

HIGHER EDUCATION IN DUBAI

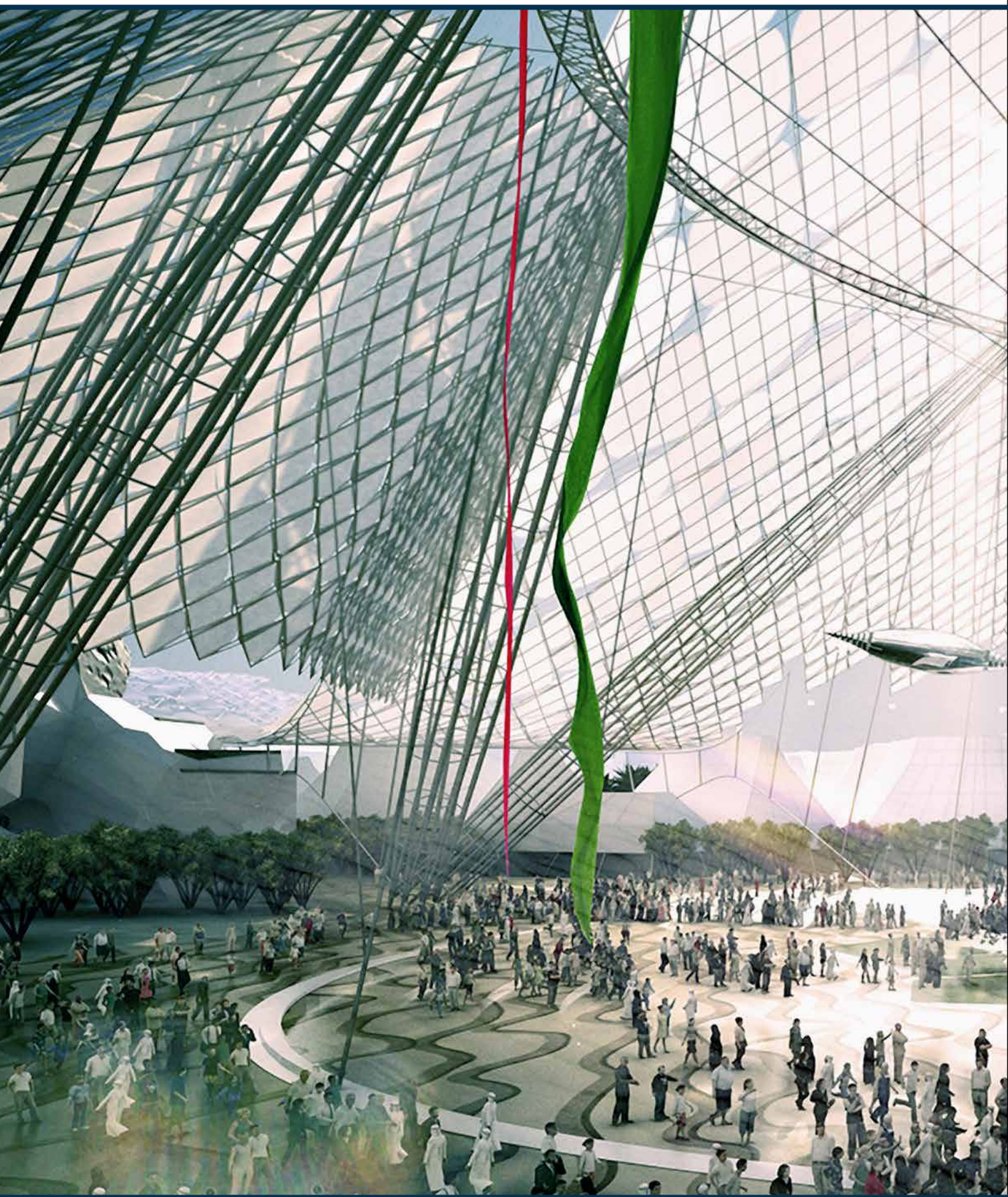




HIGHER EDUCATION IN DUBAI 2017

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FOREWORD

Thirty years ago, Dubai was a relatively unknown, coastal city in the Arabian peninsula, on the southern coast of the Arabian Gulf. Today, thanks to the visionary leadership of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Dubai is a thriving metropolis recognized for its world-class infrastructure, its entrepreneurial culture, and iconic architecture, such as the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. Dubai's economic development is a story of successful economic diversification, with oil and gas revenue contributing less than 2% of GDP. The city is ideally located for future development with two-thirds of the world's population within an eight hour flight. These factors helped Dubai launch a successful bid to host Expo 2020.

Dubai's leadership is committed to education as the key driver to building a knowledge economy. The growth of higher education institutions and programmes in the city mirrors its economic development. In the last 30 years, the number of universities in Dubai has grown from three to 62. These universities come from 12 different jurisdictions including Australia, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Today, Dubai has 33 international universities, offering a wide range of programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Dubai continues to welcome applications from quality higher educational institutions whose presence would enhance student programme choices and produce graduates who can contribute to the city's economic development. This document is designed as an introduction to Dubai's higher education landscape and the application process for universities wishing to establish in Dubai. We hope the information enclosed will encourage you to further explore opportunities for investment in Dubai's higher education sector.



*Dr Warren Fox, Chief of Higher Education,
Knowledge & Human Development Authority,
Dubai International Academic City,
Dubai, United Arab Emirates.*

I. DUBAI HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

1. WHY DUBAI?

Dubai is one of the most vibrant, dynamic, and innovative cities on the planet, and home to over 200 nationalities. Two-thirds of the world's population is an eight hour flight, or less from Dubai. It has an excellent infrastructure including a world-class airline (Emirates), one of the leading shipping and logistic hubs in the world (Jebel Ali) and a road and transport system (metro, trams, buses and taxis) which facilitates economic development across the city. High-speed internet connectivity, and mature telecommunications systems, enable Dubai government and entrepreneurs to engage with the world. Dubai will be hosting Expo 2020¹, an event which will provide a platform to showcase its achievements to the world.

Dubai has a very diverse population with over 90% residents coming from abroad. Universities from 12 jurisdictions around the world, including the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), Australia, India, Austria, and Russia are Higher Education Providers (HEPs) in Dubai. As of the academic year, 2017-2018, Dubai will be home to 62 HEPs, both international and local. These universities offer a wide range of programmes at different levels, with both full-time and part-time options available.

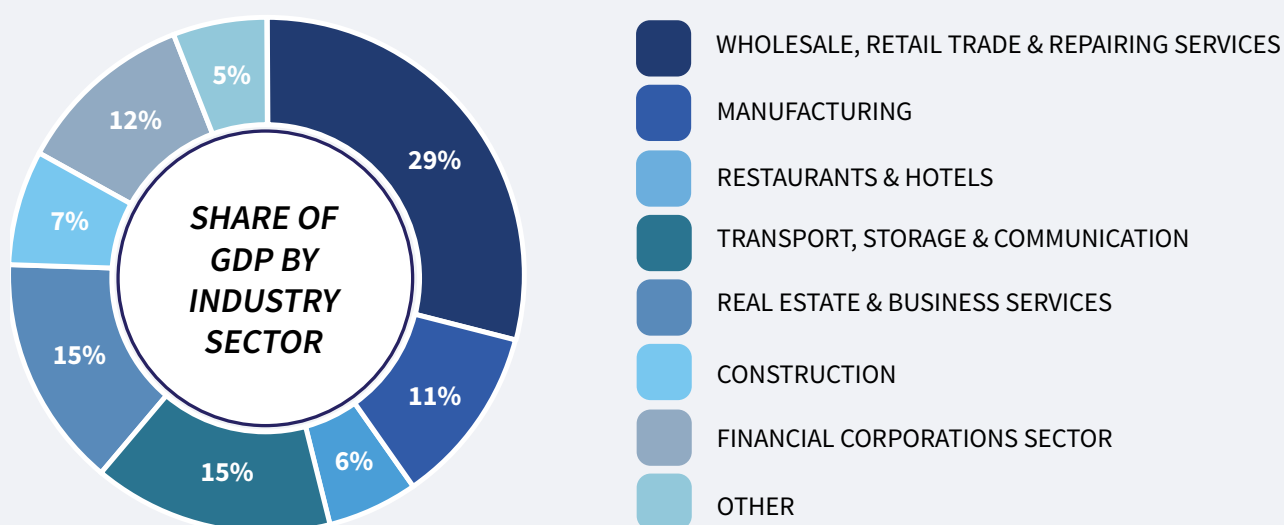
Dubai is a city which lives the future. The city is the innovative and entrepreneurial hub of the region. The city's ongoing economic development provides a wide range of employment opportunities. Dubai government is committed to increasing levels of happiness for all residents through continuous improvements to the infrastructure, streamlining bureaucracy (the goal is to make all government offices paperless by 2021), and adding to the wide range of cultural, sporting, and social activities that already exist. When you consider the charms of this truly 21st century city, it is no surprise that many international students actively plan to live and work in the city after completing their studies.



2. WHY INVEST IN DUBAI'S EDUCATION SECTOR?

Three decades ago, Dubai's leadership embraced a strategy to diversify towards a knowledge economy and move away from oil and gas dependency, which in the 1980s accounted for up to 55% of the Emirate's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Diversification and sustainability have since remained the driving forces behind Dubai's economic development strategy (Figure 1)².

FIGURE 1 | DUBAI'S GDP BY INDUSTRY SECTOR (2015)²



GDP = Gross Domestic Product

As part of the strategy, the Dubai government has launched a number of initiatives and projects to develop infrastructure such as new roads, ports, educational institutions, and medical facilities. These projects are supported by appropriate governance systems and policies as well as a progressive regulatory environment that enables investors to do business in one of the most open economies in the world. As a result of this strategy, the oil and gas share of Dubai's total GDP (\$100 billion)^a, has fallen to less than 2%.²

Dubai is open for business. Expo 2020¹, Connecting Minds, Creating the Future, with its three sub-themes, Opportunity, Mobility, and Sustainability, is generating large-scale government infrastructure projects, creating opportunities for public and private partnerships, and generating employment in tourism, hospitality, logistics, retail, banking and finance, and media. The market need for ongoing talent to meet the needs of Dubai's developing economy and growing population creates opportunities for higher education investors.²

^a Exchange rate: \$1 = AED 3.67

3. WHY STUDY IN DUBAI?



3.1. Government commitment to Education

Dubai has been successful in developing its status as an international city with a focus on economic diversity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. In this context, the development of a world-class education system is of great importance. Dubai's private school system and higher education sector have evolved to reflect the needs and expectations of Dubai's fast growing population, cultural shifts and economic demands. The high-quality higher education now available in Dubai, will equip graduates with the knowledge, skills, and attributes, to contribute to Dubai's economic development.

The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) has placed great importance in ensuring that Dubai's HEPs offer high quality education. In addition, students need to be assured that the education they receive at a HEP is high quality. HEPs are encouraged to align their programmes with Dubai's strategic objectives. Although the higher education sector in the Emirate of Dubai is relatively young, it has taken significant steps towards meeting student and economic market demands.

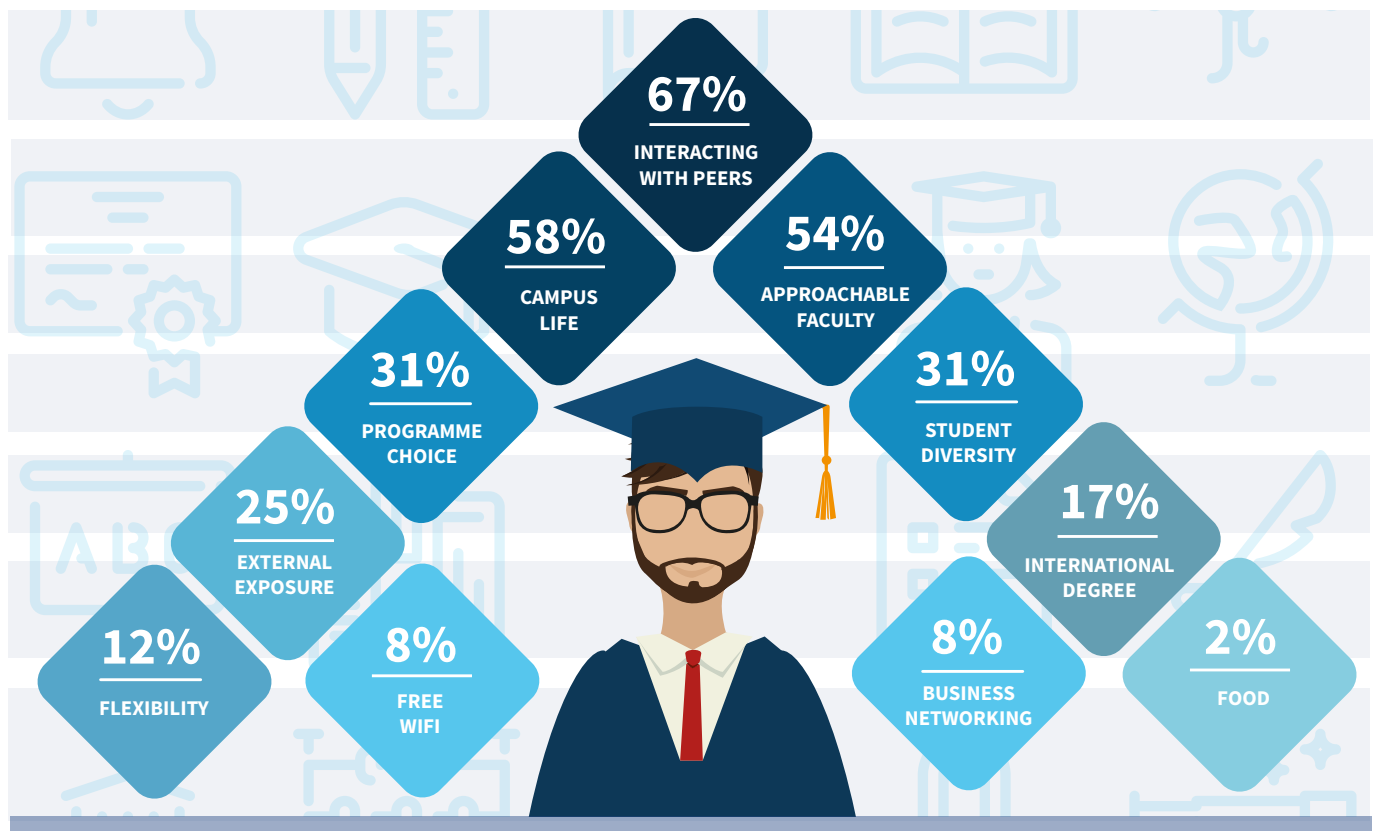
3.2. Student Experience

Since the establishment of KHDA in 2007 and ‘Universities Quality Assurance International Board’ (UQAIB) in 2008, student enrolment in HEPs has increased by 64.3% to over 60,000, encouraging investors and foreign HEPs to establish institutions in Dubai. Feedback from student focus groups highlighted several factors which make Dubai an attractive destination for students seeking a higher education experience. Figure 2 shows the factors that make higher education students happy while studying; Figure 3 shows what makes them happy outside the classroom.

Dubai is politically stable, tolerant, and safe, with very low crime levels. Students who study in Dubai have a truly global experience both in class and through social interactions across cultures. Innovation and entrepreneurship are at the heart of developing Dubai as a knowledge economy and “Smart City”. Dubai encourages innovation and entrepreneurship among students.

When making higher education choices, students consider various factors, including institutional reputation, programme offerings, employment prospects, personal interests and parental wishes. Many factors entice school leavers to continue their studies in Dubai including the multicultural student experience, the variety of higher education offerings and living in a city offering a multitude of opportunities to mature both academically and socially.

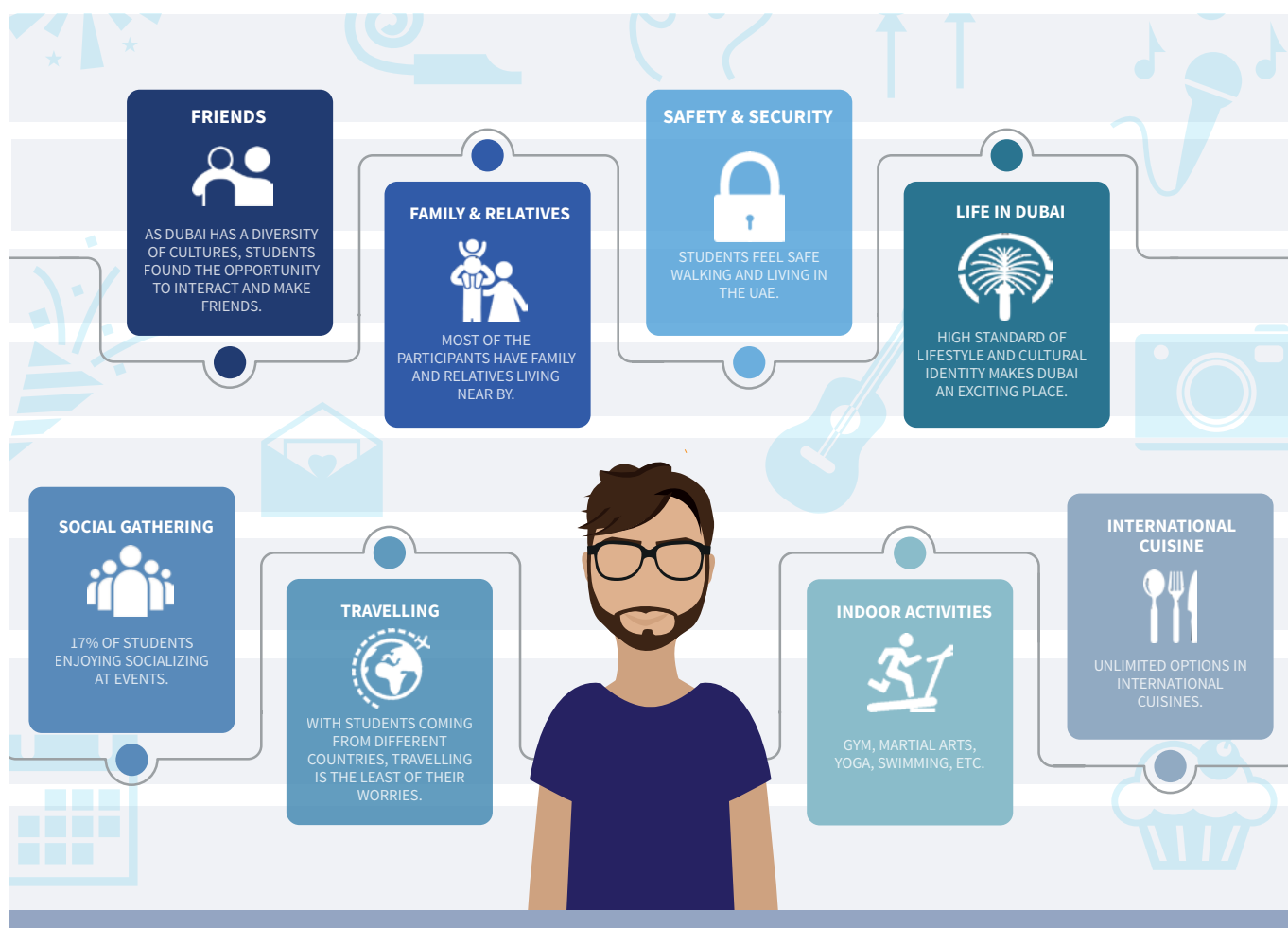
FIGURE 2 | WHAT MAKES DUBAI'S HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS HAPPY AT UNIVERSITY?



In terms of social, sporting, and cultural activities, Dubai leads the region. As is often said in reference to Dubai’s indoor ski slope, located in Mall of the Emirates, “you can ski in the morning and be on the beach by lunch-time”. The city’s beach fronts are being transformed by municipality development projects to include walking and cycling tracks, and café rich promenades. The city boasts restaurants representing every cuisine in the world with options at every price point. There is enthusiastic participation in football, cricket, rugby, netball, and softball leagues. The more adventurous can engage in sky diving. Dubai’s Opera House opened in 2016, and has raised the cultural bar in a city already served by two theatres, and multiple cinema complexes.

Opportunities to engage in a range of social, cultural, and sporting experiences which enrich students’ university experience, are factors which add to Dubai’s attractiveness as a higher education destination. Dubai offers all the above, within the context of a society undergoing constant change to keep up with today’s globally-oriented, and technologically advanced world.

FIGURE 3 | WHAT MAKES DUBAI’S HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS HAPPY AWAY FROM THEIR STUDIES?



3.3. Earn as you Learn

Under Order No (1) (Feb 2016) of 2016, Student Part-Time Employment in the Dubai Creative Clusters³, students studying in the Dubai Creative Clusters Authority (DCCA)⁴ Free Zones are authorized to work part-time. This offers a valuable opportunity to get essential experience and exposure to industries that will form the backbone of the knowledge economy of the Emirate of Dubai. Students enrolled in Dubai HEPs can now benefit from this new regulation.

This regulation is part of DCCA's⁴ commitment to implement policies and programmes to enable sustainable growth and the development of the creative industries in full alignment with the Dubai Plan 2021⁵ and the UAE National Innovation Strategy⁶.

4. DUBAI'S HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

Dubai has encouraged the establishment of international university branch campuses (HEP Branches), whose home-base campuses (HEP Home) are located outside the country, to provide high quality international degrees to its citizens and expatriate residents. HEP Branches are located across several Free Zones which allow 100% foreign ownership in tax-free environments.

Clarification of the different types of HEPs operating in Dubai, is necessary to understand the higher education landscape. HEPs in Dubai can be located either in- or outside a Free Zone. Three main types of HEPs operate in the Emirate: HEP Branch, HEP Local and HEP Federal (Table 1).

TABLE 1 | TYPES OF HEPs OPERATING IN DUBAI

HEP Branch	A university, college, academy, or institute located in a Dubai Free Zone, which acts for, on behalf of, and in the name of a HEP headquartered outside a Free Zone (usually in another country).
HEP Local (Private/Government)	A university, college, academy, or institute which provides academic programmes leading to the awarding of higher education qualifications. HEP Locals can be either funded privately or by the Dubai government. These institutions are licensed by the Ministry of Education (MoE) with programme accreditation by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA). These institutions may also obtain international accreditation.
HEP Federal	A university or college which provides academic programmes leading to the awarding of higher education qualifications. HEP Federals are established by federal decree.

4.1. Dubai Free Zones

Free Zones in Dubai allow a foreign HEP to establish a HEP in Dubai, offering academic degree programmes that are substantially equivalent to that of the HEP Home. This allows students from Dubai, and the wider region, to access a wide range of high-quality international programmes. Upon graduation, students are awarded degrees that are international.

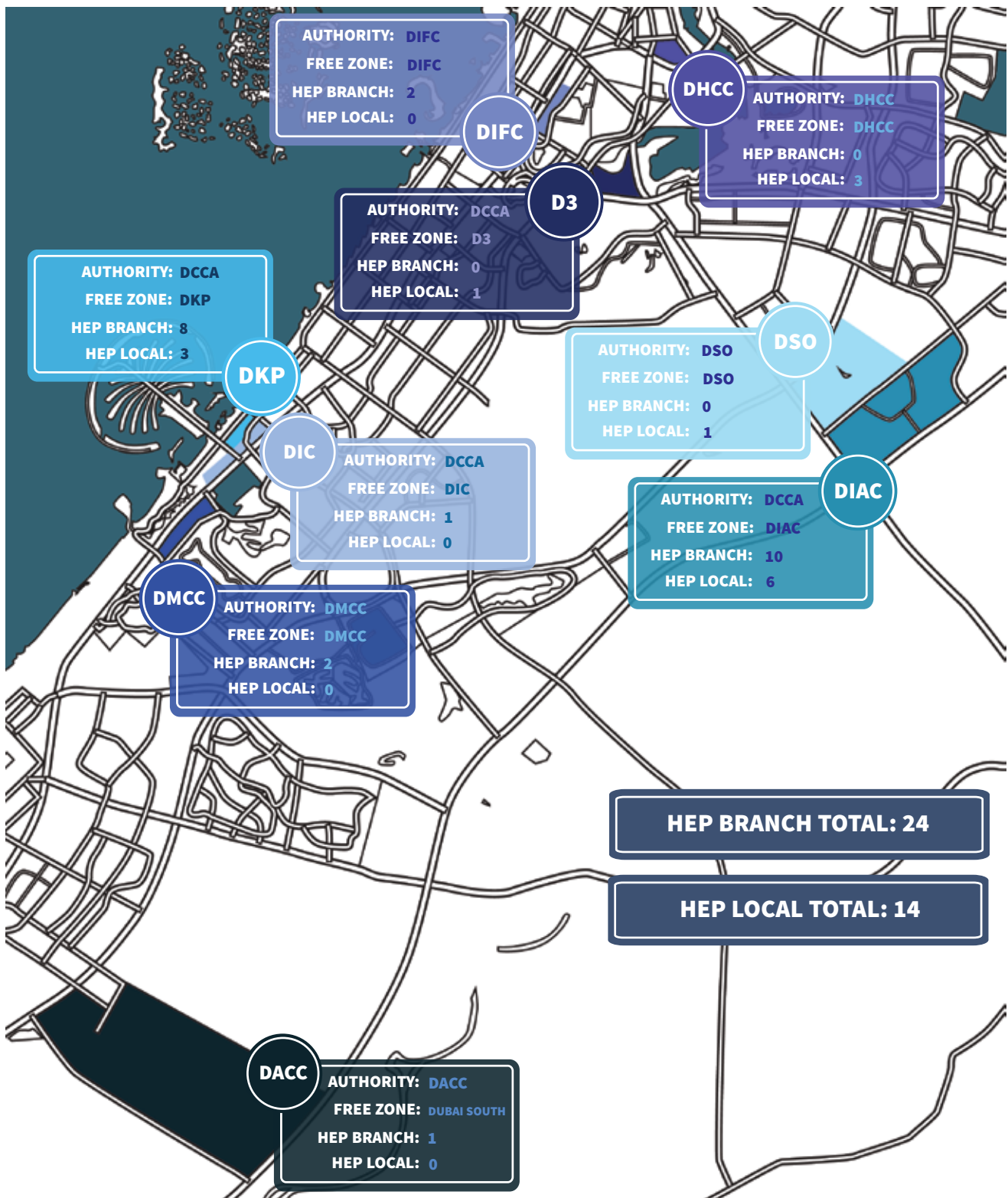
Most HEP Branches are located in Free Zones (Figure 4), and, in addition to academic regulatory procedures, described later in the document, must also comply with the construction, health, and professional safety requirements prescribed by the legislation in force in the specific Free Zone.

DCCA⁴ currently comprises ten Free Zone clusters and is home to the largest number of HEP Branches in Dubai. These are located in three different Free Zones: Dubai Knowledge Park (DKP)⁷, Dubai Internet City (DIC)⁸ and Dubai International Academic City (DIAC)⁹.

Other Dubai Free Zones hosting HEPs are Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)¹⁰, Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC)¹¹, Dubai Health Care City (DHCC)¹², Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO)¹³ and Dubai South¹⁴.



FIGURE 4 | HEPs IN THE FREE ZONES



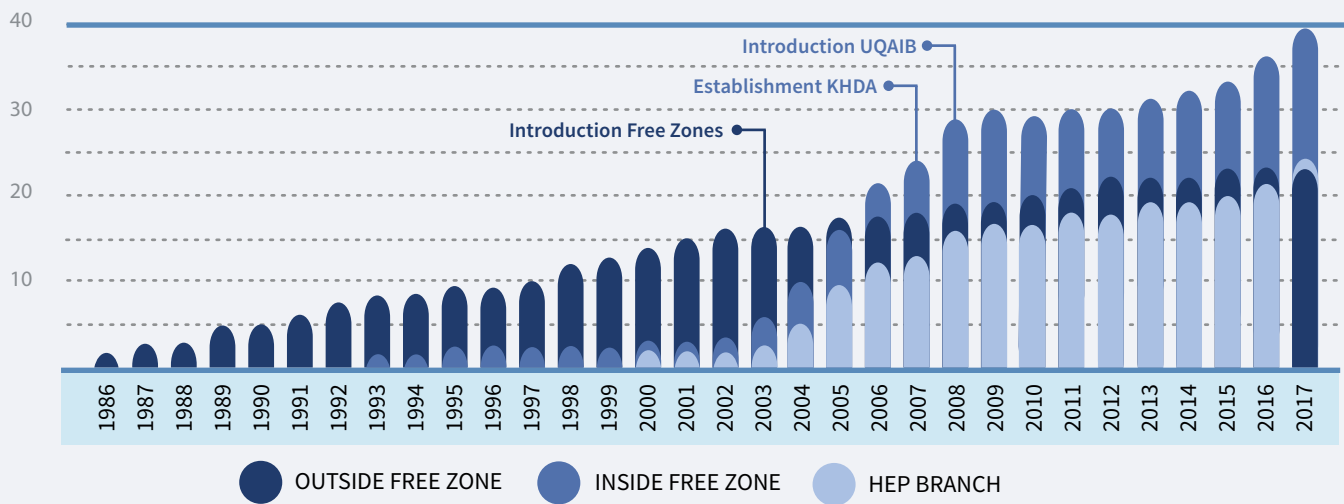
DCCA = Dubai Creative Clusters Authority; DKP = Dubai Knowledge Park; DIAC = Dubai International Academic City; DIFC = Dubai International Financial Centre; DMCC = Dubai Multi Commodities Centre; D3 = Dubai Design District; DIC = Dubai Internet City; DSO = Dubai Silicon Oasis; DHCC = Dubai Health Care City; DACC = Dubai Aviation City Corporation; HEP = Higher Education Provider

4.2. HEPs in Dubai

4.2.1. Number of HEPs

Dubai has 62 HEPs; 39 in Free Zones and 23 outside Free Zones. Since the introduction of the Free Zones in 2003 the number of HEPs has increased significantly from four in 2002 to 39 HEPs for the academic year, 2017-2018. Figure 5 illustrates the growth in HEPs over the last 30 years.

FIGURE 5 | HEPs GROWTH FROM 1986 TILL 2017



4.2.2. International diversity of HEPs

HEPs in the Free Zones have their base (HEP Home) in countries outside UAE. The current HEP Branches operating in the Dubai Free Zones are from 12 different countries. Figure 6 shows the international diversity of the different HEPs in the Free Zones.

FIGURE 6 | INTERNATIONAL DIVERSITY OF HEPs

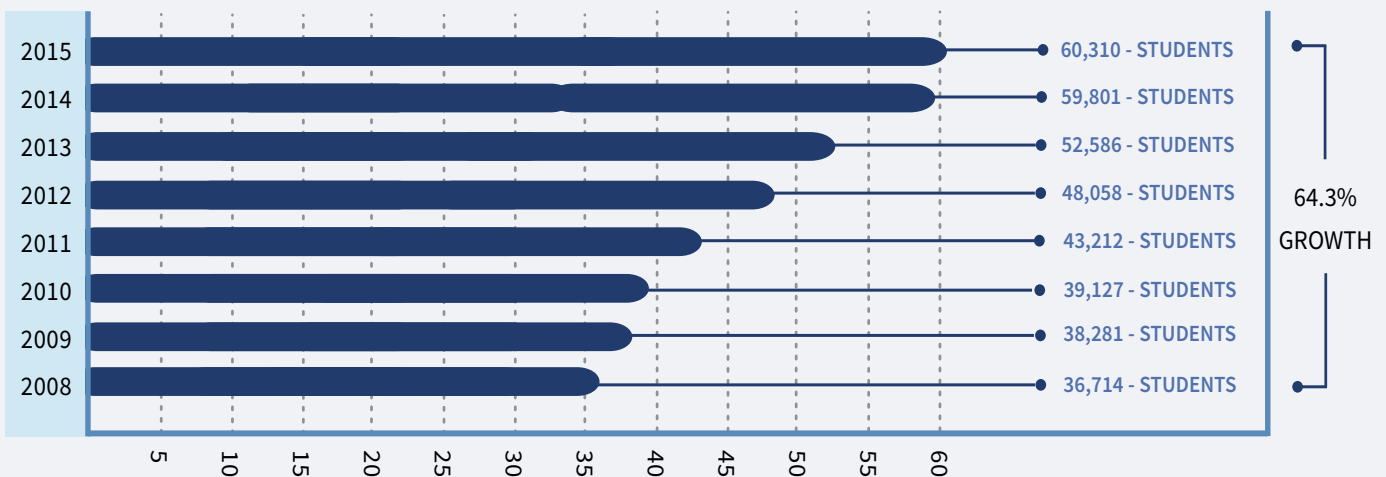


4.3. Students in Dubai Higher Education Landscape

4.3.1. Number of students enrolled

In the academic year, 2015-2016, 60,310 students were enrolled in 56 HEPs all over Dubai, including full-time and part-time students. This is a 64.3% growth in the overall total number of students and an increase of 29.2% in the total number of HEPs, since the first census in 2008. Figure 7 shows the growth of the number of students enrolled in HEPs in Dubai.

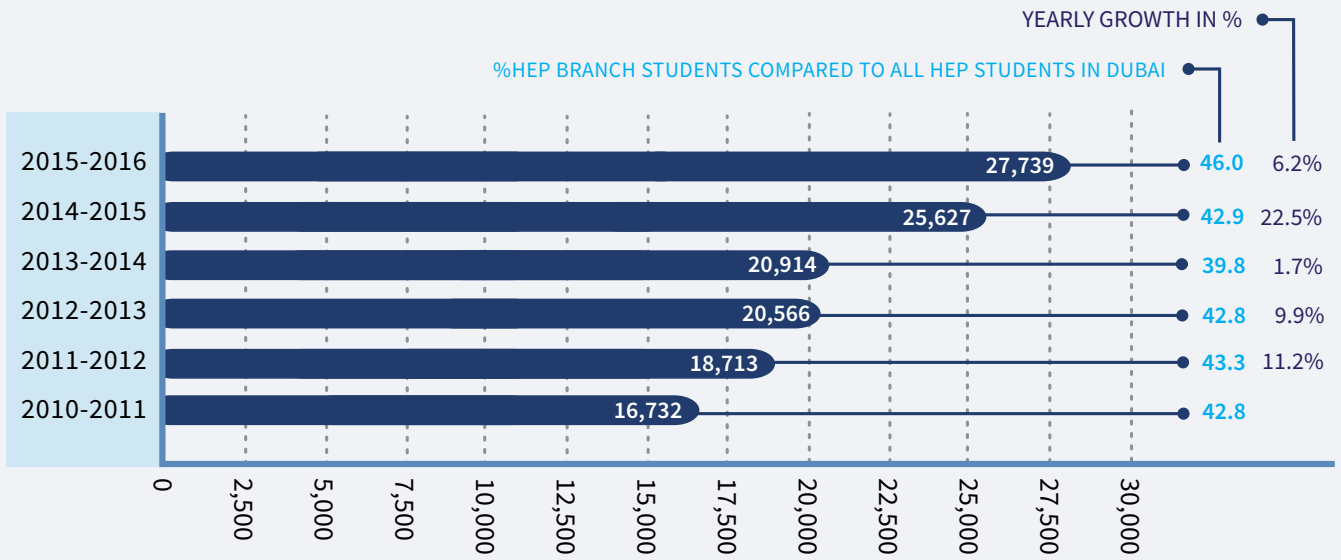
FIGURE 7 | STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN ALL HEPs



The HEP Branches give students the opportunity to earn internationally recognized degrees without leaving the city. The HEP Branches attract international students to the Emirate with roughly 30% of the student population made up of international students. This focus on attracting international students aligns with Dubai's strategic goal⁵ to be a quality higher education hub for the region.

The number of students enrolled at HEP Branches in Dubai has risen by 65.8% since 2010. For the academic year, 2016-2017, 28,972 students, representing 42.9% of total enrolment in Dubai's HEPs, are enrolled in HEPs operating with a KHDA Permit. Figure 8 shows the number of students enrolled in HEP Branches and the growth throughout the years.

FIGURE 8 | STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN HEP BRANCHES



4.3.2 Student population diversity

Students enrolled in HEPs during academic year, 2016-2017, come from 167 different countries. Almost 30% (29.6%) of the students are from the MENA region (including UAE), 56.4% are from Asia, with students from Europe and Africa accounting for 5.5% and 5.1% respectively. This diversity is illustrated in Figure 9. Figure 10 shows the total number of UAE nationals and expatriates studying at HEPs in Dubai.

FIGURE 9 | STUDENT DIVERSITY IN HEP BRANCHES



FIGURE 10 | UAE NATIONALS AND EXPATRIATES IN HEPS (ACADEMIC YEAR 2015-2016)



37,692
EXPATRIATES

22,618
UAE NATIONALS

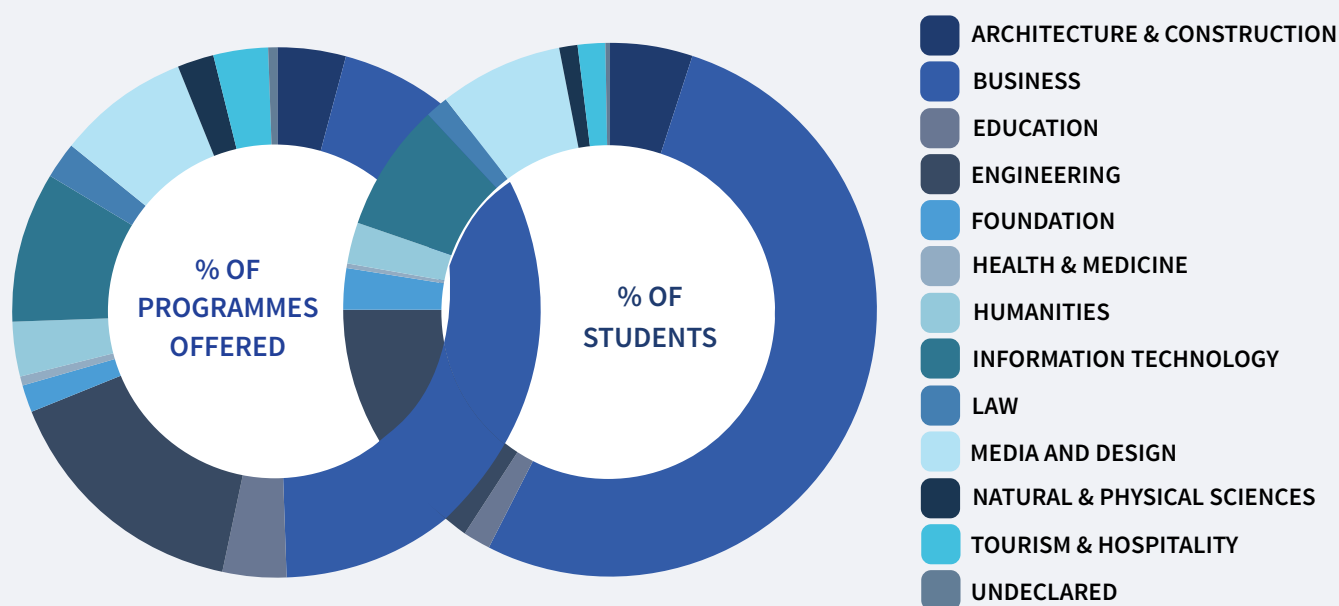
60,310 TOTAL STUDENTS

4.4 Academic programmes in Dubai Higher Education Landscape

In the Dubai higher education landscape, there are four main levels of study: foundation (pre-degree), undergraduate^b, postgraduate^c and doctoral degrees. Of the 28,972 students studying at KHDA's HEP Branches, 3.6% are enrolled in foundation programmes, 64.3% are enrolled in undergraduate programmes, 30.7% in postgraduate programmes and 1.4% for doctoral degrees. Many HEPs run part-time masters' programmes which give students the option of combining work and education.

The most popular programme specialization is 'Business', accounting for 52.7% of the total number of enrolled students. Students see 'Business' as the study area which will give them most employment options. Other specializations, such as engineering, IT, and media, programmes which align with Dubai's strategic plan to diversify the Emirate's economy, are beginning to attract greater numbers of students (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11 | STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN PROGRAMMES IN HEP BRANCHES (ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-2017)



^bUndergraduate includes Associate, Bachelor, Certificate, Diploma and Higher diploma

^cPostgraduate includes Graduate certificate, Master, Postgraduate certificate and Postgraduate diploma

II. QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN DUBAI

There are two ways in which quality in higher education is assured. Institutions in the Free Zones are given Academic Authorisation after satisfying the requirements of UQAIB, KHDA's quality assurance framework. Other HEPs apply to the MoE for accreditation through the CAA.

1. QUALITY ASSURANCE (UQAIB)

The KHDA higher education quality assurance system, UQAIB, is designed to meet the unique needs of the Dubai Plan 2021⁵ regarding the provision of higher education at the best international standards.

KHDA established UQAIB in 2008 to assure the quality of higher education in Dubai's Free Zones. It is an independent board of higher education experts from around the world. The purpose of UQAIB is to provide KHDA with reputable, independent, and international input and guidance on the quality of higher education provided in Dubai Free Zones. UQAIB is a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)¹⁵. UQAIB abides by the INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice and the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in cross-border Higher Education (2005)¹⁶. UQAIB uses a validation model to ensure that academic programmes delivered in Dubai have the same content and academic standard as those taught at the HEP Home. The UQAIB manual¹⁷ provides detailed information about KHDA's higher education requirements and quality assurance processes.

To minimize additional regulatory burden, and avoid duplication of quality assurance processes already undertaken by the quality assurance agency of the home country of the HEP Branch, UQAIB will, in the first instance, take account of existing quality reports on the quality provision of foreign HEPs as well as the effectiveness of the quality systems and procedures in place at those institutions, as long as such reports are fairly recent. UQAIB will pay particular attention to the effectiveness of arrangements for quality assurance of cross-border provision. UQAIB reserves the right to undertake quality processes of its own in cases where external quality reports do not provide sufficiently clear indications of quality provision. In special circumstances, an extraordinary audit may be warranted.

1.1. Academic Authorisation

All HEPs wishing to operate within a Free Zone are required to obtain an Academic Authorisation from KHDA. Academic Authorisations are valid for a period of 12 months. All detailed information regarding Academic Authorisation can be found in the UQAIB manual¹⁸.

Academic Authorisation must be obtained from KHDA prior to the introduction of any new Higher Education Programme.

Academic Authorisation from KHDA can only be obtained when the HEP Branch is approved by UQAIB or the HEP Local inside Free Zone has CAA accreditation. The documents that need to be submitted are available on the KHDA website (Education providers > Higher Education)¹⁹ or in Appendix C of the UQAIB manual²⁰. These documents need to be submitted to KHDA along with all the required items of information.

Academic Authorisation will specify the academic programmes that the HEP Branch is authorized to provide. These programmes need to be registered with KHDA before enrolment can commence.

1.2. Programme registration

Every academic programme offered by a HEP in a Free Zone must be registered annually by KHDA. All HEPs authorized by KHDA are listed on the KHDA website¹⁹ and mobile app (directory) to provide the public with assurances that the academic programmes on offer in the Free Zones have been independently reviewed and satisfy UQAIB's quality assurance requirements. Each academic programme needs to be registered through a separate application.

2. ACCREDITATION (CAA)

HEPs operating outside a Free Zone have to obtain permission and accreditation from the MoE (CAA) to establish and operate in the UAE.

The CAA conducts a program of licensure of institutions of higher education and accreditation of their academic programmes. This licensure informs students, graduates, their families, and the public that the standards established by the MoE have been achieved. The procedures and processes to follow are explained in the CAA portal²¹.

Both UQAIB (KHDA) and CAA (MoE) share a similar objective: to ensure that Dubai's 62 HEPs deliver high quality tertiary learning experiences for students.



III. ESTABLISHING A HEP IN DUBAI

1. THE ROLE OF KHDA IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN DUBAI

KHDA was established under Law no. 30 (2006)²², in April 2007, by the Dubai government. KHDA is responsible for the regulation, licensing and quality of education on offer in the Emirate of Dubai. The responsibilities of KHDA and HEPs are stipulated in the Dubai Executive Council Resolution No. (21) of 2011²³.

A KHDA Permit, also referred to as Academic Authorisation, must be obtained from KHDA by any HEP offering educational services in Dubai Free Zones through an application process. The Regulations & Permits Commission (RPC) of KHDA supports HEPs in the application process and issues KHDA Permits to new early learning centers, schools, HEPs and training institutes in Dubai. Applicants are required to follow the prescribed guidelines and provide the listed documents in their application submission. The application process can be divided into four phases (Table 2).

TABLE 2 | OVERVIEW OF THE KHDA APPLICATION PROCESS TO ESTABLISH A HEP IN DUBAI FREE ZONES

PHASE	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
DESCRIPTION	Eligibility application	Registration & Initial approval	Quality assurance review	Commercial licensure & KHDA Permit issuance
TIMELINE	10 wd	30 wd	Subject to submission date (Table 5)	7 wd

wd = working days

More details on regulations pertaining to HEPs can be found in ‘The Executive Council Resolution No. 21 (2011)’²³ and the relevant Bylaws²⁴ on the KHDA website¹⁹.

KHDA has developed a Customer Service Charter²⁵ that is managed in accordance with the guidelines provided by ISO 9001:2008 (Quality Management System)²⁶ and ISO 10002:2004 (Customer Satisfaction: Complaint Management System)²⁷, international best practices and organization codes of conduct.

2. HEPs IN DUBAI AND THEIR SPECIFICATIONS

Dubai has three types of HEPs that operate either inside or outside the Free Zones. The application process to set up a HEP is affected by both the type and the location of the HEP (Table 3).

TABLE 3 | MATRIX OF REQUIREMENTS TO ESTABLISH HEPs IN DUBAI

TYPE OF HEP	LOCATION	INITIAL APPROVAL BY KHDA	LICENSED BY	PERMIT BY KHDA	QUALITY ASSURANCE	ACCREDITATION
HEP Federal	No restriction	No	MoE	No	-	CAA by MoE
HEP Local	Free Zone	Yes	MoE	Yes	-	CAA by MoE
	Outside Free Zone			No		
HEP Branch	Free Zone	Yes	KHDA	Yes	UQAIB	International accreditation body of the HEP Home
	Outside Free Zone		MoE	No	-	CAA by MoE

HEP = Higher Education Provider ; MoE = Ministry of Education; KHDA = Knowledge and Human Development Authority; UQAIB: Universities Quality Assurance International Board; CAA = Commission for Academic Accreditation



3. OVERVIEW OF THE KHDA APPLICATION PROCESS

Dubai has created a regulatory environment that supports the growth of higher education and ensures institutions provide high-quality education to the student community. The table below (Table 4) shows the phases the different types of HEP must complete to be issued a KHDA Permit.

TABLE 4 | OVERVIEW OF THE KHDA APPLICATION PROCESS FOR HEPs

TYPE OF HEP	INSIDE FREE ZONE	OUTSIDE FREE ZONE
HEP Branch (UQAIB)	Phase 1, 2, 3 and 4	Phase 1, 2, and 4
HEP Branch (CAA)	Phase 1, 2 and 4	Phase 1, 2, and 4
HEP Local (CAA)	Phase 1, 2 and 4	Phase 1 and 2

Phase 1: Eligibility application; Phase 2: Registration & Initial approval; Phase 3: Quality assurance review; Phase 4: Commercial licensure & KHDA Permit issuance; UQAIB = Universities Quality Assurance International Board; CAA = Commission for Academic Accreditation

4. THE KHDA APPLICATION PROCESS

Phase 1 and 2 of the KHDA application process applies to all HEPs that want to establish in Dubai. An overview of the application process is provided in Figure 12 (Appendix A).

Applicants are required to follow guidelines and provide the listed documents in their submission. This approach ensures that all potential applicants follow due process and have equal access to the application process. All applicants are expected to submit an original application and any supporting documentation that is required by KHDA.

At this stage, KHDA welcomes applicants to contact and engage with the Forward Education team before submitting an application. After applying, the RPC team of KHDA will review and provide feedback.

4.1. Phase 1: Eligibility application

Phase 1 of the application process for establishing a HEP in Dubai is Eligibility. In Phase 1 the required information (Appendix B: Checklist for Eligibility application) should be submitted to KHDA by e-mail (HEPD@khda.gov.ae). Upon submission of a completed Eligibility application, KHDA will conduct a review and issue a decision within ten working days.

This phase focuses on the legal status of the HEP Home, the alignment of the institution and its programmes with Dubai's strategic needs, the details and any experience of the shareholders in higher education. KHDA will also evaluate whether the proposed governance and management structure is appropriate to operate in the Emirate of Dubai. In this phase the applicant needs to submit the 'Shareholders Declaration Form' (Appendix C).

If approved, the applicant will be invited to proceed to Phase 2 which involves 'Registration of the application process and seeking Initial approval' from KHDA.

4.2. Phase 2: Registration and Initial approval

In Phase 2, applicants register through the KHDA e-Services system²⁸. This phase requires the submission of a business plan which must include relevant market research. In addition, applicants should submit the following details: name and credentials of the nominated Academic head, shareholders/investors information, proposed programme offerings, and a copy of the final agreement between the Educational Services Provider and the HEP Branch Campus (if application is for HEP Branch). Appendix D gives a list of the documents that needs to be submitted in Phase 2.

Upon submission of the Phase 2 requirements, a non-refundable processing fee of 45,000 AED (United Arab Emirates dirham) will be charged. KHDA will conduct a review and issue a decision regarding the application within 30 working days. If approved the applicant receives Initial approval and will be invited to proceed to the next phase.

For a HEP Branch wishing to establish outside a Free Zone, after successful completion of Phase 2, a No Objection Certificate (NOC) will be issued to the MoE and the CAA to allow the applicant to apply for licensure and programme accreditation. Once the applicant has completed the Ministry requirements, they can proceed to Phase 4 of the KHDA requirements.

For a HEP Local wishing to establish inside a Free Zone, after completion of Phase 2, a NOC letter will be issued to the MoE and the CAA to allow the applicant to apply for licensure and programme accreditation. Once the applicant has completed the Ministry requirements, they can proceed to Phase 4 of the KHDA requirements.

For those applicants intending to establish a HEP Local outside a Free Zone, after successful completion of Phase 2, a NOC letter will be issued to the MoE and the CAA to allow the applicant to apply for licensure and programme accreditation.

More information on the MoE accreditation can be found on the CAA portal²¹. This accreditation process does not fall under the purview of KHDA.

4.3. Phase 3: Quality assurance review

Phase 3 focuses on the quality review process that assures quality in higher education in Dubai.

Detailed information regarding Phase 3 of this application process and the document requirements, is explained in the UQAIB manual¹⁷ available on the KHDA website for both Academic Authorisation¹⁸ and Programme registration²⁹.

HEP Branch applicants are required to submit the initial HEP Branch approval²⁰ and the initial validation and registration of programmes documentation^{30,31} to KHDA as mentioned in the UQAIB manual¹⁷. This Phase is subject to submission date deadlines (Table 5). There are two submission dates for this documentation, February 1st and September 1st.

TABLE 5 | TIMELINE* FOR ACADEMIC AUTHORISATIONS AND PROGRAMME REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS

TASK	FIRST ROUND	SECOND ROUND
Application submitted to the UQAIB Secretariat	February 1st	September 1st
Academic licensing decision confirmed (subject to any review being resolved).	April	December

** These timelines apply for HEP Branch Initial Academic Authorisation; HEP Branch Academic Authorisation Renewal; Initial Programme registration; and Programme Renewal registration.*

4.4. Phase 4: Commercial licensure and KHDA Permit issuance

Phase 4 involves the issuance of the KHDA Permit, also known as Academic Authorisation, which gives permission to establish and operate a HEP in a Dubai Free Zone.

When a HEP Branch application has been successfully reviewed and approved by UQAIB, the HEP Branch will be issued with a NOC letter to proceed with the Commercial licensure and campus set-up. The issuance will take seven working days after fee payment. Upon receipt of a Commercial license, KHDA will process the educational tariffs as outlined in Schedule 1 of the Executive Council Resolution No. 21 (2011)²³ (Table 6) and issue the KHDA Permit for Academic Authorisation upon receipt of payment.

HEP Locals that will operate in the Free Zones are requested to submit their institutional licensure and initial programme accreditation obtained from the MoE (CAA). KHDA will issue the NOC letter for the Commercial licensure and the HEP Local will receive the KHDA Permit upon receipt of payment.

TABLE 6 | FEE SCHEDULE FOR ACADEMIC AUTHORISATION AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION CERTIFICATION*

	DESCRIPTION	FEE (AED)
1.	Annual Academic Authorisation for an Academic institution offering 1 to 5 Higher Education Programmes	150,000
2.	Annual Academic Authorisation for an Academic institution offering 6 to 10 Higher Education Programmes	175,000
3.	Annual Academic Authorisation for an Academic institution offering 11 Higher Education Programmes or more	200,000
4.	Certifying Academic Qualifications, transcripts and any other documents related to the Academic Institution's students	200 for each qualification, transcript or document

* Current fees as of May 2017. AED = United Arab Emirates dirham



5. KHDA REGULATIONS FOR ESTABLISHED HEPs

KHDA continues to regulate HEPs after they have been permitted and established in a Dubai Free Zone. This is in accordance with the Executive Council Resolution No. 21 of 2011²³ and the relevant Bylaws²⁴.

5.1. Renewal, Amendments and Cancellation

Renewal

Academic Authorisations and Programme registration must be renewed annually in line with the KHDA annual cycle. An application for renewal of the Academic Authorisation has to be submitted to KHDA in the form prescribed by the UQAIB manual^{20,30,31,32}.

Amendments to Academic Authorisation

A HEP may apply to amend Academic Authorisation in accordance with the procedures determined by KHDA²⁴. The HEP must notify KHDA of changes either in writing or in person within two weeks of the information becoming known to the HEP Branch.

Amendments to the KHDA Permit can be made after approval from KHDA. The amendments that can be processed are: (1) Academic head amendments; (2) New programme registration; (3) Programme de-registration; (4) Change in an existing programme; (5) Expansion of premises; (6) Relocation of premises; (7) Change in provider name; and (8) Change of shareholder(s).

Cancellation

KHDA has a moral obligation to protect students and society from poor quality higher education. Those HEPs found to have poor quality provision may have their Academic Authorisation cancelled. Such action would not be taken lightly, and will usually be preceded by a number of interim steps, such as probation. Cancellation can apply both to Academic Authorisation and/or Programme registration.

No HEP is allowed to wholly or partially discontinue, suspend, or close any of its approved higher education programmes for any reason without first obtaining the written approval of KHDA.

5.2. Ownership/Governance

Academic head

An Academic head must hold a doctoral degree and is responsible for the management and supervision of the HEP on a fulltime basis. Further details can be found in 'The Executive Council Resolution No. 21 (2011)' (Article 10)²³ and the relevant Bylaws (Article 13)²⁴. The Academic head's appointment is subject to KHDA's final approval.

Financial provisioning

The HEP Home bears the ultimate responsibility for the students enrolled through the HEP Branch. KHDA requires the HEP Home to ensure adequate financial provision in the event that cancellation of the Academic Authorisation or Programme registration occurs. Further details can be found in Appendix E of the UQAIB manual³³.

Disputes with venture partners

The agreement between the HEP Home and venture partner, such as investor or academic infrastructure provider, should provide a clear process for dispute resolution. In the event that a dispute arises which is not resolved in a timely fashion, and which, in the opinion of KHDA, places the HEP Branch, its students and/or the reputation of KHDA at significant risk, KHDA reserves the right to intervene.

5.3. Naming and Advertisements of the HEP

Naming of the HEP

HEP names have to be approved by KHDA and satisfy specific requirements as per the Bylaws of 'The Executive Council Resolution No. (21) (2011)' (Article 10)²⁴. The name, or similar, of other educational institutions in Dubai, the UAE, or beyond, should not be used. The HEP Branch must use the same name as the HEP Home.

To get name approval, the proposed name has to be submitted in Phase 1 of the KHDA application process. The HEP must use its own name as approved by KHDA on all its printed materials, correspondence, documents, and other formal notices of the HEP. The HEP may not change its name without prior written approval from KHDA.

HEP Advertising

HEPs must have written approval from KHDA to use any advertising or marketing material as per Article 15 of KHDA's resolution Bylaws²⁴. The KHDA website^{19,34,35} provides more information on the review and approval process.

These guidelines have been put in place to ensure that all published media-related information is prepared responsibly and does not mislead the public in any way.

If a HEP wishes to advertise programmes which are offered outside Dubai, the advertisement must include a disclaimer that such programmes are offered outside Dubai. KHDA bears no responsibility for these programmes.

5.4. Complaints committee

KHDA has formed a "Complaints committee" to address complaints filed against a HEP, taking into account their non-compliance with 'The Executive Council Resolution No. (21) of 2011'²³, the Bylaws²⁴, and other resolutions or instructions issued by KHDA. The way a complaint is handled by the committee is stipulated in Article 21 of the Bylaws²⁴.

5.5. Certification (Attestation) of Qualifications

'The Executive Council Resolution No. 21 of 2011 (Article 9)'²³ and the Bylaws (Article 20)²⁴ authorize KHDA to certify academic qualifications.

Students who graduate from a HEP in the Free Zones can have their degrees certified by KHDA for employment and other purposes in Dubai. The certification is applicable to all academic programmes that are registered with KHDA and appear on the Academic Authorisation of the HEP.

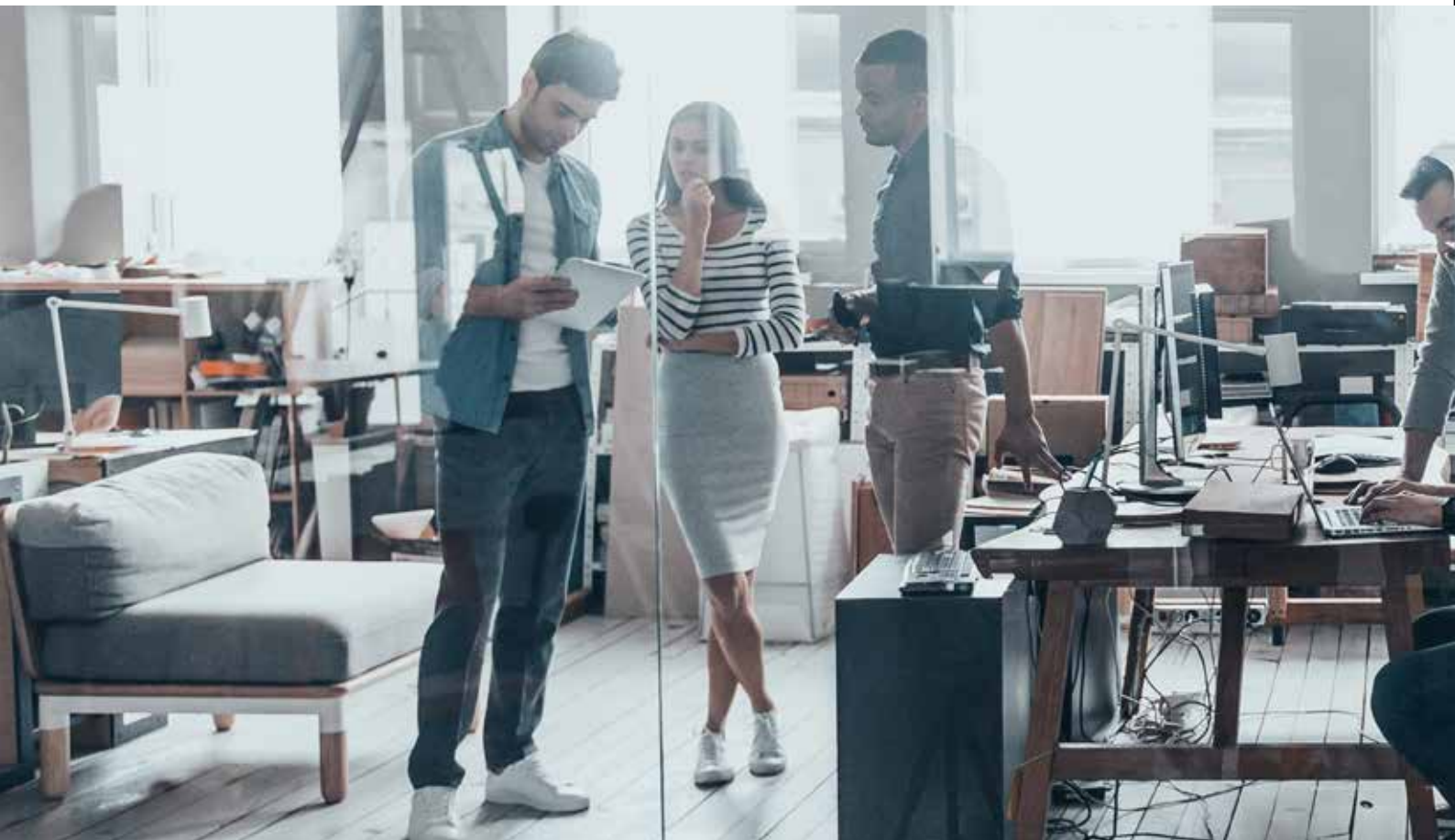
5.6. Infrastructure of HEPs in Dubai Free Zones

The HEP programmes must be delivered in premises that meet the requirements suitable for conducting these activities as mentioned in 'The Executive Council Resolution No. (21) (2011)' (Article 8)²³ and its Bylaws (Article 11)²⁴. The HEP must comply with the construction, health, and professional safety requirements prescribed by the legislation in force in the Dubai Free Zones.



IV. GLOSSARY

ACADEMIC AUTHORISATION	An Academic Authorisation constitutes the permission to operate as a HEP in the Free Zone, subject to terms and conditions specified in the Academic Authorisation. It is also referred to as KHDA Permit.
AED	United Arab Emirates dirham.
CAA	The Commission for Academic Accreditation is established within the UAE Ministry of Education. This is the federal body with responsibility for licensing institutions and accrediting programmes in the UAE.
CERTIFICATION/ ATTESTATION	Recognition by KHDA of the academic qualifications granted by the academic institution to students who successfully meet the requirements of any academic qualification.
DACC	'Dubai Aviation City Corporation' Free Zone is comprised of eight districts: logistics, aviation, humanitarian, residential, commercial, leisure, exhibition and commercial around the centerpiece of the airport.



DCCA	‘Dubai Creative Clusters Authority’ is a Free Zone authority that currently regulates 10 creative clusters and represents eight industries. DCCA has the mandate to promote Dubai as one of the world’s most attractive cities for creative businesses.
DHCC	‘Dubai HealthCare City’ is a free zone committed to creating a health and wellness destination.
DIAC	‘Dubai International Academic City’ is a Free Zone cluster of DCCA that covers the Higher Education industry which ensures the provision of a highly skilled workforce in line with future industry requirement, critical for the sustainable growth of the knowledge-based economy.
DIC	‘Dubai Internet City’ is a Free Zone where the ICT industry plays a transformative economic role, acts as a catalyst for productivity, improves connectivity between markets, and speeds up the exchange of innovative ideas.
DIFC	‘Dubai International Financial Centre’ is a Free Zone authority located at DIFC in the heart of modern Dubai. DIFC operates an international judicial system and promotes Dubai as a destination where investors can be confident that international business laws will apply.
DKP	‘Dubai Knowledge Park’ is a purpose-built education Free Zone, part of the DCCA cluster. Its purpose is to provide physical space for higher education providers to educate students to be part of a highly skilled workforce critical for the sustainable growth of the knowledge-based economy.



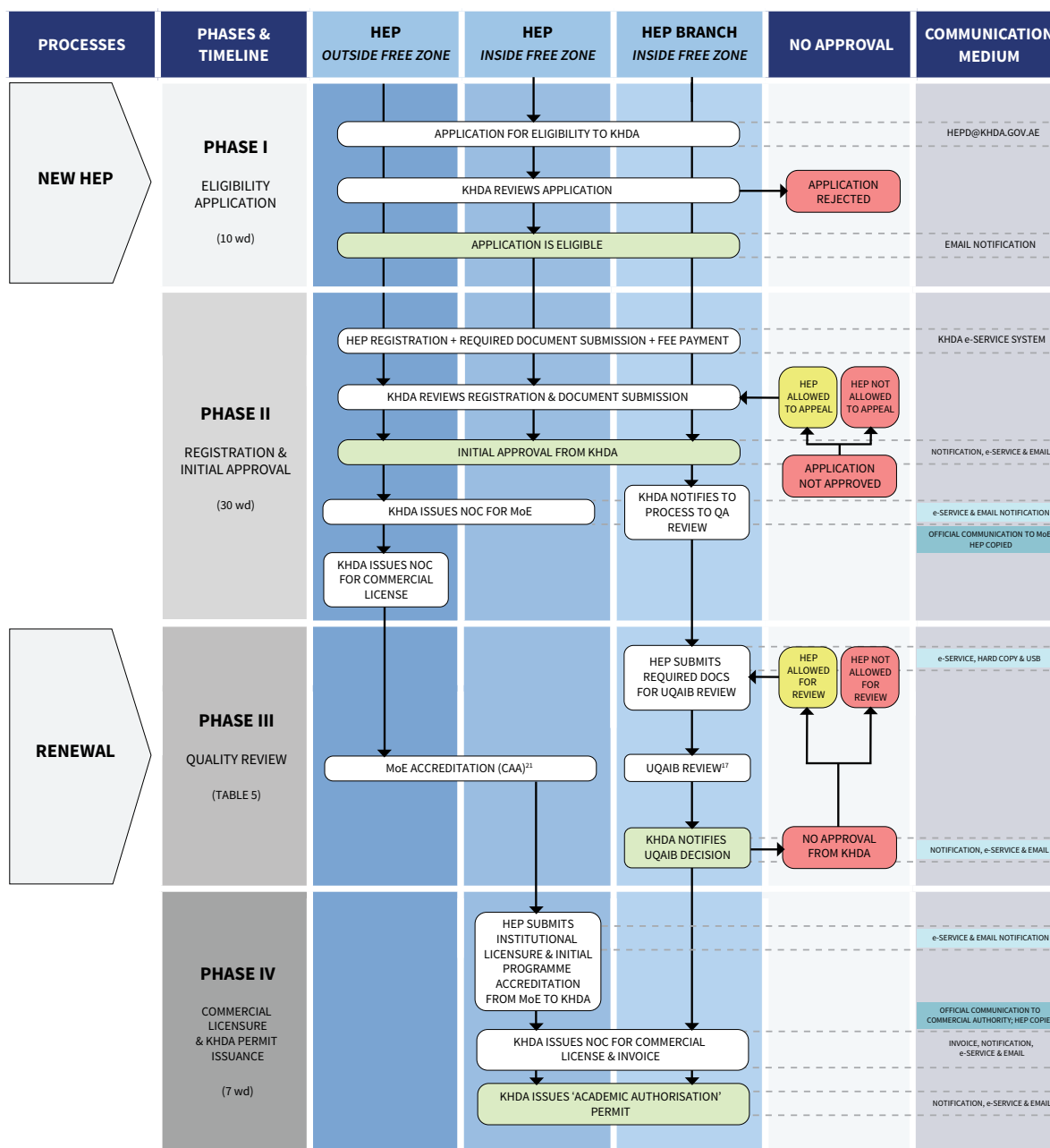
DMCC	‘Dubai Multi Commodities Centre’ is a Free Zone authority located at the centre of Jumeirah Lakes Towers district and responsible for regulating, promoting and facilitating trade across a range of goods from gold, diamonds and precious metals to tea, food and industrial materials.
DSO	‘Dubai Silicon Oasis Authority’ is a Free Zone authority that has been established to “facilitate and promote modern technology based industries” thus supporting the region’s demand for business expansion.
DUBAI FREE ZONE	Dubai has established a number of Free Zones designed to facilitate international investment, economic growth and the provision of international higher education. The zones allow up to 100% foreign ownership and target specific commercial activities.
DUBAI SOUTH	Due to its strategic location connecting both air and sea mega ports, Dubai South creates a self-sustained urban destination to empower businesses, families and individuals to grow and prosper.
GDP	‘Gross Domestic Product’ is a monetary measure of the market value of all final goods and services produced in a period (quarterly or yearly). Nominal GDP estimates are commonly used to determine the economic performance of a whole country or region, and to make international comparisons.
HEP	Higher Education Provider, typically a university, college, academy, or institute which provides academic programmes leading to the awarding of higher education qualifications.
HEP Branch	A HEP located in a Dubai Free Zone, which acts for and on behalf of, and in the name of an HEP headquartered outside the Free Zone (usually in another country).
HEP Federal	A university, or college which provides academic programmes leading to the awarding of higher education qualifications. HEP Federals are established by Federal decree.
HEP Home	An HEP at its registered place of origin.
HEP Local (private/ governmental)	A university, college, academy, or institute which provides academic programmes leading to the awarding of higher education qualifications. HEP Locals can be either funded privately or by the government of Dubai. These institutions are licensed by the Ministry of Education with programme accreditation by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA). These institutions may also obtain international accreditation.
INQAAHE	The ‘International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education’ is a world-wide association of near 300 organizations active in the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education. The great majority of its members are quality assurance agencies that operate in many different ways, although the Network also welcomes (as associate member) other organizations that have an interest in Quality in Higher Education.
ISO	International Organization for Standardization develops and publishes International Standards. They create documents that provide requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose. Bringing real and measurable benefits to almost every sector imaginable, standards underpin the technology that we rely on and ensure the quality that we expect.

KHDA	Knowledge and Human Development Authority is a Dubai government authority responsible for the growth and quality of private education in Dubai. KHDA supports schools, universities, parents, students, educators, investors and government partners to create a high quality education sector focused on happiness and wellbeing.
KHDA Permit	See Academic Authorisation
MoE	Ministry of Education is the UAE federal government entity that regulates public education outside the Free Zones of the UAE and regulates HEP Local universities in Dubai's Free Zones.
NOC	A 'No Objection Certificate' is a type of legal certificate issued by any agency, organization, institute or, in certain cases, an individual. It does not object to the covenants of the certificate.
OECD	The 'Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development' has the mission to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. The OECD provides a forum where governments can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems. OECD works with governments to understand what drives economic, social and environmental change. They measure productivity and global flows of trade and investment and analyze and compare data to predict future trends. OECD sets international standards on a wide range of things, from agriculture and tax to the safety of chemicals.
RPC	'Regulation and Permits Commission' is the KHDA responsible for issuing Academic Authorisations.
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNESCO	'United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization' is responsible for coordinating international cooperation in education, science, culture and communication. It strengthens the ties between nations and societies, and mobilizes the wider public so that each child and citizen has access to quality education; a basic human right and an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable development; may grow and live in a cultural environment rich in diversity and dialogue, where heritage serves as a bridge between generations and peoples; can fully benefit from scientific advances; and can enjoy full freedom of expression; the basis of democracy, development and human dignity.
UQAIB	Universities Quality Assurance International Board was established and supported by KHDA. UQAIB makes recommendations to KHDA on the approval and renewal of HEPs and academic programmes. It is an independent External Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA) which provides KHDA with evaluations, reviews, audits or similar services pertaining to HEPs' academic activities.



V. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FIGURE 12: OVERVIEW OF THE KHDA APPLICATION PROCESS



CAA = Commission for Academic Accreditation; HEP = Higher Education Provider; KHDA = Knowledge & Human Development Authority; MoE = Ministry of Education; NOC = No Objection Certificate; UQAIB = Universities Quality Assurance International Board

APPENDIX B: CHECKLIST FOR ELIGIBILITY APPLICATION

INFORMATION THAT NEEDS TO BE SUBMITTED FOR ELIGIBILITY REVIEW		CHECK
1.	Name and a description of the HEP (mission and vision, legal status and staffing profile).	
2.	Proposed application process: (International HEP Branch Campus or HEP Private)	
3.	Proposed name of the institution.	
4.	Proposed legal status of the institution (for a HEP Branch application include the current legal status of the HEP Home).	
5.	Proposed governance and management structure of the institution.	
6.	In the case of a HEP Branch, provide the Board Resolution from the highest governing body at the HEP Home authorizing the establishment of the HEP Branch Campus in Dubai.	
7.	Details of proposed accreditation/quality assurance for the institution (CAA/other)	
8.	Details of shareholders and their experience in higher education and any previous applications to the KHDA for any educational services.	
9.	Overview of the proposed quality assurance system for the institution. In the case of a HEP Branch, include details of experience of transnational higher education including programme partnerships and international HEP Branch Campuses.	
10.	Proposed programmes over a five year period.	
11.	Confirmation of the language to be used in teaching and assessment.	
12.	Details of consultants, if any, who will be involved in the preparation of the application.	
13.	Completed Shareholder Declaration Form which can be found in Appendix B.	
14.	Where any of the shareholders are currently involved in any educational services in the Emirate of Dubai, a Letter of good standing must be obtained from all existing educational partners. This letter must indicate that they are aware of the current application for the establishment of a higher education institution.	
15.	How will the proposed programmes add to making Dubai a regional and International hub for higher education?	
16.	What research and development expertise and programmes that the proposed institution commits to bring to Dubai?	
17.	What will be the target market of students?	
18.	How does the proposed institution and programmes fit Dubai's Strategic Plan 2021? education?	

APPENDIX C: SHAREHOLDER DECLARATION FORM

This document is a declaration to be signed and dated by the Educational Services Provider or venture partner listed on the application as the main investor(s) in the establishment of the Higher Education Provider (HEP). This document must be submitted on behalf of all investors and their affiliates.

The contents of the document are as follows:

I, _____

On behalf of _____ the Academic Services Providers, venture partners for _____ do hereby declare that we will comply with all Laws and regulations enforced in the UAE and the Emirate of Dubai, and all regulations, guidelines and procedures issued by KHDA for the duration of the Academic Permit. More specifically, we confirm that we will:

- Not mislead or misrepresent the Academic Institution, nor to provide false documents/ statements or information to the Authority.
- Notify KHDA of any changes to documents/ information previously submitted to the Authority and ensure that KHDA is notified of any changes to the Academic Institutions status/ circumstances as outlined in the regulations and guidelines of the KHDA.
- Not interfere in the academic affairs of the institution as set by the HEP or take up any positions at the HEP (branch or home campus).

We further certify that we have read and understood the KHDA regulations and will comply with all KHDA, the Emirate of Dubai and UAE regulations.

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / 20 ____

Print Name: _____



APPENDIX D: CHECKLIST FOR REGISTRATION APPLICATION

INFORMATION THAT NEEDS TO BE SUBMITTED FOR REGISTRATION APPLICATION		CHECK
1.	Details of the nominated Academic Head:	
	a. A letter from the Shareholders/Investor appointing the Academic Head	
	b. A letter of appointment from the HEP Home confirming the appointment of the Academic Head, in the case of a HEP Branch Campus.	
	c. Valid Passport copy	
	d. Copy of CV	
	e. Copy of highest earned credential	
	f. Completed Specimen Signature	
	g. A no objection certificate from the current sponsor, if applicable	
2.	Details of the shareholders/investors:	
	a. Valid Passport copy	
	b. Copy of CV	
	c. Copy of credentials	
	d. Completed Specimen Signature(s)	
	e. Details of other educational business operations	
	f. Copy of Commercial License, in the case of a company	
	g. Certificate of Good Standing, in the case of a company	
	h. Copy of the Company's Board Resolution (in the case of a company)	
3.	Details of proposed programme offering. The following documents must be submitted for each proposed programme:	
	a. Overall description of the programme with curricular design and learning outcomes.	
	b. Describe the added value of the programme to the overall higher education landscape of Dubai.	
	c. Description of target market and evidence of both student and employer needs. Describe the process and results used to establish the needs. Provide the full study and summary of findings.	
	d. Programme projected yearly enrolment for five years. What evidence (surveys, focus groups, documented enquiries, etc.) were used to support enrolment projections and to support the conclusion that interest in this programme is sufficient to meet the needs of the market?	
	e. Include plans for faculty recruitment, research and library resources for this programme	
4.	Copy of the final agreement between the Educational Services Provider and the HEP Branch Campus.	
5.	Responsibility matrix clearly outlining the roles, responsibilities and accountability of the investor, venture partner or Educational Services Provider supporting the operations of the HEP Branch and a letter from the HEP Home confirming its academic responsibilities towards the HEP Branch.	

6.	Student Grievance Policy & Process (including explanation of any variances from the policy and processes in use at the HEP).	
7.	Confirmation from the HEP Home that the programmes offered at the HEP Branch are the same as those offered at the HEP Home, and that the students at the HEP Branch will have access to similar learning resources.	
8.	Letter from HEP Home confirming that the HEP Home External Quality Assurance Agency will quality assure all academic programmes at the HEP Branch.	
9.	Letter from the HEP Home External Quality Assurance Agency confirming that they will quality assure the programmes at the HEP Branch Campus.	
10.	Proposed location and size of the institution and details of facilities and instructional/teaching space	
11.	Plans for faculty recruitment, research and library resources	
12.	Financial projections for five years, including projected income (profit and loss) statements for five years and cash flow statements	
13.	Proof of availability of adequate funds to meet capital expenditure and operational expenditure requirements of the institution	
14.	Demonstrate fiscal capacity in the event of programme closure to complete teach out of students or other KHDA approved alternatives	
15.	Any proposed collaborative agreements or professional certifications/accreditations	
16.	In the case of a Private Higher Education Institution, submit a copy of the standards documents submitted to the Commission for Academic Accreditation under the Ministry of Education.	



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KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Block 8, Academic City, P. O. Box: 500008, Dubai, UAE
Tel: +971 4 364 0000 Fax: +971 4 364 0001

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