Abu Dhabi University Becomes First in UAE to Secure QABA Approval for Master's-Level Applied Behavior Analysis Coursework

the program supports national priorities in inclusive education and specialized workforce development, with Emirati women accounting for 64% of enrolled students

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 12 November 2026: Abu Dhabi University (ADU) has announced that its Master of Arts in Applied Behavior Analysis (MA ABA) has received approval from the Qualified Applied Behavior Analysis Credentialing Board (QABA®), making it the first official master's program in the UAE to receive this recognition. QABA is an internationally recognized professional credentialing body that assesses academic coursework against the requirements of its professional certifications. Its QBA credentialing program is accredited by the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB), a US-based accreditation body.

Offered by ADU's College of Arts, Education, and Social Sciences (CAESS), the program prepares professionals to address the growing need for specialized behavioral services across the UAE. For students, the coursework approval means that the program's academic content meets QABA's requirements towards the QBA credential, providing a pathway to pursue an internationally accredited professional certification, subject to meeting the additional certification requirements. This enables students to strengthen their professional qualifications and prepare for specialized roles in applied behavior analysis across education, healthcare and other related settings.

The program also reflects growing national participation in this specialized field, with Emirati women accounting for 64% of total enrolment. This representation highlights the contribution of national talent to developing the specialized expertise needed to advance inclusive education, healthcare and community well-being in the UAE.

The achievement reflects ADU's contribution to the UAE's vision of building an inclusive society where people of determination have access to quality education, healthcare and specialized support services. It also aligns with the objectives of the UAE's National Autism Policy and National Policy for Empowering People of Determination, which emphasize strengthening professional capabilities and improving access to specialized services. Through the program, ADU is contributing to the development of local expertise needed to support these national priorities.

Professor Ghassan Aouad, Chancellor of Abu Dhabi University, said: "Developing the specialized expertise required to build an inclusive society is an important part of the UAE's wider ambitions for its education and healthcare sectors. At Abu Dhabi University, we see it as our responsibility to contribute to these ambitions by offering academic programs that respond to emerging

national needs and prepare professionals to make a meaningful difference in their communities. The QABA coursework approval is an important recognition of this commitment, reinforcing the quality and international relevance of our academic offering while supporting the development of local capabilities in applied behavior analysis."

The program benefits from the expertise of Dr. Aida Tarifa-Rodriguez, a Board Certified Behavior Analyst–Doctoral (BCBA-D) and Qualified Behavior Analyst (QBA) with over 20 years of experience in behavioral science and specialized education. Her professional experience includes research at the Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Special Education, operated by the New England Center for Children (MRC-NECC), focusing on language development, communication and evidence-based interventions for individuals with autism and other developmental needs. ADU has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MRC-NECC, providing students with opportunities to undertake internships and gain practical experience in a specialized educational setting.

Dr. Aida Tarifa-Rodriguez, Assistant Professor at the College of Arts, Education, and Social Sciences at ADU, said: "Applied behavior analysis plays an important role in translating scientific research into practical interventions that can improve the lives of individuals with autism and other developmental needs. However, effective practice requires more than theoretical knowledge; it calls for professionals who can assess individual needs, apply evidence-based approaches and adapt interventions to the cultural and social contexts in which they work. Through our master's program, we aim to develop this combination of scientific understanding and practical competence, preparing graduates to contribute to more effective and responsive support services across the UAE. The QABA coursework approval provides external recognition of the academic foundation underpinning this preparation."

ADU's Master of Arts in Applied Behavior Analysis combines advanced coursework, supervised practical experience and a research thesis, covering areas such as behavioral assessment, intervention design, ethical practice and evidence-based decision-making. With an emphasis on culturally responsive approaches, the program is designed for educators, psychologists, speech-language pathologists (SLPs), occupational therapists (OTs), counselors and other professionals working with individuals with developmental or behavioral needs. Graduates can pursue opportunities across schools, healthcare institutions, rehabilitation centers, early intervention programs and community organizations.

- Ends -