Zaheen Farraz Ahmad

Curriculum Vitae

Postdoctoral Scholar at the Unversity of Alberta
zfahmad@ualberta.ca | zfahmad.com

Education

Ph.D. in Computing Science, University of Alberta 2017 – 2025
Thesis: *"Strengthening Integration Between Learning and Search For Planning"*
Advisors: Michael Bowling, Levi H.S. Lelis

M.Sc. in Computing Science, University of Alberta 2013 – 2017
Thesis: *"Action Selection for Hammer Shots in Curling: Optimization of Non-convex Continuous Actions With Stochastic Action Outcomes"*
Advisor: Robert C. Holte

B.Sc.Engg. in Computer Science and Engineering, Islamic University of Technology 2008 – 2012
Graduated with Honors, GPA: 3.98/4.00

Work Experience

Postdoctoral Scholar, University of Alberta 2025 – Present

Graduate Research Assistant, University of Alberta 2019 – 2021

Machine Learning Consultant, AB Sciex Pte. Ltd. 2017 – 2018

Lecturer, Islamic University of Technology 2012 – 2013

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, University of Alberta 2013 – 2020
Courses:

- CMPUT 101: Introduction to Computing
- CMPUT 175: Introduction to the Foundations of Computation II

Awards and Scholarships

- Graduate Research Assistant Fellowship, 2021 – 2025
- Graduate Student Teaching Award, 2018
- IUT Gold Medal Award, 2012
- IUT Scholarship, 2009 – 2012

Academic Services

Program Committee:

- 2026: ICLR
- 2025: TMLR, ICLR, ICML

- 2024: ICLR, ICML, NeurIPS (top 10%)
- 2023: AAAI, ICML, NeurIPS
- 2022: AAAI, NeurIPS

Vice-President, Computing Science Graduate Student Association, University of Alberta, 2015

Treasurer, IUT Computing Society, Islamic University of Technology, 2012

Organizer, National ICT Fest, Islamic University of Technology, 2012

Outreach

Presenter, Iverson Day, 2014 – 2019

Panelist, WP Wagner Panel, 2015

Talks

- "Strengthening Integration Between Learning and Search for Planning" — Thesis Seminar, *University of Alberta*, Edmonton, Canada (2025)
- "Generating Approximate Solutions for Submodular Set Function Maximization Problems" — Graduate Student Seminar, *University of Alberta*, Edmonton, Canada (2025)
- "Marginal Utilities for Planning in Continuous or Large, Discrete Action Spaces", *University of Regina*, Regina, Canada (2023)
- "Marginal Utilities for Planning in Continuous or Large, Discrete Action Spaces" — Amii AI Seminar, *University of Alberta*, Edmonton, Canada (2021)
- "Action Selection for Hammer Shots in Curling" — Conference talk, *IJCAI*, New York, USA (2016)
- "AI Analytics for the Sport of Curling" — Amii AI Seminar, *University of Alberta*, Edmonton, Canada (2016)

Publications

Journal Publications

Milson, N., Tashchilina, A., Ooi, T., Czarnecka, A., Ahmad, Z. F., & LeBlanc, L. J. (2023). High-dimensional reinforcement learning for optimization and control of ultracold quantum gases. *Machine Learning: Science and Technology*, *4*(4), 045057.

Durksen, T. L., Chu, M.-W., Ahmad, Z. F., Radil, A. I., & Daniels, L. M. (2016). Motivation in a MOOC: A probabilistic analysis of online learners' basic psychological needs. *Social Psychology of Education*, *19*, 241–260.

Conference Publications

Sokota, S., Ho, C. Y., Ahmad, Z. F., & Kolter, J. Z. (2021). Monte carlo tree search with iteratively refining state abstractions. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, *34*, 18698–18709.

Ahmad, Z. F., Lelis, L., & Bowling, M. (2020). Marginal utility for planning in continuous or large discrete action spaces. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, *33*, 1937–1946.

Ahmad, Z. F., Holte, R. C., & Bowling, M. (2016). Action Selection for Hammer Shots in Curling. *International Joint Conference on Artifical Intelliegence*, 561–567.

Workshop Publications

Ahmad, Z. F., Sturtevant, N., & Bowling, M. (2021). Measuring the Solution Strength of Learning Agents in Adversarial Perfect Information Games. *Association for the Advancement of Aritificial Intelligence*.

Other Publications

Milson, N., Tashchilina, A., Ooi, T., Czarnecka, A., Ahmad, Z. F., & LeBlanc, L. J. (2024). Reinforcement learning control of atom cooling. *Bulletin of the American Physical Society*.

Ahmad, Z. F. (2017). *Action selection for hammer shots in curling: Optimization of non-convex continuous actions with stochastic action outcomes*.