

# Master of Fine Arts (MFA)

Admissions Requirements

Academic Year 2024 – 2025

**Sharjah Performing Arts Academy (SPAA)**

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## About Sharjah Performing Arts Academy

Sharjah Performing Arts Academy (SPAA) is a centre of excellence, the only Academy in the MENA region dedicated to exclusively training and educating students for the professional performing and production arts.

Our Academy focuses on training and educating students in performing and production arts to succeed in a competitive and ever evolving industry. SPAA provides a comprehensive education for the professional performing artist, and production and technical specialists.

Performing and production arts includes all the roles involved in the collaborative process of making professional performances. This includes, but is not limited to, stage managers, scenic designers and painters, directors, actors, musicians, singers, dancers, theatre technicians, backstage crew, choreographers, costume designers and makers; sound, and lighting designers.

Developing creative, highly skilled, and professionally trained individuals who are able to collaborate and lead in any global context is at the forefront of all strategic aims of our Academy.

SPAA graduates will be strong, confident, independent individuals with life skills that enable them to be the changemakers of the performing and production arts industries.

At SPAA, our students, faculty and staff come from all over the world. Since opening our doors in 2019 our team here at SPAA has grown exponentially. From the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia to Spain, Chile, and South Africa, we have enrolled students, staff and faculty from 42 countries across globe.

We take talented individuals and turn them into credible professional performers, dancers, actors, designers, technicians, and stage managers through a deep exploration of the world of theatre and live performance. SPAA embraces, celebrates, and encourages the creativity, diversity, and unique talent of each individual student.

Our Master of Fine Arts: Theatre and Live Arts Creation, a two-year postgraduate degree with concentrations in Design, Directing or Producing, expands the undergraduate experience to train and educate students within their artistic concentration, preparing them to lead teams within the creative and cultural industries, from initial vision through to realization.

SPAA currently offers the following Bachelor of Arts (BA) Undergraduate Programmes:

- BA Acting
- BA Musical Theatre
- BA Production Arts

From September 2024, SPAA will offer the following postgraduate degree (MFA):

- Master Of Fine Arts (MFA) in Theatre and Live Arts Creation

The degree will also include concentrations in Design, Directing or Producing.

## Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Admissions Requirements

The selection process considers not only educational qualifications, but also the applicant's combination of aptitude, ability, and motivation. SPAA values learning from prior experience and welcomes mature students who wish to return to formal study.

Admissions procedures aim to identify applicants who can benefit from the MFA postgraduate combination of intellectual engagement and professional training. The intention is to ensure a good fit between the student's ability and the rigorous demands of the course, so that those who attend the programme can reasonably expect to succeed in achieving the degree.

Applicants seeking admission to the Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Live Performance Creation at SPAA must meet the following minimum criteria:

### Prior Learning

Completion of a bachelor's degree in arts or a relevant discipline with a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 3.25 out of 4.0 or equivalent (e.g., an upper second-class honour in a UK-style degree from a reputable accredited institution or a B+ average).

### English Language Proficiency Requirements

A minimum level of English proficiency in the form of either:

- iBT TOEFL (internet-based test) score of 91 or equivalent, or
- Overall academic IELTS Academic score of 6.5, or
- 1550 EmSAT English score

### References

Two referee recommendations via the SPAA template

- a) [Referee Template](#)

### Statement of Purpose: Video or Written

Each applicant is required to submit a Statement of Purpose. There are two options for the format of this required statement:

- a) A written statement of purpose. Length: between 800-1,000 words. Please see suggestions below for more information.

**OR**

- b) A 2–3-minute video offering a more detailed insight into the student's artistic aspirations and motivations in attending SPAA.

The Statement of Purpose should clearly outline the applicant's motivations and reasons for pursuing postgraduate studies at SPAA.

Here are some guidelines to consider including:

- A statement from a 'first person perspective' (using "I" statements) about why attending SPAA as an MFA student is of interest.
- Information about why career development is relevant now, and the importance of developing it at Sharjah Performing Arts Academy.
- Prior relevant experience can help us understand why you are choosing this course. Consider including it in your personal statement.
- Information on how you will engage with other students and/or what qualities you will bring to the cohort if you attend the course.
- Consider sharing your current aims for your artistic practice and career after you graduate from the programme. If possible, be as specific as you can about your current artistic or career aims.
- The minimum number of words is 800, the maximum, 1000. Or a 2–3-minute personal video statement.

### Audition or Interview

Depending on the programme's specialization, applicants may be required to participate in an interview or audition process. This may include discussing educational, work experience or creative projects listed on the applicant's CV or resume or discussing educational aims or career goals.

### Required Documents

The following required documents should be scanned in a clear and legible form.

- Attested copy of bachelor's certificate (as applicable).
- Equivalency certificate issued by the UAE Ministry of Education for applicants that have graduated from institutions outside of the UAE.
- Official transcript showing the grading scale.
- English language proficiency score certificate (IELTS, TOEFL or EmSAT).
- Passport-style photograph on a white background.
- Valid passport.
- International applicants who reside in the UAE should also upload a clear copy of their valid UAE visa.
- Family Book– UAE National applicants only.
- Valid UAE national ID card (for national and international applicants who currently reside in the UAE).
- References (minimum of two).
- Statement of Purpose (800 to 1,000 words).
- Curriculum Vitae/Resume.
- Portfolio- specific to the area of concentration (Directing, Producing, Set & Costume Design).

## Additional Requirements

Applicants to the MFA programmes are required to have significant practical theatre experience.

Applicants must also submit the following:

- Curriculum Vitae/Resume: Education and work history/experience
- Portfolio: A formal presentation of the applicant's recent portfolio or work is required as part of the application process.
  - Directing: examples of, or a portfolio including commentary and/or documentation of previous theatre work, e.g. photographs, reviews, posters, website pages, awards
  - Set and Costume Design: examples of, or a portfolio containing examples of freehand drawing, and any other artwork, set and/or costume design you may have done, or documentation of your other theatre work.
  - Producing: a portfolio including commentary and/or documentation of your theatre or live event producing work e.g., marketing materials, budgets, statements of purpose, posters, websites or web pages, awards, etc.

## English Language Test Exemptions

Subject to review and approval, the English test score requirement (TOEFL, IELTS or EmSAT) may be waived for an applicant who is a native English speaker who has completed his/her Bachelor's/master's degree qualification in an English-medium institution.

## Conditional Admission Requirements

Applicants with a lower CGPA score (minimum 2.7 out of 4.0 or equivalent) may be considered for conditional admission to a master's programme in exceptional circumstances. If conditional admission is granted, the student must achieve a minimum CGPA of 3.0 out of 4.0 in the first nine credits of taught courses. If the student fails to satisfy the conditions, then his/her registration will be terminated.

## Recognition for Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), is a process that can allow a student to join a programme at an advanced stage and be given credit for section(s) of the course they have missed, based on previous learning they have completed.

The first stage in making an application for RPL is by making a formal application for the course, noting in the applicant's personal statement that they are looking for advanced entry. Additional evidence will later be requested by the Admissions Team to support this.

**Please note:** Certain MFA programmes may not accept transfer applications – the applicant must apply and interview/audition to join the first year in the usual way.

In accordance with SPAA Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, students in the MFA programme will be requested to provide additional evidence of unaccredited, informal, or professional experience at the same academic level (MFA). The Academy may grant credit for prior learning, provided individuals

supply verified and authenticated documentation to substantiate their claims. For MFA programmes, this limit is set at six (6) credit hours. To illustrate, credit for prior learning at the postgraduate level will be applied toward a corresponding MFA-level course at SPAA. However, it is imperative that the minimum course grade attained be at least "B" or equivalent for Postgraduate level courses."

## Mature Students

SPAA actively encourages MFA applications from mature students. We expect prospective students to meet our MFA entry requirements whenever possible, and are steadfast in our commitment, evaluating each applicant based on their merits, carefully reviewing their unique circumstances and experience. It is important to note we rigorously assess individual merits for the possibility of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

## Credit Transfer

As part of the MFA programme, graduate students can seek the transfer of credits earned from graduate courses taken at an institution accredited by the UAE Ministry of Education. These requests are subject to approval and are contingent upon the following conditions:

1. Credits will only be granted for postgraduate-level courses that are substantially equivalent to those offered within the SPAA MFA programme and have not been used to satisfy the requirements for a previously obtained degree.
2. Transfer credits will not be applicable for work-related experience, vocational or training courses, or coursework that does not meet the criteria for postgraduate-level studies.
3. Maximum credit transfer allowance at master's level: 25%

To initiate the credit transfer process, applicants must provide an official transcript and catalogue descriptions of the relevant courses at the time of application.

## Application Timeline

Most postgraduate programmes at SPAA consider applications from November until April, though programmes will close to new applications once they reach the maximum number of students for each area of concentration. We therefore encourage you to apply as soon as you are ready.

## How to Apply: Online

Potential candidates for our Master of Fine Arts (MFA) programme must apply online through our website.

[PG Admission Application Form](#)

## Additional Information: Contact Us

We look forward to receiving your application. If you have any questions or need help with your application, please email: [admissions@spaa.ae](mailto:admissions@spaa.ae)