



Synchronized inspection and accreditation visit
Knowledge and Human Development
Authority and New England Association
of Schools and Colleges
KHDA Requirements



Introduction

The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) ensures the growth and direction of private education in Dubai and, through the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB), is responsible for ensuring and maintaining high quality education in Dubai's private schools.

Currently there are **158** private schools in Dubai, and **31** schools teach the US curriculum to **45,862** students, amounting to **18.8** percent of all private school enrollments.*

To establish and implement an accreditation process appropriate to US schools in Dubai, and to offer students and their parents a curriculum where academic standards and attainment are benchmarked against international norms, KHDA has partnered with The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The Association has a long and established history as the oldest accrediting body in the US.

To achieve NEASC standards of accreditation, US schools in Dubai must deliver educational content that closely reflects subjects taught in American or international schools with the mission to deliver quality education and learning to all of its students. To help schools understand and achieve the fundamentals of a US curriculum, KHDA has set forth a number of requirements that cover the basic elements. These requirements cover a range of areas such as curriculum standards, assessment, staffing and personnel, and graduation requirements.

This guidebook consists of two sections. The first section is intended to clarify the purpose of this partnership between KHDA and NEASC, explain to schools how the NEASC accreditation procedure operates and highlight how the process of accreditation, in conjunction with KHDA's inspection process, will benefit schools, parents, stakeholders and above all, the students who attend US schools in Dubai. The second section lists the KHDA requirements that all US curriculum schools need to meet or exceed.

Schools meeting KHDA requirements and gaining NEASC accreditation will be categorized as "Authorized American Schools". Schools that do not successfully meet KHDA requirements including NEASC accreditation will be categorized as offering a "School Based Curriculum". This categorization will become effective in the **2017/2018** academic year.

*Dubai Private Education Landscape 2013-2014



SECTION ONE:

SYNCHRONIZED INSPECTION AND ACCREDITATION VISIT

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is an expression of confidence in an educational institution's mission, educational programs, performances, and human and financial resources. It is a system of accountability through peer review that is ongoing, voluntary, and comprehensive in scope. Accreditation is based on standards that are developed, regularly reviewed, and that define the characteristics of good schools and colleges.

What is NEASC?

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is the oldest accrediting body in the United States of America (US); it is one of six regional accrediting bodies in the US. NEASC is an advocate of educational quality and its improvement. NEASC accredited schools demonstrate alignment with NEASC's core standards and embrace the concept of continuous school improvement.

NEASC serves more than **2,000** public and independent schools, colleges, and universities in the six states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. It also serves more than **220** American/International schools in **68** nations worldwide, through the Commission on American and International Schools Abroad (CAISA).

The mission of CAISA is to ensure and promote high quality education for students by developing and applying standards which are used to assess the effectiveness of American and international schools operating outside the United States. Commission standards focus on virtually every aspect of a school's operation. NEASC Accreditation is curriculum-neutral and schools offering *American, international, or national curricula may qualify for accreditation, provided English is a prime language of instruction.

*Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) refers to American schools as 'US' schools.

Why NEASC accreditation for US schools in Dubai?

NEASC accreditation of American and international schools outside of the United States has long been recognized as a highly effective means of initiating and maintaining school improvement and demonstrating alignment with a set of publicly stated standards. NEASC accreditation is an internationally respected quality seal distinguishing the school that has earned it.

Schools undertaking the accreditation process commit to improving the quality of education offered to their students through a rigorous process of self-study, followed by an objective, external appraisal and validation by a team of peers. The Visiting Team Report provides the school with a blueprint for ongoing short- and long-term development and attests to the school's demonstrable strengths. Parents of students at NEASC-accredited schools are assured that their children are learning in a high quality, safe, and caring environment and that they will be gaining the skills and understandings to become successful citizens of the world.



In meeting NEASC Standards of Accreditation, schools give evidence that they provide an educational program similar in orientation and scope to that of an American or international school.

What are the NEASC accreditation standards?

The NEASC Accreditation protocol (the 8th Edition Guide to School Evaluation and Accreditation, Journey to Excellence in International Education) consists of 37 Standards (and 190 Indicators describing the Standards), grouped into seven sections:

- School Guiding Statements (Mission, Vision, Objectives)
- Teaching & Learning (Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment, Internationalism)
- Governance & Leadership (Operational and Strategic Oversight, Long-Term Planning, Policy)
- Faculty & Support Staff (Qualifications, Conditions of Employment, Professional Development)
- Access to Teaching & Learning (Counseling, Special Needs, Guidance)
- School Culture & Partnerships for Learning (Home/School Relationship, Communication Systems, Child Protection)
- Operational Systems (Facilities, Finance, Health & Safety).



While the Guiding Statements and Teaching & Learning sections constitute the core and essence of the accreditation model, all sections focus on three principles underpinning the entire model:

- Student Learning
- Student Wellbeing
- Internationalism/Intercultural Competence.

For a school to earn accreditation, it must offer tangible and observable evidence that it is aligned with the Standards and dedicated to promoting the core principles. Where alignment is deficient, the school is expected to define and implement appropriate, timed, and achievable action plans.

NEASC/CAISA Standards of Accreditation may be downloaded at:

http://caisa.neasc.org/standards_policies/standards_indicators/

How does accreditation differ from inspection?

Accreditation is a voluntary, peer review process. It is a ten-year cycle that includes a Preliminary/Preparatory Visit, a comprehensive **12-18** months Self-Study, a Team Visit, a First Report on Progress and Planning after two years, and a 5-Year Review Visit. Additional follow-up visits, designed to ensure that planned and recommended institutional change is accomplished, may be scheduled as deemed necessary. Visiting Teams are composed of both administrators and teachers who are currently working in the field. Team members conduct classroom observations, meet with Self-Study Committees and representatives from all constituencies, and review school performance data.

By comparison, DSIB inspections focus initially on outcomes (attainment, progress, learning skills, and students' personal and social development) and evaluate the effectiveness of each school's provision in achieving its stated aims.

Although there are conceptual and logistical differences between the two processes, NEASC accreditation and DSIB inspection support continuous school improvement, promote life-long institutional learning, and establish benchmarks of excellence.

How does the DSIB-NEASC partnership work?

The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) is responsible for oversight of private education in Dubai and, through the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB), ensures high quality education in Dubai's private schools. The DSIB inspection and the NEASC accreditation processes, while different in structure and scope and producing separate and distinct reports, complement each other and pursue identical aims: to promote excellence in teaching and learning for students in schools designated as 'US.'

To retain a 'US' education permit classification, a school must meet KHDA requirements for 'US' schools and earn accreditation. KHDA has opted to partner with NEASC, the oldest accrediting body in the United States, for synchronized inspection-accreditation visits.

'US' schools that meet KHDA requirements but are not currently NEASC-accredited are encouraged to apply for NEASC accreditation. If the application for NEASC accreditation is successful, DSIB will schedule a synchronized inspection-accreditation visit.

What are the NEASC application procedures?

- Schools must notify KHDA of their interest in NEASC accreditation/membership and synchronized visits. They should then complete the online NEASC application form, which can be accessed by the link on the KHDA website www.khda.gov.ae
- Schools must send the completed application form to KHDA RPC@khda.gov.ae, where it will be reviewed and forwarded to NEASC.
- Upon receipt of the completed application form, NEASC invoices the application fee to the school. The fee must be paid before a final determination of eligibility is made.
- In some cases, NEASC may request that the school hosts a 1-2 day visit prior to determining eligibility. The visit incurs a fee which the school must settle before a final determination of eligibility is made.
- Individual schools are notified by NEASC within four weeks whether their applications for accreditation/membership have been successful.
- DSIB communicates to the schools the inspection-accreditation visit date once NEASC has confirmed a school's eligibility.

What information is required in the application form?

The application is the first step in the process of becoming a NEASC-accredited school. A school's eligibility for NEASC accreditation will depend on how thoroughly and thoughtfully the school responds to the questions on the application form. Specifically, the school is asked to:

- Provide general information (Mission Statement, Enrollment, Grade/Age Levels, History, etc.);
- Describe its curriculum, pedagogical philosophy, special learning needs services, assessment practices;
- Explain how it instills international-mindedness in its students;
- Summarize the teachers' and administrators' qualifications and experience;
- Describe the governance system and the delegation of operational and strategic responsibilities;
- Analyze its current financial position and include financial projections;
- Reflect on its perceived alignment with the Standards and on anticipated areas of improvement as a result of the accreditation process;
- Comment on short- and medium-term strengths, challenges and future opportunities.

What steps follow application?

Once a school's application to enter the NEASC accreditation process has been accepted, a synchronized accreditation/inspection visit consists of a regular team of DSIB inspectors and two (or more) NEASC representatives spending four days at the school. The NEASC representatives determine whether

- the school is sufficiently aligned with the Standards of Accreditation;
- the school is committed to ongoing school improvement and ready to conduct a Self-Study; and whether
- the school has the resources and capacity to undertake a comprehensive Self-Study over a period of up to 18 months.

A decision to authorize the school to proceed with the Self-Study will depend on NEASC's review of the Visitors' Report and their recommendation.

NEASC Preliminary Visit/DSIB Inspection – Candidacy Status

Prior to the scheduled synchronized NEASC preliminary/DSIB inspection visit, the school submits a more detailed self-assessment of its compliance with the 37 Standards of Accreditation and their Indicators. At the same time, the school prepares the self-evaluation document required by DSIB.

Two (or more in the case of very large schools) NEASC Visitors and a regular DSIB-appointed Inspection Team spend 4 days at the school, visiting classes, meeting with and interviewing administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, and board representatives. While the reports written by the NEASC Visitors and the DSIB Inspectors differ in format, scope and purpose, the teams work together closely and shared evidence informs both reports.

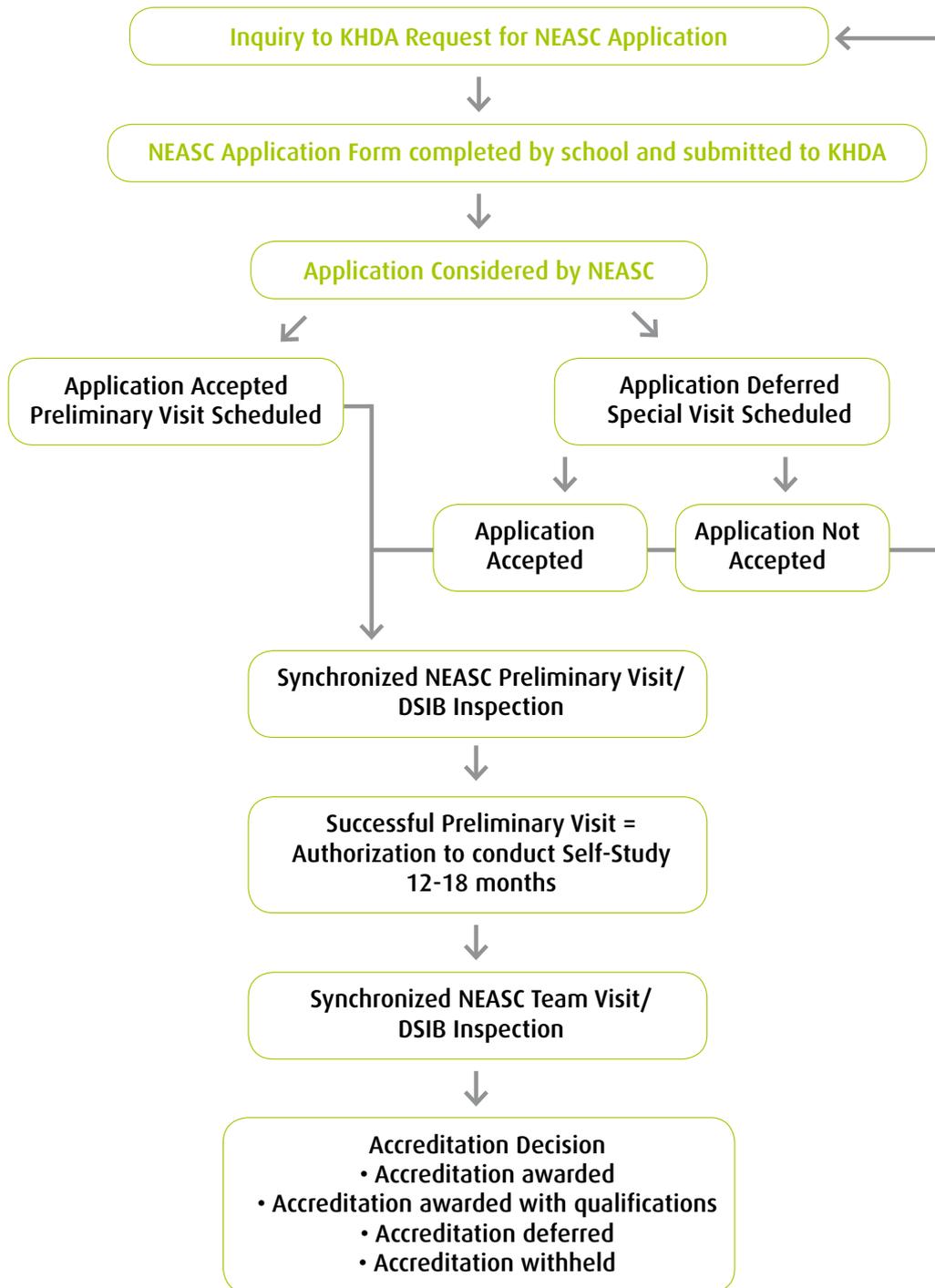
On the day following the synchronized visit, the NEASC Visitors facilitate a full-day workshop for the faculty and staff in which the NEASC Self-Study process is explained in detail and hands-on practice for preparing the Self-Study is provided. The NEASC Visitors also discuss next steps with the school's leadership (i.e. the Self-Study, and likely date of the Accreditation Team Visit). If it is apparent that the school is not sufficiently aligned with accreditation Standards, the workshop will focus on improvement strategies.

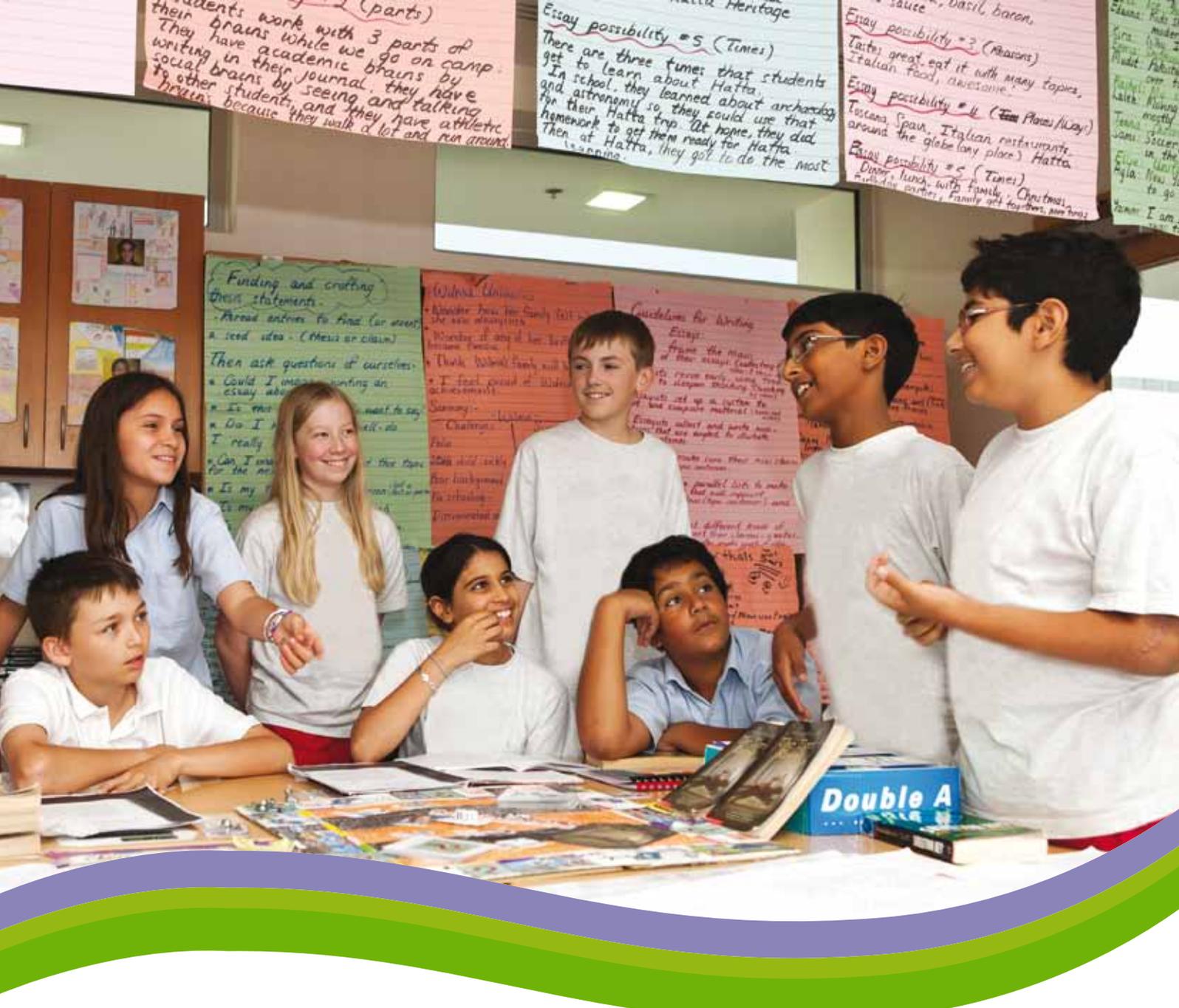
The synchronized visit concludes with two separate feedback sessions; the NEASC Team and the DSIB Inspection Team will subsequently submit their reports to their respective agencies for review and decision-making before they are sent to the school.

If NEASC accepts the Visitors' Report and recommendation, the school will be granted Candidacy status. Candidacy allows the school to proceed with the comprehensive Self-Study in preparation for a Team Visit and eventual accreditation. Candidacy also authorizes the school to use the NEASC logo (with the notation: "Candidate for Accreditation") on its website and in published materials.

If, in the opinion of NEASC, the school falls short of meeting the requirements to advance to the next stage in the accreditation process, a Special Report and further Special Visit may be requested by NEASC before Candidacy status is awarded.

Overview of Synchronized NEASC Application & Accreditation Process/DSIB Inspection





SECTION TWO:

KHDA REQUIREMENTS

KHDA Requirements of “US Curriculum” Schools

The following set of requirements is considered essential for ‘US curriculum’ schools in Dubai. These requirements are mandatory and schools must meet or exceed all the KHDA requirements, including accreditation from NEASC, in order to be categorized as an “American Authorized School”.

The Curriculum

1. The curriculum must be compliant with KHDA requirements for the teaching and learning of Islamic Education and Arabic.
2. English must be the language of instruction in the school.
3. Curriculum expectations must meet or exceed the US Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and mathematics.
4. Curriculum expectations for other subjects must be aligned with the standards of a named state or the American Education Reaches Out (AERO) standards.
5. The curriculum must include quality extra-curricular activities, which address the broad spectrum of student interests in all phases of the school.

Assessment and Graduation Requirements

1. Internal assessments in English Language Arts and mathematics must be aligned with the US Common Core standards and expectations.
2. Internal assessments for other subjects must be aligned with the curriculum standards and expectations of the named state or AERO standards.
3. Schools must use the following standard conversion chart to convert high school percentage grades to letter grades. This chart must also be used to calculate cumulative grade point averages (GPA).



Letter Grade	Percent Grade	4.0 Scale
A+	97-100	4.0
A	93-96	4.0
A-	90-92	3.7
B+	87-89	3.3
B	83-86	3.0
B-	80-82	2.7
C+	77-79	2.3
C	73-76	2.0
C-	70-72	1.7
D+	67-69	1.3
D	65-66	1.0
D-	Below 65	0.5
E/F	Below 60	0.0
AP/ IB courses	An addition of 0.25 to the standard weighting	

- All high school students (those studying in Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12) must take recognized standardized tests as appropriate to their needs and grade level. Choices must also be linked to university and national equivalency requirements.

The following is a list of recognized standardized tests associated with US curriculum expectations:

Acronym	Description	Grade level appropriateness
PSAT	Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test	Grades 10 and 11
SAT I	Scholastic Assessment Test (English and mathematics)	Grades 11 and 12
SAT II	SAT Subject Tests	Grade 12
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language	Grades 11 and 12
IELTS	International English Language Testing System	Grades 11 and 12
AP	Advanced Placement Test	Grade 12

Note: the school can also use other recognized standardized/ international tests.

- Any student seeking UAE equivalency status for his/ her High School Diploma must sit for SAT I math component (minimum score of **400**) and TOEFL (minimum score of **173** computer based; minimum score of **61** internet based).
- Elective courses, including arts, must be available to high school students.
- Each school must have clear High School graduation requirements, which will be shared with the students and parents in the high school section.
- Graduation requirements must be aligned with the following minimum expectations spread over the four years of the High School phase (Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12):



Subject	Units or credits Each full unit or credit is considered as a subject studied throughout the academic year for at least three 50 minute periods per week (except for Islamic Education)
English	4
Science	3
Math	3
World Language	2
Social Studies	2
Physical Education	2
Visual/ Performing Art	0.5
Electives	5.5
Arabic	4
For Arab Nationals - Mandatory These units can replace a combination of credits or units from the elective and world language components	
Islamic Education	2
For Muslim Students - Mandatory These units can replace a combination of credits or units from the elective and world language components	
*A credit or a unit is 120 classroom hours of instructions	

Staffing and Personnel

1. At least one of the following senior management positions must be held by a person with appropriate experience in an accredited US school: Superintendent, Principal, Vice-principal or Curriculum Coordinator.
2. Each school must have at least one full-time qualified guidance counselor to assist students with college and university admissions.
3. Every teacher of a key subject taught in English must have proficiency level in English. It is the school's responsibility to provide evidence of such proficiency through valid assessments of language proficiency. These include:

Test or Assessment Type	Required Score for English Teachers	Required Score for mathematics and science teachers
TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language	Between 96 – 120	Between 79 – 95
IELTS – International English Language Testing System	Between 7.5 – 9.0	Between 6.5 – 7.0

Accreditation

1. In addition to meeting other KHDA requirements, schools that wish to retain or obtain a permit to operate as an “Authorized American School” must earn accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

