

GEMS Dubai American Academy

Attendance Policy

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Reviewed by: M. Gilmour Deputy Superintendent

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DAA Attendance Policy - All Divisions

Common Attendance Policy (Applicable to Elementary, Middle, and High School)*

Purpose

Regular school attendance is essential for academic success, personal growth, and community engagement. Dubai American Academy (DAA) values the importance of consistent attendance and punctuality as integral to student achievement and wellbeing.

Attendance Expectations

All students are expected to attend school every day unless they have a valid excuse. Regular attendance is essential for academic progress, skill development, and social engagement.

- Students are expected to attend a minimum of 90% of all school days per term, as per KHDA guidelines.
- Attendance is monitored daily through official school registers in all divisions.
- Parents are expected to ensure their children arrive at school on time and attend all scheduled lessons, assemblies, and activities.

The KHDA uses the following ratings for attendance:

DAA Attendance Expectations*
Attendance Percentage
At least 94%
At least 91%
Below 90%

* Percentages taken from the KHDA framework.

Students who fall below the acceptable threshold may face interventions, including attendance probation and academic review.

Excused Absences

An absence may be considered excused if it results from one of the following:

- Illness supported by a doctor's certificate (required after two or more consecutive days).
- Family emergencies or bereavement.
- Religious observances (pre-approved by the Principal).
- Pre-approved travel or official commitments approved by the Division Principal.
- Other circumstances approved at the discretion of the school administration.

All absences must be communicated to the school by the parent or guardian on the same day through the division's designated attendance email or phone line.

Unexcused Absences

- Absences without valid reason or documentation will be marked as unexcused.
- Repeated unexcused absences may result in:
 - Loss of participation privileges (e.g., trips, activities, or events).
 - Formal communication to parents.
 - Referral to the KHDA as per regulatory requirements.

Late Arrivals and Early Departures

- Students arriving late must report to the designated reception area for sign-in before proceeding to class.
- Repeated tardiness may lead to follow-up communication and action from the division office.
- Students leaving early must be signed out by a parent/guardian or an authorized adult at the reception.
- For safety reasons, students cannot leave the school premises without prior approval.

Extended Absences

- Parents requesting an extended absence (beyond three consecutive school days) must seek prior written approval from the Division Principal.
- The school cannot be held responsible for academic gaps resulting from unapproved or extended absences.

Communication and Monitoring

- Attendance is recorded and monitored daily.
- Parents will be notified when attendance or punctuality concerns arise.
- Persistent absenteeism may result in formal intervention and documentation with the KHDA.

Recording Daily Attendance

Recording accurate attendance is an essential component of student safeguarding. As such, a variety of attendance codes are utilized within PowerSchool in order to ensure accurate documentation of student attendance to lessons throughout the school day. The following codes are used to record attendance in PowerSchool:

PowerSchool Attendance Codes and their Meanings

P	Present - The student was present and on time for their assigned lesson.
A	Absent - At the time of attendance registration, the student was not in the classroom with no prior notification from the parent or guardian. This counts towards a student's overall absences within that particular course.
AN	Absent Notified - The student was absent from their lesson following direct notification from the parent and/or guardian. Parents can notify the school of a student's absence by emailing the divisional attendance secretary directly by 7:40 AM. This counts towards a student's overall absences within that particular course.
AE	Absent Excused - The student's absence from their lesson has been excused through official documentation. This absence does not count towards a student's overall absences within that particular course.
SAE	School Approved Event - The student was absent from their lesson due to participation in a school event, such as a field trip, sporting event, or competition. This absence does not count towards a student's overall absences within that particular course. It is important to note that only DAA-run events can be considered "School Approved Events".
ND	Nurse Dismissal - The student has been dismissed from school by the nurse's office due to confirmed illness or injury. This absence counts towards a student's overall absences within that particular course, however, if a formal sick leave certificate is shared with the divisional attendance secretary within 3 working days, the absence can be updated to excused.

TE	Tardy Excused - The student arrived tardy to their lesson with an official excuse or documentation - this may include a pass from the nurse or another member of staff.
TU	Tardy Unexcused - The student arrived up to 10 minutes tardy to their lesson without any official excuse or documentation.
UMT	Unaccounted for Missed Time - The student arrived in excess of 10 minutes late to their lesson without any valid documentation or excuse, thereby missing a substantial portion of the lesson.
SKP	Skipped - The student was on campus at the time of their lesson but did not attend. Disciplinary consequences for skipping lessons can be found below. Skipping a lesson counts as an absence from class and will be counted towards a student's overall absences within that particular course.
ISS or OSS	In School Suspension or Out of School Suspension - Suspension from school is a disciplinary consequence that results in temporarily removing a student from the learning environment. Absences resulting from assigned disciplinary consequences do not count towards a student's overall absences within that particular course.

If a student or parent believes that their attendance has been recorded inaccurately, then they must first contact the teacher directly to request clarification. For further clarification and support, the student or parent may contact the appropriate divisional attendance secretary:

ES: Ms. Shirley Vas at s.vas_daa@gemsedu.com

MS: Ms. Marianne at MSattendance_daa@gemsedu.com

HS: Mr. Kelvin Sicat at k.sicat_daa@gemsedu.com

Absence from School

Students are expected to attend school every school day. Attendance is essential if the student is to be successful. Faculty can best help students learn when students meet the expectation of being present in all scheduled lessons. When students are absent from class, it is their responsibility to make up any missed coursework or material. Absences from school fall into one of two categories:

- **Daily Absences:** If a student will be absent from school, a parent must notify the divisional attendance secretary by phone or email no later than 8:30am. These absences will be documented as “AN” for “Absence Notified”. Failure to notify the divisional attendance secretary of the student’s absence will result in the student being documented as “A” for “Absent”.
- **Excused Absences:** An excused absence is when a student has an official, documented reason for being absent from school. Examples may include a medical sick leave certificate, an official government appointment, or family emergency. Documentation to verify an excused absence must be submitted within 3 business days of the student’s absence from school. If no documentation is submitted within this time frame, the student’s absence will remain documented as “A” for Absent or “AN” for “Absence Notified”. Students are allowed a maximum of 8 days of unexcused absences throughout the school year before an official parent meeting must be had with the administration team.

Students who will be absent for three or more consecutive days must provide an official sick leave certificate. School Approved Events (SAE), such as DAA sporting events, travel for MESAC tournaments, school field trips, etc. will be recorded as such in PowerSchool and will not be counted towards a student’s overall absences.

Internal Truancy

When students are on campus, it is essential that they attend all of their lessons as scheduled. Attendance is a matter of student safeguarding and students are not permitted to miss lessons without a valid and documented excuse. Instances of internal truancy will result in disciplinary consequences in alignment with our Student Handbook and DAA Behavior for Learning Plan. Examples of internal truancy include:

- Skipped Lessons - any time that a student is on campus and chooses not to attend their assigned lesson, it will be documented as “SKP” on PowerSchool. This includes arriving late to campus and choosing not to attend the remainder of the current ongoing lesson. When students are identified to be skipping class, the following consequences will result:
 - First Offense: Lunch Detention + Parent Communication
 - Second Offense: After School Detention + Parent Communication + Student Meeting
 - Third Offense: Formal Warning Letter + Out of School Suspension + Parent Meeting
- TU - Unexcused Tardiness - when a student arrives between 1 and 10 minutes tardy to their scheduled lesson without a valid excuse and/or documentation, they will be marked as Tardy Unexcused (TU) in PowerSchool. Habitual tardiness to lessons may result in disciplinary action, such as a lunch detention assigned by the student's teacher.
- UMT - Unaccounted for Missed Time - when a student arrives in excess of 10 minutes tardy to their scheduled lesson without a valid excuse and/or documentation, they will be marked as Unaccounted for Missed Time (UMT) on PowerSchool. This differentiation from standard tardiness (between 1-10 minutes) is to indicate that the student has missed a substantial portion of the lesson and to document any potential student safeguarding concerns. Excessive tardiness such as this may result in disciplinary action, such as a lunch detention assigned by the student's teacher or, in repeated instances, further action in alignment with our HS Student Handbook and DAA Behavior for Learning Plan.

Special Considerations

A variety of circumstances may require special consideration in regards to a student's attendance. The following are common circumstances that are given special consideration within our HS Attendance Policy:

- **Attendance Following a School Trip:** Students traveling outside of the country on school sponsored trips need not report to school until 11 hours after the plane lands. If students are traveling within the UAE, they should report to school not later than 10 hours after arrival back at school. It is the responsibility of the teacher/administrator in charge of the trip to advise students at the airport for international trips, or at school for local trips, of the expected arrival time at school the following day. The trip administrator should also inform the high school office of expected arrival times of students. Absence or tardiness after this designated time will be considered unexcused and may result in a student being unable to participate in activities the following day.
- **Participation in Student Events and Activities:** Students are not permitted to participate in or attend an activity on a day they are absent from school, including both in and out of school suspension. In order to participate in an activity, High School students must be present or, if late to school. The only exceptions to this procedure will be made by the Principal.

High School - Additional Guidelines

Attendance Expectations

All students are expected to attend school every day unless they have a valid excuse. Regular attendance is essential for academic progress, skill development, and social engagement.

The KHDA uses the following ratings for attendance:

DAA Attendance Guidelines*			
Attendance Percentage	Instructional Days per Semester	Class Meetings per Semester (Every Other Day)	Absences per Semester
At least 94%	90	45	3 or less
At least 91%	90	45	5 or less
Below 90%	90	45	6 or more

* Percentages taken from the KHDA framework.

Students who fall below the acceptable threshold may face interventions, including attendance probation and academic review.

High School Graduation Requirements

To earn a US High School Diploma, students must earn the required number of credits in each of their academic subject areas. The requirements for each subject area can be found below:

Subject	Required Credits for Graduation
English	4
Science	3
Math	3
World Language	2
Social Studies	2
PE	2
Arts	0.5
Electives	5.5
Arabic	4 (Arab Nationals)
	1 (Non-Arab Nationals, Grade 9)
Islamic (Muslim Students Only)	2

High school students earn credit on a semester basis, earning .5 credits each semester in each course. Therefore, year-long courses result in 1 full credit at the completion of each academic year. When a student does not earn credit in one of their courses, through either a failing grade or lack of attendance, they may be required to recover that credit in order to successfully complete high school.

Excessive Absences

Credits for individual courses are awarded on a semester basis. When students accumulate excessive absences, they may be ineligible to earn academic credit and may be required to complete credit recovery. The high school provides a tiered approach to communicating absences to families to ensure that expectations and outcomes are both clear and consistent:

- Tier 1: Daily attendance to lessons is recorded and communicated through PowerSchool multiple times per day. Parents can access information and receive notifications from PowerSchool at any time, 24/7.
- Tier 2: Students who accumulate 3 or more absences in a class will receive formal communication at least twice per semester: one when progress reports are issued and a second time when final report cards are issued.
- Tier 3: Students who accumulate 6 or more absences in a class will receive formal communication twice per semester: one when progress reports are issued and a second time when final report cards are issued. These students will be placed on Attendance Probation for the remainder of the academic year.

Attendance Probation

Students who have excessive absences or instances of internal truancy may be placed on attendance probation to better monitor their attendance to lessons. This process seeks to ensure that students improve their attendance and earn credit in all of their academic courses by the end of the school year. Students may be placed on Attendance Probation for:

- Excessive Absences - Receiving 6 or more absences in one or more of their academic courses within a semester.
- Repeated Instances of Internal Truancy - After receiving repeated warnings and progressive consequences as indicated above, students may be placed on attendance probation for continued instances of skipped classes, unexcused tardiness, or unaccounted for missed time.



Students on Attendance Probation will not be eligible to compete in school sports or participate in various school activities that require consistent attendance and participation, such as SPARK Week, Model United Nations, Duke of Edinburgh, the National Honors Society, Student Government, Academic Games, Speech and Debate, Ambassadors, etc. They may also be ineligible to run for school leadership positions within the Student Government or Athletics Council.

Academic performance and achievement is closely linked with student attendance. As such, students placed on Attendance Probation will not be eligible to enroll in higher level academic courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses or IB Diploma Program courses. They will also be ineligible to have an Unsupervised Study Hall.

Students seeking the opportunity to improve their attendance and end their probationary status may do so following a formal meeting with the high school administration team. Students must demonstrate consistent improvement in alignment with the terms agreed upon within that meeting for a period of at least 6 working weeks.

If, after the implementation of Attendance Probation and an improvement plan, a student's attendance does not improve, the case may be escalated to the KHDA for further action, including potential academic retention or dismissal.



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Attendance During High School Assessments and Exams

Students are required to attend all assessments and exams as scheduled. If a student misses an exam or summative assessment, they must submit official documentation to verify an excused absence on the day of the missed assessment. Failure to submit this documentation will result in the student's inability to make up the assessment and, ultimately, a failing grade. Repeated absences during exams and summative assessments is a violation of our Academic Integrity Policy and will be subject to administrative review and academic penalties as indicated within the policy.

Students who submit fraudulent or altered documentation in order to excuse an absence (on the day of an assessment or otherwise) will be subject to disciplinary consequences in alignment with our HS Student Handbook and DAA Behavior for Learning Plan.

Early Dismissal from School

If a student requires an early dismissal, their parent or guardian must contact the divisional attendance secretary to confirm the exact time of dismissal. To ensure a prompt dismissal, parents/guardians are advised to send this communication 24 hours prior to the student's dismissal from school. Absences due to a verified early dismissal will be documented as "AN" (Absence Notified) unless otherwise specified. No student will be permitted to leave campus without the verified written permission of their parent/guardian as a matter of student safeguarding.

Senior Privileges

Senior students may earn the privilege to leave campus during the school day through demonstrated excellence in regards to attendance, achievement, and behavior. Students who qualify for this privilege and their families will receive clear guidance in regards to its implementation and limitations. Violations of these guidelines will result in a loss of the privileges.

High School Credit Recovery

Students with excessive absences in one or more courses may require opportunities for credit recovery. Credit recovery opportunities allow students to complete additional seat-time or course requirements to regain credit in their courses and prevent any disruption to the student's graduation pathway. Credit recovery opportunities can be either internal or external.

Internal Credit Recovery opportunities exist when students have exceeded the allowable absences threshold by between 1 and 5 absences. In these cases, families will be notified and students will be assigned additional opportunities to attend school sessions outside of traditional instructional times in order to recover their academic credit in the course.

External Credit Recovery opportunities exist when students have exceeded the allowable absences threshold by 6 or more absences. In these cases, families will be notified and advised on their options for external credit recovery through an accredited organization, such as iCademy. Submission of a completed iCademy transcript to the HS Counseling Office will allow students to recover their academic credit in the course.

Students who do not participate in either of the above options will not receive academic credit in the specified course(s). This will be documented on their transcripts as an "AF", Attendance Failure. An Attendance Failure is a failing grade, as calculated within the student's grade point average, that can only be recovered through one of the credit recovery options described above.

If students or families have questions in regards to their credit requirements, they should schedule an appointment with their counselor at their earlier convenience. The HS Counseling Department has specific expertise in advising students in regards to their graduation pathways and university requirements.

Middle School - Additional Guidelines

Attendance Expectations

All students are expected to attend school every day unless they have a valid excuse. Regular attendance is essential for academic progress, skill development, and social engagement.

The KHDA uses the following ratings for attendance:

DAA Attendance Guidelines*			
Attendance Percentage	Instructional Days per Semester	Class Meetings per Semester (Every Other Day)	Absences per Semester
At least 94%	90	45	3 or less
At least 91%	90	45	5 or less
Below 90%	90	45	6 or more

* Percentages taken from the KHDA framework.

Students who fall below the acceptable threshold may face interventions, including attendance probation and academic review.

Recording Daily Attendance

In Middle and High School, attendance is recorded in PowerSchool each time the students attend their lessons throughout the day. This communication is readily available to families at any time of day and should be used to maintain an awareness of the student's attendance on a daily basis. Teachers are required to submit attendance within the first five minutes of each lesson period and may update attendance at the end of the lesson as necessary

- **Early Dismissal from School:** If a student requires an early dismissal, their parent or guardian must contact the divisional attendance secretary to confirm the exact time of dismissal. To ensure a prompt dismissal, parents/guardians are advised to send this communication 24 hours prior to the student's dismissal from school. Absences due to a verified early dismissal will be documented as "AN" (Absence Notified) unless otherwise specified. No student will be permitted to leave campus without the verified written permission of their parent/guardian as a matter of student safeguarding.

Elementary School - Additional Guidelines

Recording Daily Attendance

In the Elementary School, attendance is recorded by the homeroom teacher first thing in the morning to capture each student's daily presence. In addition, specialist teachers record attendance during their respective classes as students attend their lessons throughout the day. While daily attendance is visible to parents through PowerSchool, attendance for specialist lessons is recorded internally and not reflected on the parent portal. Homeroom teachers and specialists work closely together to ensure attendance records are accurate and consistently maintained..

Early Dismissal from School:

If a student requires an early dismissal, their parent or guardian must contact the divisional attendance secretary to confirm the exact time of dismissal. To ensure a prompt dismissal, parents/guardians are advised to send this communication 24 hours prior to the student's dismissal from school. Absences due to a verified early dismissal will be documented as "AN" (Absence Notified) unless otherwise specified. No ES Students can leave the campus without a parent or guardian.

- Early Dismissal: this is when a student needs to be picked up before the regular dismissal times (2:50pm Monday to Thursday; 11:50am Friday).
- Please note: The last Early Dismissal can be made at 2:15pm Monday to Thursday; and 11:15am on a Friday). Following these times, parents/guardians will have to wait until 2:50. Extenuating circumstances will be considered on an individual basis.

For planned and Unplanned Early Dismissal

- Parents/guardians proceed to the Divisional Secretary's desk and wait to be assisted.
- Students will meet parents/guardians at the Ground Floor ES Reception for students KG1 to Grade 2; and at the First Floor ES Reception for students Grade 3 to Grade 5.
- Please note that in accordance with our safety rules:
 - Parents are not allowed to collect children for early dismissal from the classroom.
 - Parents are not allowed in the hallways as these are active learning spaces

Planned Early Dismissal:

Early Dismissal requests should ideally be made 24 hours in advance, but no later than 2 hours before the requested dismissal time. Requests should be made via email to the homeroom teacher and the Divisional Secretary (KG1 - Gr.2 Shirley; Gr.3 - Gr.5 Juliana). In planned cases, the student will be escorted by the homeroom teacher or EA to the secretary at the said time, and will be ready and waiting to be picked up by the parent/guardian.

Unplanned Early Dismissal:

In circumstances when the early dismissal could not be planned and informed, parents/guardians complete the Early Dismissal Form with the secretary, and will need to expect a wait time of up to 45 minutes once they reach the secretary. (Locating students can take time as this can be influenced by having staff available to collect the student, class transitions, break times, and other specialist locations).



ES Divisional Secretaries contact:

- KG1 - Gr.2 Shirley: s.vas_daa@gemsedu.com
- Gr.3 - Gr.5 Daniela: d.wendorff_daa@gemsedu.com



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