SK

Samer Khalil

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6 NOVEMBER 2026

Dear Members of the Admissions Committee,

I am glad to recommend Hala Mahmoud for the MSc in Statistics and Data Science at KU Leuven. I have known her for two years, first as a student in my Regression Analysis course in autumn 2023, which had 52 students, and then as my research assistant for two semesters in 2024 and 2025.

Hala finished Regression Analysis with a mark of 97 out of 100, the highest in the class. What I remember more than the mark is how she worked. Her questions in office hours were rarely about how to reach an answer and usually about why a method fails: what happens to a model when its assumptions are only partly true. Later that year, on her own initiative, she started a weekly R help session for second-year students, and around 25 of them came each week.

As my research assistant on a study of household energy use in Amman, she cleaned survey data from 1,100 households. During that work she found that 140 records had been entered twice, an error that changed one of our main estimates. She reported it to me, with the code that showed the problem, before I had noticed anything. That combination of care and honesty is what research needs most, and it is not common at her stage.

Among the students I have taught in eleven years, I would place Hala among the five strongest. I recommend her without reservation, and I am confident that she will do excellent work in your programme.

I would be happy to answer any questions about her application.

Sincerely,

Dr Samer Khalil

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