



ACADEMICA
INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES

**ACADEMICA INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
DUAL DIPLOMA PROGRAM**

**STUDENT/ PARENT
HANDBOOK**

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Academica International Studies is to give students in countries outside of the United States the opportunity to earn a U.S. high school diploma while simultaneously earning their secondary school diploma in their country of origin. The purpose is to provide an additional competitive advantage to these students by fostering the development of self-directed and responsible 21st century life-long learners through the thoughtful use of interactive, media-rich educational opportunities in a flexible, student-centered, virtual learning environment.

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Academica International Studies, hereinafter referred to as “AIS,” has instituted admission and enrollment policies and procedures for its Dual Diploma Program. The purpose of the program is to make instruction available to secondary students using online and distance learning technology in the nontraditional classroom.

Enrollment Procedures

To enroll, a student must complete the application process, take an English language Admissions Test, and be accepted. Once accepted, the student will be given a username and password to access their courses. Courses will be open beginning the first day of the semester.

All students will be placed in core classes and may have the ability to choose elective courses according to the Course of Study. An AIS instructor will work with the Program Director to verify that the student has been enrolled in the appropriate courses. Students will receive a separate program software for English if applicable, the Student/Parent Handbook, a QuickStart, and any applicable materials needed.

GENERAL ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICIES

AIS monitors student attendance, participation, and performance to ensure that students meet compulsory attendance requirements and are making progress toward successful completion of the course or program as specified in the program’s attendance policies.

Dual Diploma students are expected to own their own computer and attend and participate in their online education courses as they would attend and participate in a traditional classroom course. Expected number of logins will vary depending upon the course. Students should login at a minimum of **three times weekly** and spend approximately **3-5 hours per course, per week, studying**. Students are also required to follow the guidelines provided by their instructor for completing the modules in the **English software program** if applicable. Students will also check their email daily as teachers send out numerous announcements, updates, and grade reports via email.

If there is no activity or login from a student in one week, the teacher may contact the student and Program Director. Unless prior communications have been received from the student, parent, or home school regarding the student’s absence, a student who fails to log in and participate in his/her online course for twenty (20) days may be academically withdrawn from the program. **If a student**

does not log in to a course for seven (7) consecutive days for any reason, it is his or her responsibility to notify the teacher.

Attendance is measured by time logged in, contributions made through communication via discussion threads, e-mails, live sessions, and/or through the submission of assignments, projects, and tests. Each time a student enters a course, participation is automatically recorded and the length of time in each area is noted.

STUDENT DROP POLICY

Only through continuous communication can students be successful in an online course. Within each course the instructor outlines the weekly minimum work requirements. It is essential that the student and instructor maintain regular contact.

All students are required to adhere to the following statement upon registration:

*“I acknowledge that during the first **five (5) days** of being enrolled into my AIS course(s), I may drop the course(s) without penalty. This provision shall not apply if I have already started working in my course(s). I understand that for each online course there are a minimum number of assignments that must be completed each week. Failure to submit the minimum number of assignments on a weekly basis may result in my removal from the Dual Diploma Program.”*

To ensure that our students are aware of this commitment, the three-part process below will be followed:

1. If the student does not submit the expected number of assignment(s) according to the course calendar, the student, parent, and Program Director will receive an email from the instructor notifying the student that he or she is behind. The student is to respond to the teacher and begin completing assignments.
2. If the student does not respond to the teacher and begin submitting assignments, or does not begin to submit an acceptable number of assignments each week, the Academic Coach will send an email to the student, parent, and Program Director.
3. If there is still no response from the student and the student still does not submit an acceptable number of assignments according to the course calendar, AIS will assume that the student does not intend to remain in the Dual Diploma Program, and the student will be academically withdrawn.

ACADEMIC GRADING PERFORMANCE SCALE

The following is the grading scale for virtual courses:

A	Superior progress	90-100
B	Commendable	80-89
C	Average progress	70-79
D	Lowest acceptable progress	60-69
F	Failure	0-59

ACADEMIC WATCH POLICY

Students in the AIS Dual Diploma Program are expected to maintain a certain grade percentage over the course of the semester in each class which they are enrolled. In order to graduate from the Dual Diploma Program, a student must earn an overall Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 (70% minimum average in all courses). Should a student's grade drop below a 70% in any course during the semester, the student will be notified by their instructor and academic coach.

To ensure that our students are aware of this commitment and graduation requirements, the following processes will be followed:

1. If a student's grade drops below a 70% in any class, the student, parent, and Program Director will receive an email from the instructor notifying them of the situation and a reminder of the Academic Policies of the program. The student should respond to the instructor and begin submitting assignments.
2. If the student does not respond to the teacher and begin submitting assignments and raise their grade(s), the Academic Coach will send an email to the student, parent, and Program Director.
3. If at the end of the semester, the student is still not making appropriate progress and not passing the course(s), he/she may be academically withdrawn from the Dual Diploma Program or placed on Academic Watch for the following semester.
4. A student who is placed on Academic Watch has one semester to improve their grades to meet the graduation requirements in order to continue in the Dual Diploma Program. The student will be closely monitored by their instructor and academic coach. If at the end of the Academic Watch semester, the student is still not meeting the minimum graduation requirements of the Dual Diploma Program and is not passing their course(s), he/she will be academically withdrawn from the Program.

ACADEMIC PROBATION POLICY

In order to earn the Dual Diploma, the student's official home country secondary school transcripts must be provided to AIS, an official English translation of the student's secondary home country transcripts if requested, and the student must meet the minimum 24 credit graduation requirements and minimum 2.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) (70% minimum average in all courses) as outlined in the chart below.

To ensure that our students are aware of this commitment and graduation requirements, the following processes will be followed:

1. At the end of each school year, the student's overall GPA is calculated based on their final course grades. If a student passes their course(s) but the student's overall GPA falls below the minimum graduation requirement of 2.0, the student will be placed on Academic Probation for the following school year as he/she is at risk of not meeting the minimum graduation requirements.

2. A student's overall GPA is calculated as follows. Every letter grade has a point value. The GPA is found by adding the Grade Point Average of each course completed to date, and divided by the amount of courses taken. When calculating GPA, we use the following point system: **A**=4.00 **B**=3.00 **C**=2.00 **D**=1.00 **F**= 0.00.
3. The instructor and academic coach will closely monitor the student placed on Academic Probation during the following school year to support and remind them of graduation requirements.
4. If the student continues to underperform and does not increase the GPA to the minimum graduation requirement, he or she is at risk of not graduating with the Dual Diploma due to not meeting the graduation requirements or of being academically withdrawn from the Dual Diploma Program if they do not pass their courses.

PROMOTION GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Graduation from the Dual Diploma Program and progression through the grades will be in accordance with the completion of the minimum credits set forth. In consultation with the Program Director, student performance will be evaluated and reported based on mastery of standards to determine a student's eligibility for promotion and/or graduation. In order to earn the Dual Diploma, the student's official home country secondary school transcripts must be provided to AIS, an official English translation of home country secondary transcripts if requested, and the student must meet the minimum 24 credit graduation requirements and minimum 2.0 GPA as outlined in the chart below.

The academic grades in all courses are to be based on the student's degree of mastery of the instructional objectives and competencies for the course. The determination of the specific grade a student receives will be based on careful consideration of all aspects of each student's performance such as coursework, supplemental projects, tests, and other online assessments. Progress reports and report cards will serve as the primary means of communicating student progress and achievement of the standards for promotion.

COURSE OF STUDY

A minimum of 6 of the 24 graduation requirements must be taken at Academica International Studies. All students will take the 4 Required Courses: 2 Credits of English, United States History, and United States Government/Economics. Students will take 2 credits from the Electives.

ACADEMICA INTERNATIONAL STUDIES GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to obtain the AIS High School diploma, the following course requirements must be completed.

Subject Area	Course Requirements 24 Credits
Native Language & Literature	4 credits, with major concentration in composition, reading for information, and literature
English	4 credits

Mathematics	4 credits, one of which must be Algebra 1 or equivalent and one of which must be Geometry or its equivalent
Science	3 credits, two of which must have a laboratory component and one of which must be Biology 1 or equivalent course or series of courses
Social Studies	1 credit of World History 1 credit of US History .5 credit of US Government .5 credit of Economics
Fine Arts or Performing Arts	1 credit of fine or performing arts, speech and debate, or practical arts
Physical Education/Health	1 credit in physical education to include integration of health
Electives	4 credits
Grade Point Average	Cumulative GPA of 2.0 on 4.0 scale

STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Students are expected to maintain an appropriate pace throughout the course and take care to not fall behind. He or she must be proactive in giving their best effort to attain proficient grades in each class at all times.

If the student has difficulties with the course, assignments, or with time management, he or she should contact the teacher for support and guidance.

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Students complete and submit assignments, projects, quizzes, and tests to the Learning Management System (LMS). Once the teacher grades the students' work, the students can see the grade they receive and any teacher feedback through the LMS as well.

RELEASE POLICY

As a student of AIS, you grant permission to the School and/or its assigns, employees, contractors, or agents, full permission to use, publish, and copyright, either in whole or in part, direct quotes, photographs, and/or videos made by/of you. Such material may be used with or without your name in all forms of media, including the Internet and social media, for the purposes of advertising, promotion, and the development of the School and its goals. You give this permission without expectation of any remuneration. If you do not consent to the use of your name, likeness, or quotes at any point going forward, you must contact the AIS School Registrar.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Internet access is required for all students, but access must be used in a responsible, safe, efficient, ethical, and legal manner. With expanded access to electronic information, availability of inappropriate material is not uncommon. Some sites contain illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or offensive information. Although it is impossible to control such misuses, we believe that with

responsible use, the benefits of the Internet as an educational tool outweigh the negatives. We especially appreciate partnering with parents to teach responsible Internet use.

Please review the following **rules and expectations** carefully:

- **Students are responsible for good behavior** on the network. Always use a computer in a way that shows consideration and respect. It is not acceptable to use obscene, profane, threatening, or disrespectful language.
- **We take integrity and authenticity of student work** very seriously. Do not cut, copy, or plagiarize Internet content or the work of your online classmates. Teachers do utilize technologies to check for authenticity. Copying, knowingly allowing others to copy from you, and/or misusing Internet content could result in removal from our program and other disciplinary action.
- **Live Sessions** are an integral part of our program. Students are expected to attend and participate in these sessions according to the Master Calendar. Conduct during the live sessions is similar to that of a brick and mortar classroom setting. Students should not eat, drink, or smoke during the sessions. They should be actively listening and participating in the lesson.
- **Security is a high priority**, especially when the system involves many users. If you can identify a security problem in the school's network, notify your instructor.
- **It is illegal to create harmful computer viruses.**
- **Email is not private.** Never say anything via email that you wouldn't mind seeing on the school bulletin board or in the local newspaper.
- **Beware of emails from anyone, particularly adults you don't know**, asking for personal information, attempting to arrange meetings, or engaging in personal contact. Alert your teacher of any message you receive that is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable.
- **Email with your online classmates should be course-related.** It is prohibited to send unwelcome email to your online classmates.
- **Email addresses that use profanity or may be construed as offensive, shall not be permitted for correspondence.** Administration reserves the right to determine if student email addresses are inappropriate. When necessary, students will be asked to use an alternative email address or be refused for participation in the program.
- **Protect your password.** Keep it secret from anyone except your parents.
- **Administrators will cooperate fully** in any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted through Internet access. In the event there is a claim that you have violated this policy, you will be provided with notice of the suspected violation and have an opportunity to present an explanation. Any violations may result in removal from the program, as well as other disciplinary or legal action.

INTERNET USAGE POLICY

All Internet data that is composed, transmitted, or received via our computer communications systems is considered to be part of the official records of AIS and, as such, is subject to disclosure to the Program Director, parents, administration or other third parties. Consequently, AIS expects both students and staff to abide by the school's internet usage policy:

Data that is composed, transmitted, accessed, or received via the Internet must not contain content

that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, obscene, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or disruptive to any other person. Examples of unacceptable content may include, but are not limited to, sexual comments or images, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comments or images that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Abuse of the Education Portal provided by the School in violation of school policies will result in disciplinary action. Employees may also be held personally liable for any violations of this policy. The following behaviors are examples of previously stated or additional actions and activities that are prohibited and can result in disciplinary action:

- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, or threatening messages or images
- Stealing, using, or disclosing someone else's code or password without authorization
- Copying, pirating, or downloading software and electronic files without permission
- Sending or posting confidential material, trade secrets, or proprietary information outside of the organization
- Violating copyright law
- Engaging in unauthorized transactions that may incur a cost to the organization or initiate unwanted Internet services and transmissions
- Participating in the viewing or exchange of pornography or obscene materials
- Sending or posting messages that defame or slander other individuals
- Attempting to break into the computer system of another organization or person
- Refusing to cooperate with a security investigation
- Using the Education Portal for political causes or activities, religious activities, or any sort of gambling
- Jeopardizing the security of the organization's electronic communications systems
- Sending or posting messages that disparage another organization's products or services
- Passing off personal views as representing those of the organization
- Sending anonymous e-mail messages
- Engaging in any other illegal activities

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

What is academic integrity?

- Academic integrity means that all work submitted is the student's own work.

Why is academic integrity important?

- When students submit an assignment that is not their own original work, there are two issues involved:
 - Students are earning credit for learning material for which they have not demonstrated mastery.
 - They may be violating the policies of Academics International Studies.

What are some examples of academic integrity violations?

- There are two kinds of academic integrity violations. One is “plagiarism” and the other is “cheating.”
- **Plagiarism** - to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own: use (another’s production) without crediting the source.” Some examples are, but not limited to the following:
 - Copying and pasting a report from the Internet and representing it as your own work
 - Copying any other work and not properly citing authorship
- **Cheating**
 - To influence or lead by deceit, trick, or artifice
 - To practice fraud or trickery to violate rules dishonestly Some examples are, but not limited to the following:
 - Providing questions/answers/ work to another student
 - Receiving questions/answers/work from another student

Ensuring Academic Integrity

- AIS uses a variety of tools to ensure the integrity of student work.
 - **Plagscan** - This tool compares student work against a variety of databases. This database compares students’ work against other students’ work, as well as work found on the Internet.
 - **Academic Integrity Database** - Database of student integrity incidences or violations. This database is used to monitor the number of student integrity issues.
 - **Teacher Expertise** - Instructors have extensive classroom experience. Their expertise is often a guide in identifying the level of originality in student work.
 - **Academic Integrity Reporting Policy** - Community members, guidance counselors, program directors, parents, and students can call or email any academic integrity-related issue anonymously.

Consequences of Violation of this Policy

A variety of consequences will be administered when students are caught cheating or plagiarizing. These consequences range from resubmission of an assignment up to expulsion from the program. Additionally, final grades may be rescinded if a student is found to have cheated or plagiarized after the grade has been posted to a transcript.

- **Students** are responsible for submitting their own, original work and are expected to:
 - Participate in a welcome meeting during which components of our academic integrity program will be discussed
 - Ask any questions regarding plagiarism or cheating if they are not sure

- **Parents**, as partners in supporting student learning, are expected to:
 - Ensure that their student’s work is authentic and original
 - Monitor, via their guardian and email accounts, their child’s progress and teacher communication
 - Ask any questions regarding plagiarism or cheating if they are not sure

- **Teachers**, as stakeholders in ensuring the highest standards of academic integrity, are expected to:
 - Act as a resource for student questions
 - Submit various assignments in the Plagscan database
 - Coordinate any academic integrity issues with the Program Director and administration
 - Verify student mastery of content through discussion based and authentic assessments
 - Participate in any mandated trainings or staff development

- **Academic Coaches** are expected to:
 - support academic integrity
 - support teachers in academic integrity initiatives
 - support the administration of consequences
 - provide support to the instructional staff in the implementation of these policies

STUDENT CODE OF HONOR

A student should NEVER:

- Share their Username and Password with anyone other than their Parents
- Use anyone else’s Username and Password
- Obtain or assist anyone to obtain unauthorized access to the network
- Post their or anyone else’s personal information (i.e. address, email, telephone, etc.)
- Post private messages sent to them

TEACHER AVAILABILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS

Frequent student-teacher communication in the virtual learning environment requires commitment above and beyond the traditional work day by staff in a brick and mortar environment, as communication is the critical element to the success of the program. Instant Message (IM) communication and email are considered essential and are expected on a regular basis. Voice to voice communication is expected, at a minimum, during the initial start as well as at the end of the term. AIS makes the following commitments to its students, parents and Program Director:

- All email, voicemail and instant message communication will be responded to within 24-48 hours during the work week.
- Teachers will establish office hours and will be available to students and parents during those hours on school days that the staff member is working. Instructors will be available to answer all course-related questions during scheduled office hours. During those hours, instructors will

be available to answer emails, Skype, and instant messages. Each request for correspondence will be answered in as timely of a fashion as possible with a minimum turnaround target of 24 hours. In the case that an instant reply is not viable, no response to student/parent contact shall exceed 48 hours from the time of initiation.

- Teachers will communicate regularly with students and program directors throughout each semester.
- Teachers will update course announcement pages frequently. During the first week of the school year, all teachers will have a Welcome Meeting with their students to go over the program's policies and platforms.

PARENT/GUARDIAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

As a parent/guardian of a Virtual School Student, it is very important to understand the responsibilities associated with that role. With the many distractions students have these days, it can be difficult for some students to set aside time to work on courses when not in school. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to encourage the student to manage their time in an effective way. Teachers will keep the parent/guardian apprised of the student's progress and will initiate contact if they fall behind in their coursework.

Parents are expected to supervise and monitor their student's progress throughout the duration of the course. This can be accomplished by accessing the parental account periodically to monitor student progress.

Parents should support Academic Integrity. Academic Integrity is one of our core values and one of the most important areas of focus as a learning organization. Students with Academic Integrity make decisions based on ethics and values that will prepare them to be productive and ethical citizens.

You may contact the student's teacher when necessary through the Program Director or via email directly to the teacher to ask any questions that you may.

Parents/guardians should also be aware of the course progression plan that their student is following and use that to help plan for the child's academic and educational future.

PRIVACY POLICY

AIS will abide by **student privacy guidelines** inspired by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of the federal government of the United States. The following persons have access to student records:

- Principal
- Administrative Team
- Professional Staff (Teachers, Academic Coaches, Guidance Counselor, the General Counsel)

All students are provided a unique password to access online courses. It is the student's responsibility to keep his/her password in confidence.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

AIS admission and enrollment policies and procedures comply with anti-discrimination provisions.

AIS does not discriminate against pupils on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, physical, mental, emotional, learning disability or handicap in its education programs.

Furthermore, the criteria for admission to a program or course shall not have the effect of restricting access by persons of a particular race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status.

Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status against a student or an employee is prohibited.

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

Academica International Studies prohibits unlawful harassment between members of the AIS community, including communication of any form between students, AIS faculty and/or staff, and any third parties directly or indirectly related to the AIS Academic Network.

AIS is committed to maintaining a working and learning environment in which students, faculty, and staff can develop intellectually, professionally, personally and socially. Such an atmosphere must be free of intimidation, fear, coercion and reprisal.

It is an expectation that all students and employees shall use all equipment and programs for the intended educational purpose. AIS is committed to protecting its students and employees from bullying, harassment or inappropriate uses of computers or programs to participate in bullying behavior. Bullying and Harassment **will not be tolerated** and shall be just cause for disciplinary action.

Conduct that constitutes bullying or harassment, as defined herein, is prohibited.

Bullying, harassment, and cyber stalking are defined as inflicting physical or psychological distress, and/or communicating words, images or language using electronic mail that causes emotional distress and for which there is no legitimate purpose.

Any action by a student or parent deemed inappropriate will be fully investigated by the appropriate school administrator.

Consequences for students for actions that violate the policy on bullying and harassment shall be determined by the administrative staff and may include:

- ◆ Student/teacher/parent conference
- ◆ Suspension of email privileges
- ◆ Removal from access to courses

NETIQUETTE POLICY

Students are responsible for proper behavior while online. Students must always show consideration and respect when participating in AIS classes. Obscene, profane or threatening language online as well as offline will not be tolerated.

Students should be cautious about email messages from anyone, particularly adults asking for personal information, attempting to arrange meetings, or engaging in personal contact. Students should disclose to teachers any message received that is inappropriate or that causes uncomfortable feelings.

Any distribution of unsolicited email to online classmates is prohibited. All course interaction between teachers, parents, students, and stakeholders will be logged. Email messages to online classmates should be limited to welcomed correspondence that is course-related. AIS administrators will cooperate fully with any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted through the Internet.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

The Administrators, in consultation with his/her designees, will determine the appropriate disciplinary actions for student violations of the code of conduct as they arise. The severity of the offense is the prime determiner in deciding the appropriate consequence. Any inappropriate behaviors that are outlined in the student handbook that are reasonably considered detrimental in a school setting are grounds for immediate removal from the AIS program. Possible actions may include but are not limited to:

- ◆ Written and verbal warning and notification to the Program Director.
- ◆ Placement on “temporary conduct probation.” A student’s online academic network activities will be monitored for the duration of the student’s current course(s) and the course(s) the student takes in the subsequent term.
- ◆ Suspension from the AIS program for a specified period of time.
- ◆ Permanent removal from AIS.

When a violation has occurred, a report, including the date, time and circumstances of the alleged act, will be submitted to Program Director. This report includes a description of the actions of all parties involved, names of witnesses available and documentary evidence that supports the charge.

Students wishing to report a violation should file the report through the Program Director. Upon receipt of the report, AIS, in consultation with the Program Director will determine if an AIS policy may have been violated by the student. If there is sufficient information, the student and parent will be contacted in writing informing the student of the charges in sufficient detail, including the time and place the alleged violation occurred and the penalty that would be appropriate if the student did in fact violate the policy. All communications will go through the Program Director.

MINIMUM TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLINE COURSE PARTICIPATION

Browsers

- Google Chrome (latest versions) ([Click here to download](#)).
- Firefox (latest versions) ([Click here to download](#)).
- Safari browser (latest versions) ([Click here to download](#)).

Plug-ins and Software

- Microsoft Office, Open Office or Goggle Docs.
- Skype ([Click here to download](#)).
- Adobe Acrobat Reader DC ([Click to Download](#)).
- The following plugins and settings may be required to use in the courses if you do not use **Chrome**.
 - Java ([Click to Download](#)).
 - Adobe Flash ([Click to Download](#)).
 - Check your browser here <https://www.whatismybrowser.com/>

PC/Mac Requirements

- Audio: Headset with functioning microphone
- Web camera
- A broadband connection is strongly recommended.
- Free USB port
- Processor – Intel Pentium 4 1.5 GHz
- 1.5 GB RAM
- Broadband Internet Connection
- Minimum Screen Resolution – 1024 x 768
- Microsoft Windows Operating System – Microsoft Windows XP (SP 3), Vista (SP 2), Windows 7, Windows 8, Windows 10
- Any Mac running Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard and up.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Students will be provided with professional technical support throughout the course as needed. AIS is committed to providing technical assistance within 24-48 hours of a request for assistance.