Curious, visionary, and unforgettable.

Just three words that you, the Class of 2020 and NYU Abu Dhabi’s seventh graduating class, use to characterize yourselves. You are some 300 students, hailing from 75 countries. Most of you speak more than two languages. You were selected from 11,000 applicants four years ago, and since then, you have won a number of prestigious awards and scholarships, gained experience at major global organizations, and given back to communities both in the UAE and abroad through outreach, engagement, and volunteering.

You exemplify extraordinary character.

The impact of COVID-19 has been felt acutely by you, our graduating seniors. This semester has not been the one that any of us envisioned, but the commitment, care, and positive spirit that each of you has demonstrated has been a profound source of motivation and assurance.

Today, we celebrate all of your qualities. Some that can’t be taught, endeavors that don’t make headlines, and achievements - both personal and academic - that aren’t always recognized with awards. You are remarkable because of your immeasurable compassion and courage, steadfast desire to be ethical in a fast-changing world, and willingness to engage in solving problems bigger than yourself.

As graduates of NYU Abu Dhabi, you see things differently because you’ve found a way to navigate through unique backgrounds toward a common purpose. You have experienced and contributed to a truly global education that values both intercultural understanding and individuality. You, the Class of 2020, symbolize hope for a more inspired and cooperative world.

We are proud to count you among the global family of alumni of both NYU and NYU Abu Dhabi.

Congratulations!
A MESSAGE FROM STUDENT GOVERNMENT PRESIDENT HAFSA AHMED

To the Class of 2020 (and loved ones),

Four years ago, our teenage selves embarked on nothing short of a quest, whether we knew it or not. That quest took us anywhere from halfway across town to halfway across the world. Out here on Saadiyat, we asked more questions than could be answered, discovered new realities both in the classroom and the world at large, were pushed outside of our comfort zones, discovered new comfort zones and ways of being, learned from each other, our professors and other community members, and in many ways, from our own selves, past and present.

Days turned into months, months into years, and along the way we found our own happiness, big and small, individual and collective. Now it’s Commencement and for the first time in our young university’s history, its graduates – us – are not together. It’s okay to acknowledge and accept how awful that is. It’s also okay to acknowledge that despite that, in some ways we are closer than we have ever been before. This pandemic has tested us, challenged us, even pushed us to our limits. It has unearthed our vulnerabilities. But more than anything, it has shown us that the world needs the compassion, resilience, and resolve that NYUAD has nourished in every single one of us. The past four years may seem ephemeral, but let the lessons learned and friendships fostered last us entire lifetimes. Most importantly, let us leave imprints of the care that we fortunately received here, wherever and upon whoever the world takes us to next.

To our loved ones, thank you for continuing to catch us when we fall and push us right back up every time. To my Class, my family, mabrook for achieving this milestone – we’ve got countless more to go and it’ll be a sight to behold!

Yours with solidarity and spirit,
Hafsa Ahmed
Sports have played an important role in Alexander Fleming’s time at NYU Abu Dhabi. The ex-captain of the volleyball team knows how easy it can be for a busy university student to have competing commitments and potentially skip regular practice sessions. But the discipline in sports — turning up and bringing his A-game to each session — has benefited him in the classroom.

Fleming made the switch to become a mechanical engineering major later than most engineering students. There were challenges, but he persevered and managed to meet the requirements for the major. He knew that, as in volleyball, consistency meant results.

During his time at NYU Abu Dhabi, the Australian native was also a student assistant with the University’s fitness center. Together with the department, he championed wellness and positivity, focusing on advocating a passion for health and fitness over body image.

The accessibility and availability of NYU Abu Dhabi’s sports facilities resonated with Fleming. Here, the facilities are for all students, not just student athletes, and this inclusiveness is something Fleming really appreciates. “A lot of effort and resources have been put into caring for our student body so that we have a well-structured fitness element to our education.”

Alexander Fleming
Mechanical Engineering
Australia
For Candidate Weekend, every student was asked to bring an object that represented home to them. Reem Al Shami had brought along her Arabic coffee pot without realizing that it would become a reflection of her four years here — an exchange and learning of cultures and experiences.

“Instead of filling my pot with Arabic coffee, I have been on a journey where I am filling my pot with coffees from around the world. Coffees from Brazil, Armenia, Ethiopia... they represent the countries of the friends I’ve made.”

The Emirati student was often surprised by some of her new classmates’ perspectives on people from the UAE and took it upon herself to answer questions on the topic, especially in a world where the media can portray a biased view. “It is important to me that we reflect the accurate perceptions about who we are.”

The political science major hopes to have a career in public service and one day become an ambassador for the UAE.
You may want to avoid getting into an existential argument with Deok Hyun (David) Kim. If being a philosophy major isn’t enough, he is also an ex-president of the NYU Abu Dhabi Debate Union.

Initially drawn to the Debate Union because of its dynamic and engaging dialogues, Kim joined and learned ways to put forward his arguments and how to discuss a point of view that he may not personally agree with.

Beyond learning how to see and understand perspectives that are different from his own, Kim believes critical analysis is important to back up arguments because “you can’t get away with saying things without substance as people will challenge your thoughts rigorously.” Pair that with the dialectic nature of being a philosophy major and Kim’s world is all shades of gray — in a good way. These experiences opened Kim up to how complex the world is, and said it allowed him to be able to embrace “the messiness of life.”

Four years at NYU Abu Dhabi was “trajectory altering” for Kim. “I will be attending Harvard Law School and I wouldn’t be on the trajectory I am on right now without NYU Abu Dhabi.”
Mia Mancuso believes in paying it forward, and she has committed her time at NYU Abu Dhabi to doing just that.

During her third week at NYU Abu Dhabi, Mancuso received news that a friend back home in the United States had passed away. Devastated, she signed up for a health program where the attendees included a member of REACH, the school’s mental health and general wellbeing student support group. A few weeks later, that student recognized Mancuso along the Highline and checked in to see how she was coping. Mancuso was touched, and it wasn’t long before she became a REACH member herself. “I would like to be able to do the same for others in need.”

Navigating her year first at university was challenging, and self doubts often arose for the physics major. Thanks to the helpful pep talks and upperclass students who led by example, Mancuso soon realized it was possible to be driven to success in her studies, while also finding balance. Those early experiences drove Mancuso to be part of the First Year Dialogue program in hope to share her own struggles and provide some positive outlook for incoming first years.

Helping others has been a big part of Mancuso’s life at NYU Abu Dhabi and she values the friendships and support network that lifted her through rough patches. “I’ve made friends who will be there with me for the good times and bad times… and I know that I will stay in touch with them for the rest of my life.”
Keziah Ann Johnson spent the last four years studying for a demanding degree in mechanical engineering, creating meaningful relationships, and constructing a solar-powered house.

Her educational journey at NYU Abu Dhabi was peppered with frequent trips to Dubai to take part in the Solar Decathlon, working with a team of fellow students to build a house that runs entirely on solar energy.

She dedicated herself to the task, despite an often gruelling schedule. “We’d go to Dubai early in the morning to work on site, then we would return to campus to attend a class, or take a quiz. Then we’d go back!”

The experience taught her about sustainable building practices and offered the chance to apply her engineering skills in the real world, but it also showed her the importance of teamwork and working with others from all around the world.

The opportunity to work with such an international team is one of the benefits of being in the UAE. Johnson, who grew up in Abu Dhabi, says the country’s internationalism is encapsulated in NYU Abu Dhabi and has enabled her to connect with people from all around the world to build bonds that will last her lifetime.

“Two things I love about NYU Abu Dhabi are the community I built here and the opportunities I have received. Going to a small school allowed me to make a family, not just of friends but also faculty and staff.”

As Johnson moves on to life after graduation, she said that the support she received from the community will propel her forward in her future in engineering.
Liene Magdalēna Pekuse came to NYU Abu Dhabi from Latvia knowing that making art brings her great joy but she didn’t realize that it could be a viable career option.

Her mother had bought her a camera when she was young, and while she quickly developed a passion for photography, she never looked at it as something that could provide her a future.

“I just didn’t think I was good enough for it to be a career after graduating. In high school I had a very science-based experience. No one had suggested that art was an option, until I got to NYU Abu Dhabi, and it pushed me forward with confidence,” she said.

Majoring in film and new media, Pekuse began working on her Capstone, a film that shows two girls who are running away from home to escape adulthood. In their journey they have to face the trauma that the parents have caused, but despite the hardship they have nothing to worry about as long as they have each other.

“The movie represents how I feel about the friendships I have been so lucky to form at university. I wanted to make a film to show how friends can save a life,” she said.
WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY FROM YOUR TIME AT NYU ABU DHABI?

Staying up with my friends on the highline, chatting about politics and random topics

Meeting HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed in the library

Meeting people from all over the world

Discovering Mina Port

Walking on Saadiyat Beach

Working on my Capstone with an all-women cast and crew

Exploring different parts of Abu Dhabi

Walking the streets of Hamdan with friends all in search of good karak

Iftar dinners during Ramadan

Discussions around dinner tables

Attending Candidate Weekend as a student and continuing to be a member of the NYUAD mission

Trying classes that push me out of my comfort zone

Exploring different parts of Abu Dhabi

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The Class of 2020 are driven and motivated, and were involved in a range of global work experiences throughout their four years at NYU Abu Dhabi. Ninety percent of the Class of 2020 had at least one work experience, and almost 70 percent of the graduating class had three or more work experiences throughout their years of study.

The Class of 2020 explored the borderless fields of education, healthcare, and public service. They engaged in foreign policy dialogue and contributed to a more peaceful and productive world at global think tanks and research institutes. They traveled the world and witnessed the impact that charities, foundations, and nonprofits have on the people who need them the most. Some conducted research in labs and in the field, explored society and the sciences, and saw the future at Apple, Google, and Boeing. Others discovered how to develop that world and keep it moving with companies that manage construction, energy, transportation, and telecommunications. The Class of 2020 were immersed in the arts at top galleries, festivals, and theaters across the globe. They explored how to tell stories with media organizations including *The National*, *Dazed*, and *ITP*, and how to communicate through marketing. They learned strategy development and financial analysis from top consultancies like Deloitte, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and KPMG.

Abu Dhabi Investment Authority
Abu Dhabi National Oil Company
Aga Khan Foundation
Apple
Bae, Kim and Lee
Bain and Company
Boeing
CANVIA
Center for Disease Control
Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi
Coca Cola
Constanza Macras | Dorky Park
Credit Suisse
Crown Prince Court - Abu Dhabi
CRVENA Association for Culture and Art
Dalberg
Deloitte
Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi
Development Alternatives Inc.
Educate Girls
Edudvision Foundation
Ericsson
Ernst & Young
General Electric
GliaxoSmithKline
Google
Harvard Business School
Hay Festival
Hewlett Packard Enterprise
Human Rights Watch
Hyperloop One
Imkan
IRENA
Jean Paul Najar Foundation
Jordan River Foundation
JP Morgan
Khalifa Bin Zayed Foundation
KPMG
Leidar
Louvre Abu Dhabi
Lynk
Matenadaran Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts
McKinsey & Company
Mercedes Benz
Metropolitan Transport Authority
Mubadala Investment Company
MWH Global
Nestle
No5 Barristers Chambers
Prague Youth Theater
PwC
Restless Books
Royal Film Commission
Save the Children
Sothebys
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
The National
UAE Permanent Mission to the United Nations
Uber
UK Mission to the United Nations
US Embassy to France
Warehouse 421
HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE THE CLASS OF 2020?

Ambitious • Curious • Persistent • Inspired • Diverse • Motivated • Fearless • Special

• Life-changing • Unforgettable • Spontaneous • Family • Adventurous • Daring

• Creative • Brilliant • Dynamic • Intellectual • Passionate • Unique • Visionary

Energetic • Innovative • Risk-takers • Compassionate • Eclectic • Fun • Bold • Warm

Charismatic • Talented • Active • Fierce • Strong • Vibrant • Connected • Kind

• Ambition • Curiosity • Persistence • Inspiration • Diversity • Motivation • Fearlessness • Specialness

• Life-changing • Unforgettable • Spontaneous • Family • Adventurous • Daredevils

• Creativity • Brilliance • Dynamism • Intellectualism • Passion • Uniqueness • Visionary

Energetic • Innovation • Risk-takers • Compassion • Eclecticism • Fun • Boldness • Warmth

Charismatic • Talent • Activity • Intensity • Strength • Vibrancy • Connection • Kinship

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The Class of 2020 won global awards, scholarships, and accolades, earning them top spots at prestigious graduate schools and helping to secure employment at some of the world’s pre-eminent businesses and institutions.

For some of the Class of 2020, their next step will be to start new jobs and begin applying all they’ve learned in their time at NYU Abu Dhabi to the workforce. Many of the graduates have chosen to remain in the UAE at organizations including McKinsey and Company, Dubai Expo 2020, and the Department of Health while others will travel across the globe to pursue opportunities in management consultancy, transport, teaching, finance, and other areas.

Other graduates will go onto further study, and have already been accepted to graduate programs in disciplines spanning economics, computer science, international security, political science, law, physics, and medicine. Many will be studying for degrees at the world’s leading institutions including the University of Oxford, Sciences Po, Columbia, MIT, Stanford, Cornell, and Harvard, while having won global awards such as the Rhodes, Fulbright, Ertegun, Erasmus Mundus, and Aker Scholarship.
OVER HALF A MILLION GRADUATES ACROSS THE WORLD.

WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY.

GET INVOLVED
nyuad.nyu.edu/alumni

NYU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

nyuad.nyu.edu/commencement
MEMORIES WORTH SHARING

#myNYUAD
#NYUAD2020