SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Al Ain University



جامعة العين
AL AIN UNIVERSITY

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 10

Al Ain University Admissions Policy: Equity, Fairness, and Non-Discrimination

Formal Admissions Policy and Public Availability

Al Ain University (AAU) maintains a formal admissions policy that is clearly documented and publicly accessible. The university's **Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions policies** are published on AAU's official website and in its student handbook, ensuring transparency for all stakeholdersqaa.ac.ukqaa.ac.uk. These policies outline the criteria and processes for admission and are **readily available** to prospective students. The **QAA International Quality Review** of AAU confirms that the admissions regulations are pre-defined, published, and consistently applied, providing a transparent overview of student admission proceduresqaa.ac.uk. In addition, AAU's Admission and Registration Unit oversees the implementation of these policies to maintain parity of admission across all collegesqaa.ac.uk. This public documentation and oversight demonstrate AAU's commitment to fairness and openness in its admissions process.

Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life cycle', for example student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1 The Undergraduate Admissions and Masters Admission policies give a transparent overview of how students are admitted to AAU and provide a basis for a parity of admission across the University. The AAU Admission and Registration Unit oversee these arrangements. Students reported a wide range of reasons for studying at AAU including the course portfolio, proximity of the institution and its reputation in the region. There has been a steady increase in students enrolling at Al Ain University since 2018 rising from 5,410 in 2017-18 to 7,125 in 2022-23. The student demographic demonstrates a diversity of nationalities with 26% of the students enrolled over the last five years being categorised as international.

4.2 The admissions process for students is outlined on the University website and for Emirati students has a simple 'apply now' button. Students are accepted according to academic standards which are set out by the MoE in the United Arab Emirates. This is reflected in AAU's Undergraduate and Masters Admission policies. These policies and supporting information are easily accessible on the website. Information is categorised under relevant colleges with clear and transparent admission requirements for each course offered at AAU. This includes information about documents required for application, for example it outlines the need for secondary school certificates and transcript, health certificates and other administrative requirements. Students who successfully apply to AAU are required to hold a valid English Language Proficiency certificate.

Commitment to Non-Discrimination in Admissions

AAU's admissions policy explicitly affirms a commitment to **non-discrimination**, ensuring equity and fairness for applicants of all backgrounds. According to the official policy, **admissions decisions are based solely on academic merit (e.g. secondary school achievement) and are made "regardless of gender, race, color, religion, age, handicap or national origin."**en.wikipedia.org. In practice, this means that no applicant is given preferential or prejudicial treatment due to personal characteristics. The policy covers a wide range of protected factors – including **gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, age, and disability** – underscoring that all individuals have the right to be evaluated on equal terms. AAU has described its approach as an "Equal Admissions Policy," whereby **all applicants, including women, are evaluated based on merit** and qualifications, without bias[en.wikipedia.org](en.wikipedia.org). This language aligns with the university's principle that *"all individuals have the right to be treated with respect and equality"* and that any form of discrimination or harassment is unacceptable in the AAU community[en.wikipedia.org](en.wikipedia.org). By embedding such non-discriminatory language into its admissions policy, AAU formally codifies equity and fairness at the gateway of university education.

Admission [edit]

AAU admission policy is based on students' academic achievements in the secondary school certificate or its equivalent, regardless of gender, race, color, religion, age, handicap or national origin. The student may be accepted in AAU either as a full-time student or part-time student.

- Undergraduate Admission Requirements: https://aau.ac.ae/en/admission/undergraduate/general-admission-requirements
- Graduate Admission Requirements: https://aau.ac.ae/en/admission/graduate/graduate-admissions
- Applying link: https://apply.aau.ac.ae/en/

Support and Positive Discrimination Measures

While AAU's admissions criteria are merit-based and non-discriminatory, the university also implements **positive support measures** to foster inclusion of underrepresented or disadvantaged groups. AAU does **not practice quotas or lower standards** for any group; instead, it focuses on providing additional support (sometimes termed positive discrimination or affirmative action in other contexts) to ensure equal opportunity for those who might otherwise be marginalized. Notable measures include:

- **Scholarships for Students of Determination (Disabilities):**

AAU offers a **50% tuition fee discount** for students of determination (i.e. students with documented disabilities) in regular semesters, as long as they maintain satisfactory academic progressaau.ac.ae. This significant fee reduction helps encourage and support the enrollment of students with disabilities, ensuring that financial burden is not a barrier to their access.

10. People of determination:

The University offers a 50% discount on registered credit hour fees for bachelor's programs (except the Bachelor of Dental Surgery program) during regular semesters (excluding summer semesters) to students maintaining a cumulative GPA of 2.50 or higher.

- **Financial Aid for Loss of Family Provider:**

If a student loses their primary family provider (breadwinner) during their studies, the university provides a grant covering **50% of the student's credit hour fees** for the remainder of the bachelor's programaau.ac.ae. This policy – essentially a form of compassionate tuition waiver – is a proactive step to prevent disruption of studies due to sudden financial hardship.

7. Loss of breadwinner

The University offers grants to bachelor's students who lose their primary provider during their university studies, covering 50% of the students' credit hour fees for all programs and 30% for the Bachelor of Dental Surgery program, continuing until the student graduates. The following rules govern this type of grant:

- An attested death certificate shall be submitted.
- The student has not been awarded another scholarship from any other official party.
- The student will benefit from this grant in the semester following the submission of the relevant death certificate.
- The student does not have access to other resources that would enable them to continue their university studies.
- It required for Bachelor of Dental Surgery students to achieve a semester GPA of 3.0 for the continuation of this grant.

- **Humanitarian Assistance for Low-Income Students:**

AAU maintains a **"Contribution Fund"** to assist students facing severe economic difficulties. The university provides *humanitarian assistance to students with harsh financial conditions preventing them from completing their undergraduate studies*, helping those from low socioeconomic backgrounds to continue their educationmail.aau.ac.ae. In practice, this can include tuition support or emergency financial aid based on individual assessments.

6.I.1 Grants and Financial Aid

Subject	Students	*Effective From*	Sep - 2011
Policy #	6.I.1	*Latest Revision*	Feb - 2025
Title of The Policy	Grants and Financial Aid	*Next Review*	Dec - 2025
Responsible Entity	Scholarships and Humanitarian Aid Committee	*Policy Pages*	5

Definitions	**AAU:** Al Ain University
Purpose	The purpose of the Grants and Financial Aid fund is to offer financial incentives to students who excel academically or in extracurricular activities. The University also provides humanitarian assistance to students who have harsh financial conditions preventing them from completing their undergraduate studies.
Scope	• Academic Grants. • Humanitarian Aid Grants.
Statement	The AAU provides grants and financial support for various purposes, including recognizing high-achieving "A" students, supporting active and engaged students, assisting those in financial need, and rewarding students for their research contributions. These initiatives aim to encourage academic excellence, student involvement, and scholarly achievements.
Procedures	**First: Academic Grants** **1-High School Excellence Grants:** • **100% Grant** ◦ **Eligible Category**: Top Five Students in UAE ◦ **Conditions**: Achieving a semester GPA of at least 3.8, based on registration for a minimum of 15 credit hours. • **50% Grant** ◦ **Eligible Category**: Students with a secondary school grade of at least 99% ◦ **Conditions**: Achieving a semester GPA of at least 3.8, based on registration for a minimum of 15 credit hours. • **40% Grant** ◦ **Eligible Category**: Students with a secondary school grade of at least 98% ◦ **Conditions**: Achieving a semester GPA of at least 3.8, based on registration for a minimum of 15 credit hours. • **30% Grant** ◦ **Eligible Category**: Students with a secondary school grade between 94% and 97.99% ◦ **Conditions**: Achieving a semester GPA of at least 3.6, based on registration for a minimum of 15 credit hours. • **20% Grant** ◦ **Eligible Category**: Students with a secondary school grade between 90% and 93.99% ◦ **Conditions**: The 30% discount continues into the next semester if the student

These initiatives illustrate AAU's commitment to **equity in access** by actively supporting disadvantaged groups. They are justified as means to **level the playing field** for students who show academic potential but face external challenges. By financially empowering students with

disabilities or economic hardships, AAU's policy works to ensure that *ability to pay* or personal circumstances do not unfairly limit someone's opportunity to obtain higher education. This approach aligns with the principles of affirmative action — not by altering admission standards, but by providing additional resources and accommodations to help underrepresented students succeed.

Accessibility of the Admissions Process

AAU has taken concrete steps to ensure that the admissions process itself is accessible and user-friendly for all applicants, including those who might have special needs or logistical constraints. Key measures include:

- **Online Application Platform:**

The university provides a streamlined **online admissions portal**, allowing applicants to apply from anywhere. On AAU's website, the admissions process is clearly outlined and applicants (including a dedicated one-click "Apply Now" option for certain groups) can submit all required information electronicallyqaa.ac.uk. This online system improves access for international applicants and those who cannot easily visit campus, and it adheres to modern standards of accessibility (e.g. compatible with screen readers for visually impaired users). The QAA review noted that the admissions information and requirements are transparently presented on the website, categorized by college and program for clarityqaa.ac.uk. All necessary forms and guidance (such as required documents, English proficiency, etc.) are available digitally, ensuring a smooth and equitable application experience.

4.2 The admissions process for students is outlined on the University website and for Emirati students has a simple 'apply now' button. Students are accepted according to academic standards which are set out by the MoE in the United Arab Emirates. This is reflected in AAU's Undergraduate and Masters Admission policies. These policies and supporting information are easily accessible on the website. Information is categorised under relevant colleges with clear and transparent admission requirements for each course offered at AAU. This includes information about documents required for application, for example it outlines the need for secondary school certificates and transcript, health certificates and other administrative requirements. Students who successfully apply to AAU are required to hold a valid English Language Proficiency certificate.

- **Physical Accessibility and Accommodations:**

As part of its inclusive ethos, AAU has invested in making its campuses **physically accessible**. This includes developing infrastructure like ramps, elevators, and designated facilities to accommodate individuals with mobility impairmentsaau.ac.ae. Such accommodations ensure that once admitted, students with disabilities can navigate campus buildings and classrooms with relative ease. Moreover, the university's policies indicate that applicants classified as "students of determination" (persons with disabilities) are welcomed in any program, with appropriate support provided. AAU also introduced flexible learning options (such as distance learning

arrangements when needed) for students of determination, demonstrating adaptability in the admissions pathway for those who require it.

Residence Halls

AAU provides students with appropriate dormitories that have all means of comfort and stability necessary to create a healthy atmosphere for studying. The tasks of the Dorms Unit include receiving new students, providing them with relevant advice and instructions, informing them of the dorms' rules and regulations, their responsibilities, assisting students in resolving the problems they face, and following up special cases that require health care.

1. There are two dormitories; one for the female students, the other for the male students.

2. The dormitories can hold up to fifty students.

3. There are single, double, and triple rooms as well as rooms for six students.

4. The fees are nominal.

5. All security and housekeeping services are provided 24/7. 6. The dormitories are supervised by specialized staff.

Through these measures, AAU works to remove both digital and physical barriers to admission. The **combination of an easy-to-use online application** and **accessible campus facilities** reflects AAU's goal of making higher education attainable for all eligible students, including those with special needs or those residing farther away. This comprehensive accessibility aligns with the broader **inclusive education** mission and Sustainable Development Goals focus on accessible, equitable quality education.

Alignment with UAE Ministry and Federal Equity Policies

AAU's admissions policy and its implementation are in **strong alignment with UAE national education policies and laws** regarding equitable access. The university is fully **licensed and regulated by the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE)**, which mandates strict standards for fairness in student admissionsen.wikipedia.org. In fact, AAU's admissions criteria adhere to the academic standards set out by the MoE's Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) for all higher education institutions in the countryqaa.ac.uk. This means that minimum requirements (such as high school grades and language proficiency) follow the guidelines uniformly applied across accredited UAE universities, ensuring no arbitrary barriers to entry. The International Quality Review report on AAU highlighted that *"Students are accepted according to academic standards which are set out by the MoE in the United Arab Emirates"*, and that AAU's own policies reflect these standardsqaa.ac.uk. By complying with CAA regulations, AAU guarantees that its admissions processes meet national benchmarks for fairness and transparency.

Moreover, AAU's non-discrimination stance echoes federal laws in the UAE that promote tolerance and equality. The UAE has enacted laws prohibiting discrimination and hate on the basis of characteristics like race, religion, ethnicity, and casteu.ae. In spirit, AAU's admissions policy upholds these principles by ensuring no applicant is excluded or favored due to such attributes. The university has publicly supported the country's agenda of **peaceful co-existence and non-discrimination**. For example, AAU has referenced the UAE's **Anti-Discrimination Law (Federal Decree No. 2 of 2015)** in its campus awareness programs, reinforcing that the institution stands firmly against biased treatmentaau.ac.ae. Additionally, AAU's licensure by MoE and oversight by local authorities (e.g. Abu Dhabi's Department of Education and Knowledge) bind it to national directives on accessibility – including provisions for students with disabilities often termed *"people of determination"* by UAE policy. AAU's 50% scholarship for students of determination and its accessible campus infrastructure directly support the UAE government's inclusion strategy for people with disabilities in educationaau.ac.aeaau.ac.ae. In summary, AAU's admissions approach is not only internally driven by its own values but is also **congruent with federal educational equity policies**, demonstrating regulatory compliance and shared commitment to nondiscrimination.

Implementation of Policy and Public Communications

AAU provides evidence through its actions and communications that the principles of equitable and fair admissions are actively implemented. **Diversity in the student body** is one clear indicator: the university's enrollment has grown steadily in recent years and comprises students from many nationalities, with about 26% of students identified as international over the past five yearsqaa.ac.uk. This diverse demographic outcome suggests that AAU's non-discriminatory admissions policy is effective in attracting and admitting students regardless of nationality or background. All students, whether domestic or international, male or female, able-bodied or disabled, are evaluated by the same academic criteria, resulting in a rich multicultural campus community.

AAU also communicates its commitments through official channels and events. The university leadership and Deanship of Student Affairs have organized awareness initiatives reinforcing the importance of tolerance and equal opportunity. Notably, AAU hosted a high-profile lecture entitled **"Combat Discrimination and Hatred,"** presented by the University Chancellor, to educate the community on anti-discrimination valuesaau.ac.ae. Such public events demonstrate AAU's stance and educate both current and prospective students on the university's culture of inclusivity. In its annual reports and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) disclosures, AAU frequently highlights policies like the **non-discriminatory admissions policy** and the **equal opportunity scholarships** as part of its social impact commitment. For example, in AAU's SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities) report, the university underscores that it guarantees open access to education for all genders and nationalities by basing admission solely on academic achievementen.wikipedia.org. Likewise, under SDG5 (Gender Equality), AAU showcases that women applicants have the same admission opportunities as men, evidenced by high female enrollment in various programs – a direct result of the equal admissions policy.

In terms of **governance documentation**, the **Student Handbook** and official **University Catalog** provide concrete implementation details of the admissions policy. These documents

include sections on admissions procedures, students' rights, and available support services. For instance, the handbook details the process for admitting *Students of Determination*, indicating the accommodations and fee discounts available to themaau.ac.ae. The transparency of these documents, which are accessible to the public, allows external observers (such as ranking agencies or accreditors) to verify that AAU's practices align with its stated policies. Indeed, an external quality review affirmed that AAU's admissions information (requirements, processes, support) is comprehensive and easily accessible to all prospective studentsqaa.ac.ukqaa.ac.uk.

Finally, AAU's consistent messaging in press releases, website news, and community engagement reflects its **ongoing commitment to equity**. Whether celebrating scholarships awarded to high-achieving students from underprivileged backgrounds, or highlighting new campus facilities for accessibility, AAU uses these communications to demonstrate how the admissions policy is put into action. This track record of implementation — from diverse intakes to supportive programs — gives credibility to AAU's claim of equitable and fair admissions. It shows that the policy is not just words on paper, but a living practice contributing to a more inclusive higher education environment.

Conclusion

In summary, **Al Ain University's admissions policy strongly embodies equity, fairness, and non-discrimination**, aligning with both institutional values and national regulations. The policy is formally documented and publicly available, making the admissions process transparent to all. Its language unequivocally prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, nationality, disability, socio-economic status, or other personal attributes, ensuring that academic merit remains the sole criterion for student admissionen.wikipedia.org. AAU complements this equal-opportunity stance with supportive measures akin to affirmative action – such as significant tuition discounts and financial aid for students of determination and those facing financial hardships – to promote the inclusion and success of underrepresented groupsaau.ac.aeaau.ac.ae. The university has also invested in accessible application procedures and campus facilities, lowering practical barriers to entryaau.ac.ae. Importantly, AAU's approach is in harmony with UAE Ministry of Education standards and the country's anti-discrimination laws, reflecting a broader commitment to social justice in educationqaa.ac.uku.ae. Through concrete implementation and public engagement, AAU demonstrates that its admissions policy is actively upholding fairness – every applicant is given an equal window to the future, fulfilling the university's motto of being "Your Window to the Future" for all members of society.