

06
Ph.D. students

45
Master's students

Ph.D.

Artem Agafonov – Russia
Abdulla Almansoori – United Arab Emirates
Chengqian Gao – China
Mariam Mohamed Amin Kashkash – Syria
Mai Ahmed Shaaban – Egypt
Tianjun Yao – China

Master's

Aljalila Salem Mohamed Khalfan Aladawi – United Arab Emirates
Ali Humaid Saeed Al Ali – United Arab Emirates
Mohammed Aldahmani – United Arab Emirates
Ayesha Abdulla Alhammadi – United Arab Emirates
Amna Mohammed Abdulla Alhammadi – United Arab Emirates
Shaikha Jasem Alhosani – United Arab Emirates
Rames Nagib Aljneibi – United Arab Emirates
Naema Mohamed Alkhzaimi – United Arab Emirates
Muhra AlMahri – United Arab Emirates
Sheikha Shamsa Hamad bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan* – United Arab Emirates
Bashayer Abdulla Saeed Alsereidi* – United Arab Emirates
Maryam Alshamsi* – United Arab Emirates
Maryam Salem Obaid Musallam AlShehyari – United Arab Emirates

* Not pictured

Machine Learning

06
Ph.D. students

45
Master's students

Master's

Abdulla Khalid Alzaabi – United Arab Emirates
Anish Ambreth – India
Albert Baichorov – Russia
Tameem Alaaeldeen Sayed Bakr – Egypt
Sushil Bohara – Nepal
Arman Bolatov – Kazakhstan
Sondos Mahmoud Bsharat – Jordan
Jiacheng Cui – China
Pham Anh Cuong – Vietnam
Yunlong Deng – China
Bishnu Dev – Nepal
Abdelrahman Elmay – Egypt
Maiya Goloburda – Kazakhstan
Dongli He – China
Pengfei Hu – China
Albina Ilina – Russia

Machine Learning

06
Ph.D. students

45
Master's students

Master's

Ainur Khamitova – Kazakhstan
Anjali Khantaal – India
Giorgi Kituashvili – Georgia
Hazem Lashen – Egypt
Yan Li – China
Xuanjie Liu – China
Mukul Ranjan – India
Vladislav Ryspayev – Kazakhstan
Yasmeen Fozi Saeed – Canada
Semyon Semenov – Russia
Yahia Salaheldin Nasser Saad Mohamed Shaaban – Egypt
Devaganthan Sivakumar Srirangan – India
Darya Taratynova – Kazakhstan
Mukhammed Togmanov – Kazakhstan
Cong Zeng – China
Aigerim Zhusubalieva – Kyrgyzstan

Natural Language Processing

Finding the fun in AI code detection

For master's graduate Daniil Orel, a "fun project" on AI-generated code detection helped shape an exceptionally productive two years as MBZUAI, defined by curiosity, collaboration, and a prolific publication output.

Daniil Orel was midway through judging a national AI Olympiad in his home country of Kazakhstan when something started to feel off about the students' coding.

"While checking the submissions, I realized that a lot of them looked really weird,' he says. "There was a very specific structure similar to what large language models generate. In the end, it was clear that I wasn't evaluating students; I was evaluating LLMs the whole time."

Caught between frustration and curiosity, Orel formulated a question that would go on to shape his work as a master's student in natural language processing at MBZUAI: how can we tell what's written by humans, and what's written by AI?

"The problem is that this is now a huge area for cheating from the student's side," explains Orel. "So, I realized we probably need something to fight this. I guessed people would hate me for doing it, but this was a project I really wanted to work on.

"It was really rough and built in just over a month, but it worked. The main contribution of this work was that we introduced another direction, so we could identify hybrid code – code written by human and LLM collaboration. This work got to ACL Findings 2025, which was my first big achievement."

The work was so interesting to Orel, that he chose to focus on AI-generated code detection for his master's thesis at MBZUAI, which he had joined a year earlier in 2024.

The thesis combined three publications and a SemEval task (a shared task in which computational semantic analysis systems are presented and compared). Together, the three publications form a focused body of work on how we evaluate and detect AI-generated code in real-world settings.

The first establishes the core problem – that existing approaches treat authorship as a binary distinction between human and machine, overlooking the far more

> "MBZUAI teaches you to question everything – don't just blindly believe everything you read. That's the mindset you get here."

Daniil Orel
M.Sc. in Natural Language Processing

common scenario of collaboration between the two. The second paper introduces more robust detection methods, extending the task to account for adversarial behavior, where code is intentionally modified to obscure AI involvement. And the third shifts attention to evaluation itself, exploring how systems should be tested and compared in conditions that better reflect actual usage, rather than controlled, idealized benchmarks.

Together, the work moves from identifying a gap, to proposing practical detection methods, to rethinking how those methods are assessed – contributing to a more realistic and reliable understanding of AI-generated code as it is used in practice.

“At the beginning, it was a project that I did for fun, but it turned into something much bigger and much more interesting, which I was really happy about.”

Lending a helping hand

This idea of “fun” is a running theme for Orel when it comes to research. A natural problem-solver, he admits to finding great pleasure in getting involved with as many projects as he can – a practice that started long before his time at MBZUAI.

During his undergraduate studies at Nazarbayev University, he explored a wide range of areas, from speech technologies to astrophysics. He helped develop one of the first large-scale datasets for Kazakh speech recognition and generation, and later worked on modelling supernovas using machine learning. He also gained industry experience at Yandex, working on applied machine learning problems focused on user behavior and optimization.

That instinct to try different things led him to MBZUAI’s Undergraduate Research Internship Program (UGRIP), where he built a media profiling system capable of analyzing websites for credibility and political leaning.

“It was so interesting, and for me it made my choice concrete,” he says. “I said, ‘OK, I will go to MBZUAI – it’s a cool place and I really enjoyed it there’.”

At MBZUAI, he continued to move across projects, contributing to work on Kazakh-language model Sherkala, evaluation methods, and collaborative papers such as FinChain. He also extended parts of his research through collaboration with the UKP Lab in Germany, further strengthening his work on AI-generated code detection.

“I just really like helping people and I know how to improve things because I have a little bit of experience. So, when I see something fun and interesting, I say, ‘let me help’,” he explains.

“With FinChain I realized that the approach can be improved using an approach from the time-series domain, and it worked. We improved results and got accepted to ACL Main, which is very prestigious.”

In fact, during his time at MBZUAI, Orel led or contributed to 12 papers that were accepted to conferences – including several at leading venues. A rare output for a master’s student.

He credits his supervisor, Professor Preslav Nakov, Department Chair and Professor of Natural Language Processing, for enabling that breadth.

“As my main supervisor, Professor Preslav was helpful with everything,” he says. “He came with new ideas and suggestions, and ways to strengthen your work – he always improved what you were doing. But he was also happy for you to work with somebody else on other projects. As long as you’re productive and it helps you, then it was fine.”

Making the most of MBZUAI

Having had such a successful experience at MBZUAI, Orel is clear about the advice that he would offer incoming students.

“You have to be brave enough to submit everything to conferences, because you never know where it might lead,” he asserts. “It can be a huge gamble – even a good piece of work can get low scores – but you really have to go for it.”

He describes one project that took repeated submissions before being accepted – reinforcing his belief that persistence is key.

“Never give up on your work,” he adds. “If you’re doing it to be of benefit to others, and you want it to be noticed, then keep going and submit to the big conferences. Don’t think that you should aim low because of a lack of experience – get involved as much as you can and really go for it.”

More broadly, he sees MBZUAI as a place that shapes how people think, not just what they produce.

“It comes from the environment and the people you talk to,” he says. “It comes from how people here approach and solve problems. MBZUAI teaches you to question everything – don’t just blindly believe everything you read. Question things, analyze things, and see how you can improve or fix them. That’s the mindset you get here.”

Orel will continue to apply this mindset as a Ph.D. student at the University; potentially focusing on how models generate and understand code – a direction that builds directly on his master’s work.

His decision to stay in academia was driven by the ability to define his own problems and shift direction when needed – continuing the fun that he has enjoyed so far.

“In industry, your goals are pretty well defined, and you have to stick to that,” he explains. “That can be a good thing, but I like the flexibility of academia – the ability to be creative in your problem solving.

“Besides, I really like where things are going at MBZUAI.”

Natural Language Processing

01
Ph.D. student

31
Master's students

Ph.D.

Tarek Mahmoud – United States

Master's

Sarfraz Ahmad – Pakistan
Momina Ahsan – Pakistan
Muhammad Cendekia Airlangga – Indonesia
Iman Andrea King Al Sikaiti – Philippines
Haram Altaf – Pakistan
Ahmed Attia – Egypt
Mena Attia – United States
Mariam Amr Barakat – Egypt
Sholpan Bolatzhanova – Kazakhstan
Wang Chen Xi – China
Nhi Hoai Doan – Vietnam
Rania Hossam Elbadry – Egypt
Bilal Elbouardi – Morocco
Omar El Herraoui – Canada
Alaa Ahmed Elsetohy – Egypt

Natural Language Processing

01
Ph.D. student

31
Master's students

Master's

Mohamed Maged Elsetohy – Egypt
Kareem Elzeky – Egypt
Erland Hilman Fuadi – Indonesia
Junjie Gao – China
Rifo Ahmad Genadi – Indonesia
Sama Mahmoud Mohamed Hadhoud – Egypt
Besher Hassan – Syria
Atharva Abhijit Kulkarni – India
Nurkhan Laiyk – Kazakhstan
Ali Mekky – Egypt
Daniil Orel – Kazakhstan
Salsabila Zahirah Pranida – Indonesia
Ivan Rodkin – Russia
Askhat Sametov – Kazakhstan
Amina Tariq – Pakistan
Diana Turmakhan – Kazakhstan

From code to control: MBZUAI graduate advances safer robotics in the real world

As AI drives faster, more autonomous machines, Salamah Almazrouei focuses on the safety systems that keep them reliable.

Robots are no longer just walking – they are now running faster than humans, navigating real-world environments autonomously, and approaching human-level coordination, while safety emerges as the next critical frontier.

Just last month, a humanoid robot called Lightning completed a half marathon (21km) in 50 minutes, 26 seconds – beating the human world record of around 57 minutes. It ran autonomously, navigating the course in real time, and reducing the next best robotic time by 78% in just a year.

As these advances accelerate real-world deployment across robotics, one Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence's (MBZUAI) graduate is focusing on how robots move safely in the real world.

Emirati Salamah Almazrouei is part of the University's first robotics cohort, one of just 17 students graduating with a Master of Science in Robotics at Commencement 2026.

And with the young robotics department quickly gathering momentum, having only been launched in 2023, Almazrouei says she is not ready to walk away from MBZUAI's unique research environment – choosing instead to continue her academic journey by pursuing a Ph.D. in robotics.

Safer, more reliable, and physically feasible

As artificial intelligence (AI) systems such as large language models (LLMs) begin to generate instructions for robots, they can suggest actions such as picking up objects, navigating spaces, or working alongside people.

However, these instructions are not always safe or physically feasible. This is where control barrier functions (CBF) come in – acting as a safety layer that

adjusts a robot's movements to prevent collisions, maintain stability, and ensure safe interaction with people and surroundings.

The result is smarter robots that can follow AI-generated instructions while operating safely and reliably in dynamic environments.

This is where Almazrouei's work comes in. Her research is not tied to a single robot platform but instead focuses on improving safety across a range of robotic systems.

"My research is designed to be general and can be applied to different types of robots including robotic arms such as Franka, as well as systems used in areas such as manufacturing, healthcare, and humanoid robots," she explains.

"It adds a safety layer that checks a robot's planned movement before execution and adjusts it when necessary to keep the motion safe and smooth."

Her work helps create a bridge between LLM motion generation and safe execution for robotic manipulators, especially those operating in safety-critical settings such as surgical arms.

Same tools, different problem

The safety tools exist, and AI-generated motion exists – but combining them into a reliable, real-time system remains an open problem.

In practice, CBFs act like a "safety shield" that modifies control commands before execution and are well-established in robotics and control theory. Today, they are widely used to guarantee safety in real time in industrial robots, autonomous vehicles, and drones.

However, direct integration of LLM outputs with safety guarantees such as CBFs is still emerging, making Almazrouei's thesis relevant.

These advanced AI systems are not widely deployed in production systems and remain largely research prototypes or in early-stage integrations.

LLMs can generate high-level plans or motion commands, Almazrouei says, but these may be unsafe or abrupt movements that fall outside safe operating limits.

"The idea is to take a nominal trajectory generated by a planner or policy and evaluate whether it satisfies safety constraints, such as position, velocity, and acceleration limits," she explains.

"If the trajectory violates those constraints, a filtering step modifies it so that the resulting motion remains within the safe set, while staying as close as possible to the original trajectory."

Growing the robotics ecosystem in the UAE

MBZUAI launched its robotics programming in 2023 as a capability amplifier for the University and the UAE.

Its faculty and student body continue to grow, and together they aim to push the boundaries further – creating AI systems that allow machines to learn at scale, operate smarter, and support humans in meaningful ways. In doing so, they are taking on advanced challenges in robot learning, humanoid robotics, human-computer interaction, and sensory awareness head-on.

Throughout her master's research, Almazrouei contributed to this mission with commitment, maturity, and a strong sense of ownership, says her supervisor, Assistant Professor of Robotics, Abdalla Swikir.

"What impressed me most was her ability to grow quickly as a researcher, respond positively to feedback, and push the work forward with consistency and determination," he says.

"She produced a strong thesis that I believe can form the basis of a good publication. Her positive attitude, together with her strong work ethic, makes her a valuable member of our research environment."

Swikir adds that he looks forward to continuing to work with Almazrouei as a Ph.D. candidate.

"It is great to see talented students like Salamah continuing their research journey here in the UAE and contributing to the growing robotics and AI ecosystem in the country," he says.

Talents like Almazrouei will be in high demand in the UAE as the country begins building its robots through a number of manufacturing hubs and global partnerships, signaling a shift to sovereign robotics capability. Robots will be seen in malls, infrastructure, and industry as more physical AI systems pop up in real environments.

A deep commitment to impactful research

Coming from a traditional information technology background, Almazrouei's two years at MBZUAI have intensified her passion for robotics and AI.

"It has strengthened not only my technical knowledge in robotics and artificial intelligence, but also my confidence, curiosity, and passion for meaningful research," she says.

"The opportunity to learn from outstanding faculty, work alongside talented peers, and be part of a community driven by innovation and excellence has been incredibly meaningful to me.

"It is an environment that continually inspires growth, curiosity, and a deeper commitment to impactful research

"The University constantly pushed me to aim higher, think critically, and grow. It has shaped how I want to contribute to innovation and real-world impact."

And what makes it most rewarding, she adds, is the opportunity to contribute to the UAE's growing leadership in innovation and advanced technology.

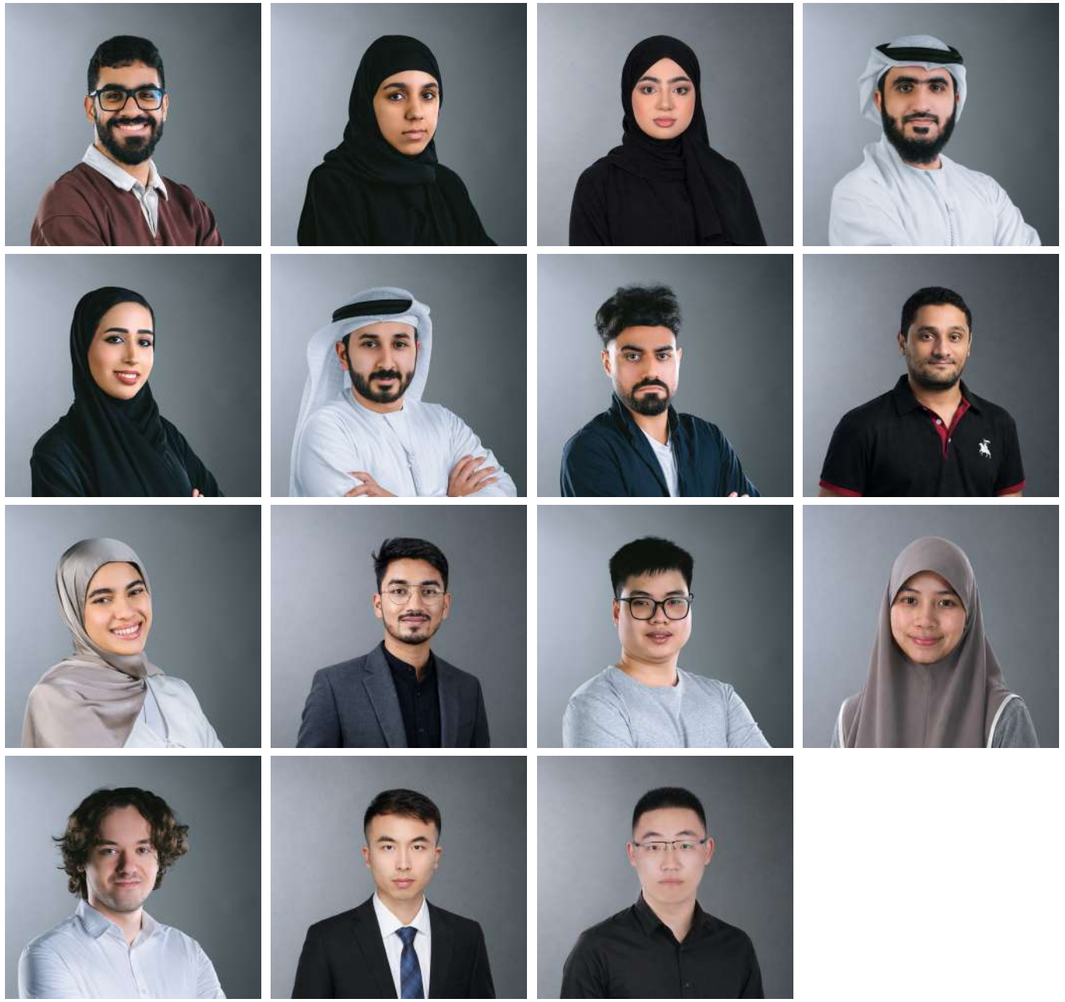
Robotics

17
Master's students

Master's

Ali Abouzeid – Egypt
Sumaya Abdulrahman Abdulla Alameri – United Arab Emirates
Maitha AlGhaithi – United Arab Emirates
Noora Saeed Alhajeri* – United Arab Emirates
Abdulaziz Ahmed Alkamali – Oman
Salamah Almazrouei – United Arab Emirates
Mohammed Hamad Almozahmi – United Arab Emirates
Ibrahim Jamal Aldin Alsarraj – Syria
Ramy Mohamed Yousef Kachwaa – Egypt
Malak Ibrahim Mohamed Mohamed Mansour – Egypt
Nakul Vijay Nibe – India
Pham Phuoc Minh Quang – Vietnam
Tunpitcha Raiprasert – Thailand
Asma Saleh* – United Arab Emirates
Konstantin Smirnov – Russia
Dequan Yang – China
Haobo Yang – China

* Not pictured



Alumni welcome

Somewhere in the world right now, someone is deciding whether to apply to MBZUAI. They're nervous, second-guessing themselves, with no idea that someone like them already made it – and is standing exactly where they hope to stand. You are someone else's proof that it's possible.

Think about what this place is. A world-class AI university, built in Abu Dhabi, by a country that decided the future was worth investing in before it arrived. MBZUAI didn't wait to be relevant: it built relevance from scratch. And it filled this place with people like you: some who grew up here and chose to shape it, others who left everything familiar for a city seen only in photographs. Different journeys. The same audacity.

Nobody talks about the hard parts. So we will. There were moments you doubted whether you belonged here – moments the work felt impossible, the distance from loved ones unbearable, the future less like a horizon and more like a wall. You pushed through anyway, not because it was easy, but because something in you refused to stop. That's what we're celebrating. The degree is just the proof.

To Abu Dhabi: thank you for giving our graduates something no curriculum could – the experience of building a life somewhere extraordinary.

The most important thing: you are no longer a student of MBZUAI. You are part of it: permanently, unconditionally, forever. The alumni community you're joining is not a mailing list or a LinkedIn group. It is a family who sat in the same seats, felt the same doubts, and chose to keep going. They are your people now.

Wherever you go, whatever you build, you will never stop belonging to this community. And this community will never stop belonging to you.

Rawdha Almeraikhi
Assistant Vice President, National Engagement and Outreach

Welcome home, Class of 2026. You are one of us now.

جامعة محمد بن زايد
للذكاء الاصطناعي
Mohamed bin Zayed University
of Artificial Intelligence

Pioneering
What's **Next**

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