In the UAE, the use and admissibility of electronic signatures is governed by Federal Law No.1 of 2006 regarding Electronic Transactions and E-Commerce. This law defines electronic signature in Article (1) as “any letters, numbers, symbols, voice or processing system in Electronic form applied to, incorporated in, or logically associated with a Data Message with the intention of authenticating or approving the same”. Article (17) states that an electronic signature shall be treated as a Secure Electronic Signature if, through the application of prescribed secure

authentication procedures or commercially acceptable authentication procedures agreed upon by the parties involved, it meets the following requirements:

1. It is uniquely linked to the signatory and to no other person;
2. It is capable of identifying its owner;
3. It is created using means of its owner and under his sole control; and
4. It is linked to the record to which it relates in such a manner that does not allow modification to that record after signing without altering the signature so that any change made after the time of signing is detectable.

In addition, Article (18) allows the parties to rely on an electronic signature or electronic authentication certificate to the extent that such reliance is reasonable. It also provides that the relying party in respect of such signature shall bear the legal consequences of its failure to take reasonable and necessary steps to verify the validity and enforceability of the certificate, as to whether it is suspended or revoked, and of observing any limitations with respect to the certificate.

It should be noted here that the Electronic Transactions and E-Commerce law and all subsequent regulations, regulatory policies, and legal instruments in UAE are intended to be technologically neutral, hence the omission of a specific technology for secure electronic signatures.

Later, the UAE Federal Law No. 36 of 2006 amended certain provisions of the Evidence Law in Civil and Commercial Transactions issued by Federal Law No. 10 of 1992. According to this Law, both electronic signatures, and electronic writing, instruments and documents shall have the same evidential weight as written signatures, and official and customary writing and instruments respectively if they comply with the provisions prescribed in the Federal Law No. (1) of 2006 concerning Electronic Transactions.