



Post-16 Guide | 2025-26

Planning your Pathway to Excellence





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Welcome from the Principal

Our Post-16 provision represents a natural continuation of our school mission of **empowering through excellence**.

Our vision of creating leaders of tomorrow is constant and providing a range of qualifications to enhance students' learning experiences is a step towards achieving this ambitious goal.

Selecting your options for Post-16 study is a significant milestone in your education, as students select the subjects that will become their foundation for higher education at universities and their progression into the world of work.



Michelle Thomas

We know that it can be a time that can cause anxiety and we hope the guidance in this handbook supports you in navigating through this time.

International and standard AS & A Levels and BTEC Level 3 are internationally benchmarked qualifications and recognised by higher education institutions and employers around the world as evidence of academic achievement.

At Post 16 (Years 12 & 13), a wide range of courses is offered to prepare students for higher education, training and employment. We expect most students to select **three** AS Level courses for Year 12 and encourage students to continue through to Year 13 to study **three** subjects at A Level.

After Post 16, almost all our students pursue their higher education and intended career pathway at various destinations in the United Arab Emirates and around the world, such as USA, UK and Canada. Students are guided through structured academic and career counselling sessions throughout the two years, as well as sessions from external speakers to help them make informed choices about their future destinations.

The guidance in this booklet and the Post-16 options process are designed to support you and your parents to start making decisions about your learning and to choose subjects that suit your aspirations, skills and needs.

As a school, we are committed to providing the care and support that will assist you throughout and very much look forward to welcoming you to Year 12 and the exciting step that it represents for your future plans.



Welcome from the Assistant Principal

Thank you for your interest in GEMS Al Barsha National School. Whether you are moving up from Key Stage 4 or joining us from elsewhere, we hope you will enjoy looking through the information provided in this prospectus.

At GNS, we are a community that believes in empowering through excellence. We aim to develop motivated and highly aspirational students who are willing to 'go the extra mile' to better themselves for the future.



Ahmed Sahbi

We are proud of our experienced pastoral team and career guidance counsellor, who work hard to offer an extensive range of co-curricular and leadership opportunities to ensure that our students leave well prepared for the ever changing and challenging world.

Our Sixth Form builds upon the strong foundations established in Key Stages 3 and 4. We offer a diverse and inclusive range of learning opportunities, designed to prepare our students for the challenges of Higher Education and the professional world. Our primary aim is to help each student achieve their full potential, and we work closely with both students and parents to reach this shared objective.

Our educational program is crafted to help students develop into well-rounded, confident, and forward-thinking individuals. A key focus of our curriculum is instilling Emirati values, ensuring our students grow into respectful and culturally aware citizens, ready to contribute positively to society.

Crucially, we believe in fostering the 'whole student' through the principles of **HAWIATEE.** Our goal is to ensure that you leave us as responsible, committed, and ambitious young adults, poised to become the leaders of tomorrow.

To this end, we encourage participation in a broad spectrum of activities promoting personal growth and community engagement. We expect all Sixth Form students to actively engage in the vibrant community life of our school, and we offer numerous opportunities for you to do so.



Studying at GNS Sixth Form

We are proud to be a small school that values exceptional teaching. We only offer a handful of A level qualifications and BTEC Level 3 Diplomas because we believe they are the best preparation for the rigour of university study.

Most students are expected to either take **three** A Level courses or **two** BTEC courses. A Level courses are taught over five, fifty five minute lessons. BTEC courses are taught over ten, fifty five minute lessons. Students are expected to at least match those hours in independent study.

All students study:

- A minimum of 3 A Levels or 1 BTEC Level 3 (combinations allowed)
- A minimum of 2 BTEC Level 3 qualifications (if only studying BTEC)
- PF
- Moral Education
- Re sit GCSE qualifications (if Equivalency has not been achieved)

Careers

Students have a timetabled session dedicated to careers which is led by the Guidance Counsellor. Students use this opportunity to explore career options and also work on documentations related to University and scholarship purposes.

MOE Curriculum (Arabic and Islamic)

As per Ministry of Education regulations, any student who holds an Arabic Passport, and any student who wishes to achieve their 'Secondary School Equivalency Certificate' must continue to study Arabic throughout Years 12 and 13. As such, we strongly recommend that all students continue to study Arabic throughout Year 13, and that they sit the MoE Arabic exam at the end of the academic year.

In addition to Arabic, Muslim students must also study Islamic Studies.



What you can expect

As a school we place great emphasis on hard work. This is the bedrock upon which success is built and achieved and we expect our students to be motivated, ambitious and willing to stretch themselves academically.

- **Exceptional teaching:** Our highly qualified, talented and dedicated teachers are an unquestionable asset. They are all genuine expects in their field and come with an enviable track record of academic excellence and success. Prospective students can trust us to deliver an outstanding curriculum.
- Opportunities to lead by example: Post 16 students play an important part in the life of the school and through their presence and participation in positions of leadership organising committees; assemblies and events for younger members of the school, they are expected to lead by example.
- **Purposeful lessons:** students receive long term and medium term plans so they can track the sequence of lessons and ensure that all of the curriculum is being covered. In each lesson, a lesson agenda is shared to show the key parts of the lesson.
- **Independent study support:** We provide you with dedicated study spaces, access to online resources, and structured study sessions to help you develop effective self-study habits.
- Academic challenge: You will be expected to work hard in and out of lessons and questions and activities will always challenge you to reach the highest grade possible.
- **Student ownership:** the best learning takes place when students take control of the learning process, expect to be asked your opinion and work with your colleagues in your lessons.



A Level course

What are A Levels?

A Levels are broken down into Advance Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced Level (AL) courses. They have been available in the UK education system for over 30 years.

Each A Level course will have between three to six modules of study with a terminal exam undertaken at the end of the course.

How are A Levels assessed?

A Levels are assessed through a series of examinations, although for some subjects, there is a coursework element included too.

A Levels Exam Board

At GNS, students gain their A Level Qualifications from the below exam boards as per their chosen subjects:

- Pearson Edexcel
 (https://qualifications.pearson.co m/en/home.html)
- AQA (https://www.aqa.org.uk/qualifica tions)

Why study A Levels?

A Levels qualification, usually referred to as the 'Gold Standard' is an internationally recognised qualification for entry into many Universities and professional training providers. This pathway provides students with the flexibility to explore subjects they already love and would like to pursue a career in the related field. Students who choose to study A Levels, often follow this route as they wish to pursue their desired subjects for Higher Education as a specialism.

A Levels enable learners to acquire skills such as:

- · in depth subject content
- · learning to work independently
- applying knowledge and understanding to new as well as familiar situations
- handling and evaluating different types of information sources through case studies
- thinking logically and presenting ordered and coherent arguments and explanations



A Level Options

Students are expected to choose at least three option subjects for their A Level course.

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Design and Technology-Product Design
- English Language
- Mathematics
- Physics



The course enables learners to acquire knowledge and understanding and develop practical skills, including efficient, accurate and safe scientific practices. Students learn to apply the scientific method, while developing an awareness of the limitations of scientific theories and models. This course structure is designed to develop skills in data analysis, evaluation and drawing conclusions, cultivating attitudes relevant to science such as objectivity, integrity, enquiry, initiative and, inventiveness.

The A-Level Biology course covers the following units:

- Biological molecules
- Cells
- Organisms exchange substances with their environment
- Genetic information, variation and relationships between organisms
- Energy transfers in and between organisms (A-level only)



- Organisms respond to changes in their internal and external environments (A-level only)
- Genetics, populations, evolution and ecosystems (A-level only)
- The control of gene expression (A-level only)

Assessment summary

Students will take units over the course of the two years and will be able to sit for their examinations at the end of each year.

The qualification consists of five externally examined units.
There will be a practical element for both the AS and A Level.

Entry requirements

Students will need five GCSE (9 – 4) grades (or equivalent) to enter Post-16, including Mathematics; English, one Science and two other options. GCSE Level 6 and above (or equivalent) in Science is required for this subject.

Where will this subject take me?

Students who graduate in Biology often follow career pathways such as:

- Medicine and Healthcare
- Science and Research
- Engineering
- Education



The course enables learners to develop a set of transferable skills including handling data, practical problem-solving and applying the scientific method. Learners develop relevant attitudes, such as concern for accuracy and precision, objectivity, integrity, enquiry, initiative, and inventiveness. They acquire the essential scientific skills required for progression to further studies or employment.

The A-Level Chemistry course covers the following units:

Unit 1: Physical chemistry

Unit 2: Inorganic chemistry

Unit 3: Organic chemistry

Assessment summary

Students will take units over the course of the two years and will be able to sit for their examinations at the end of each year.

The qualification consists of five externally examined units.

There will be a practical element for both the AS and A Level.

Entry requirements

Students will need five GCSE (9 – 4) grades (or equivalent) to enter Post-16, including Mathematics; English, one Science and two other options. GCSE Level 6 and above (or equivalent) in Science is required for this subject.

Where will this subject take me?

Students who graduate in Chemistry often follow career pathways such as:

- Medicine and Healthcare
- Science and Research
- Engineering
- Education





Design and Technology – Product Design

Pearson International Advance Level

Click here to access full specification

Course structure

The syllabus enables learners to explore design processes and requirements and develop an understanding of how current global issues, including integrating technology impacts on today's World. Students will use their creativity and innovative skills to produce design solutions as they develop their own design brief with a client/end user.

The A-Level Art and Design course covers a combination of topics under the following main units:

- 1. Principles of Design and Technology
- 2. Independent Design and Make Project

Assessment summary

The qualification consists of two components, both assessed by the teacher and external moderator. The qualification can be achieved by a combination of the six titles in the syllabus.

Entry requirements

Students will need five GCSE (9 – 4) grades (or equivalent) to enter Post-16, including Mathematics; English, one Science and two other options. Students do need prior knowledge and a GCSE to take this course.



Where will this subject take me?

Students who graduate in Design and Technology often follow career pathways such as:

- Art and Design
- Fashion
- I⁻
- Product Design
- Advertising and Marketing
- Manufacturing
- Education

^{*} This option will run subject to the minimum requirement of 5 students choosing the course*



English Language

Pearson Edexcel International Advance Level

Click <u>here</u> to access full specification

Course Structure

The Pearson Edexcel International A Level in English Language offers students a comprehensive understanding of the English language and its usage. The course focuses on key areas such as language variation, how language reflects and constructs the identity or identities of the user and varies depending on the contexts of production and reception, and language change.

Students analyse a variety of texts, both spoken and written, to understand how language functions in different contexts and for different audiences.

The curriculum includes studying linguistic frameworks, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis, which help students develop strong analytical and critical thinking skills. Assessment is through written exams, which test students' ability to apply their knowledge and conduct independent research.

The course is broken down into four units:

Unit 1: Language: Context and identity (25%)

Unit 2: Language in Transition (25%)

Unit 3: Crafting Language (writing) (25%)

Unit 4: Investigating Language – research project (25%)

Assessment Summary

Students will complete the course throughout Year 12 and Year 13, sitting two exams at the end of year 12 and two exams at the end of year 13 which are all externally assessed. Unit 4 is an investigation task focused around four topics; a subtopic for each of the specified topics will be pre-released to provide a focus for students' research and prepare them for the examination.

Entry Requirements

Students will need five GCSE (9 – 4) grades (or equivalent) to enter Post-16, including Mathematics; English, one Science and two other options. GCSE Level 5 and above (or equivalent) in English is recommended for this subject.

Where will this subject take me?

Students who graduate in English often follow career pathways such as:

- Law
- Advertising
- Publishina
- Recruitment
- Theatre



The syllabus allows learners to acquire a range of mathematical skills, particularly those which will enable them to use applications of mathematics in the context of everyday situations and of other subjects they may be studying. It helps them acquire the mathematical background necessary for further study in mathematics or related subjects.

The A level course covers the following units:

- · Pure Maths (1,2,3,4)
- · Statistics (1,2) OR
- · Mechanics (1.2)

Assessment summary

Students will take modular units over the course of the two years and will be able to sit for their international examinations within the year. The qualification consists of six externally examined units.

Entry requirements

Students will need five GCSE (9 – 4) grades (or equivalent) to enter Post-16, including Mathematics; English, one Science and two other options. GCSE Level 6 and above (or equivalent) in Mathematics is recommended for this subject.

Where will this subject take me?

Students who graduate in Mathematics often follow career pathways such as:

- Banking and Finance
- Accountancy
- Analyst
- Engineering
- Education
- Science and Research

^{*} This option will run subject to the minimum requirement of 5 students choosing the course*



The course provides learners with a foundation for the study of physics or related courses in higher education. The curriculum enables candidates to develop knowledge and understanding of scientific methods, skills in data analysis, evaluation and drawing conclusions around problems, cultivating attitudes relevant to science around them.

The A-Level Physics course covers the following units:

- 1. Measurements and their errors
- 2. Particles and radiation
- 3. Waves
- 4. Mechanics and materials
- 5. Electricity

the course*

- 6. Further mechanics and thermal physics (Alevel only)
- 7. Fields and their consequences (A-level only)
- 8. Nuclear physics (A-level only)



Assessment summary

Students will take units over the course of the two years and will be able to sit for their examinations at the end of each year.

The qualification consists of five externally examined units. There will be a practical element for both the AS and A Level.

Entry requirements

Students will need five GCSE (9 – 4) grades (or equivalent) to enter Post-16, including Mathematics; English, one Science and two other options. GCSE Level 6 and above (or equivalent) in Science is required for this subject.

Where will this subject take me?

Students who graduate in Physics often follow career pathways such as:

- Medicine and Healthcare
- Science and Research
- Engineering
- Education



What are BTECs?

The BTEC course is a career related pathway. The flexible pathway provides learners with a combination of knowledge; skills and application to real life scenarios thus enabling them to progress to higher education or employment.

Why study BTECs?

A BTEC qualification, usually referred to as 'Vocational Qualification' is a practical qualification which focusses more on flexible learning and independence, which appeals to those who find traditional teaching methods and exams challenging.

The BTEC pathway enables learners to acquire skills such as:

- · industry knowledge, transferable skills and behaviours to prepare them for a career or to continue education.
- flexible and modular course structure to fit in with existing curriculum requirements.
- · organisation and time management

The BTEC qualifications are currently recognised by over 70 Universities worldwide. Click here to access currently University list.

How are BTECs assessed?

BTEC courses are assessed through a series of coursework assessments and work experiences review which makes them an ideal option for learners who find traditional examinations challenging.

BTECs Exam Board

At GNS, students gain their Level 3 BTEC Qualifications from the below exam boards as per their chosen subjects:

 Pearson Ed Excel (https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/ home.html)

BTEC	Equivalent International A Level
Certificate (180 GLH*)	International Advanced Subsidiary
Subsidiary Diploma (360 GLH)	International A Level
Foundation Diploma (540 GLH)	International A Level + International Advanced Subsidiary
Diploma (720 GLH)	2 International A Levels
Extended Diploma (1080 GLH)	3 International A Levels



Business Pearson BTEC Level 3

Click here to access full specification

Course structure

The Pearson BTEC International Level 3 qualifications in Business, and in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, are primarily designed for learners in the 16–19 age group, who wish to pursue a career in business, primarily via higher education to access graduate entry employment with businesses, or alternatively through junior business employment. The course provides a foundation to further study at University.

The BTEC course covers the following units:

- 1. Business environments
- 2. Marketing
- 3. Finance
- 4. International Business
- 5. Management
- 6. Enterprise and Entrepreneurship
- 7. Optional Unit to support progression



Assessment summary

Assessments are designed to fit the purpose and objective of the qualification. This includes a range of assessment types and styles suited to vocational qualifications in the sector.

All assessments are internal, but some mandatory units have extra controls on assessments and are assessed using Pearson Set Assignments. Additionally, some units are synoptic.

Entry requirements

Students will need five GCSE (9 – 4) grades (or equivalent) to enter Post-16, including Mathematics; English, one Science and two other options. Students do not need prior knowledge of the subject, however GCSE Business would be beneficial.

Where will this subject take me?

Students who graduate in Business often follow career pathways such as:

- Business Management
- Accountancy
- Banking and Finance
- Recruitment and HR
- Consultancy
- Advertising and Marketing



The qualification has been designed to support progression to particular roles in applied-science industries, either directly into entry-level roles linked to these occupational areas or, more likely, via particular higher-education routes in the particular areas. The BTEC course covers the following units:

- 1: Principles and applications of Biology
- 2: Principles and applications of Chemistry
- 3: Principles and applications of Physics
- 4: A set of optional subjects related to Applied Science

Assessment summary

Assessments are designed to fit the purpose and objective of the qualification. This includes a range of assessment types and styles suited to vocational qualifications in the sector.
All assessments are internal but some mandatory units have extra controls on assessments and are assessed using Pearson Set Assignments. Additionally, some units are synoptic.

Entry requirements

Students will need five GCSE (9 – 4) grades (or equivalent) to enter Post-16, including Mathematics; English, one Science and two other options., however GCSE Double Science would be beneficial.

Where will this subject take me?

Students who graduate in Applied Science often follow career pathways such as:

- Chemical Technician
- Biomedical Scientist
- Clinical Scientist
- Environmental Scientist





This course gives learners the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in data management and social media in business. This will enable learners to progress to further study in the IT sector, or other sectors. Learners will study two mandatory units: • Unit 2: Creating Systems to Manage Information (synoptic) • Unit 3: Using Social Media in Business. This will allow progression to a variety of degrees when combined with other suitable Level 3 qualifications. Students will then complete a number of optional units such as Data Programming, Mobile apps, Software testing, and many more.

Assessment summary

Assessments are designed to fit the purpose and objective of the qualification. This includes a range of assessment types and styles suited to vocational qualifications in the sector.
All assessments are internal but some mandatory units have extra controls on assessments and are assessed using Pearson Set Assignments. Additionally, some units are synoptic.

Entry requirements

Students will need five GCSE (9 – 4) grades (or equivalent) to enter Post-16, including Mathematics; English, one Science and two other options. Students do not need prior knowledge of the subject, however GCSE ICT would be beneficial.

Where will this subject take me?

Students who graduate in ICT often follow career pathways such as:

- IT
- Media Industry
- Communication
- Marketing and Advertising
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Publication
- Education





Guidelines for making choices

Making a decision about which subjects to study in the Post 16 can be difficult. In terms of general advice, we separate this into three important categories:

Aptitude

A Level course are substantial and conceptually much more demanding than GCSEs. Examination questions are more searching and require longer, more carefully reasoned answers.

The transition from GCSE to A Level is very significant and students are unlikely to succeed in an A Level subject, unless you have laid strong foundations in that subject at GCSE level. For this reason, each subject has an entry requirement based on the course design, and its level of challenge.

Passion and Enjoyment

This should not be underestimated and is an important consideration when making choices. A genuine passion and commitment is required due to the motivation necessary to succeed being generated more easily, if the subject is one which you enjoy. Gauging whether you would enjoy a new subject can be difficult and it is important that each student researches the course specification and discusses the course with a subject teacher. Even subjects that a student has studied at GCSE can be quite different in Post 16 studies and each student must take the time to research the topics that will be covered.

University and Career Aspirations

If a student has a very clear idea about their future career, it is important that they carefully research the university paths, and their respective subject and grade requirements. Each student must ensure that these requirements are reflected in their A level choice. We will offer support and guidance in this respect. For the students who remain undecided about what their future aspirations are, they should endeavour to select a range of subjects which will leave their options open.

We recognise that a student may select and begin a course that is not suited to them. For this reason, each Year 12 student will undergo a 4-5 week probationary period in each of their subjects, with an in-built assessment. This is an opportunity for each student to determine whether they are suited to the course and an opportunity for the teaching staff to gauge whether they will be successful.



Careers

The school has a carefully planned career programme for Year 12 and Year 13 students to help support them in their higher education planning.

1. Individual counselling and support

Students have one to one session with our career counsellor to support them in their career planning and progression towards successful application to their chosen Universities. Students are also supported with their UCAS; NAPO; EMSAT applications.

2. Timetable career sessions

Students have assigned weekly careers session led by our career counsellor. During the session, students develop skills in writing their resume; letter of applications; research courses requirements and accessing a range of courses and tasks on Unifrog platform (a platform which empowers students to manage progression to University effectively)

3. Interview guidance

In the run up to University confirmations, students are given opportunities to attend mock-up interview sessions run by either subject teachers; career counsellor or a member of the Senior Leadership team.

4. Career Fairs

Students are given ample opportunities to meet Universities representatives through in house or external fairs. Both students and parents can meet, interact, and gain vital information about a range of courses and requirements.

5. Inspirational speakers

Students will be given opportunities to attend sessions led by Professionals and Specialists leaders to gain valuable knowledge from the experts.

6. Enrichment, workshops and leadership

Students are involved in a range of activities within and outside the school community such as leading assemblies and student council meetings; planning and organising events; taking part in community services and a range of other initiatives linked to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Work experience

Students in Year 12 are given the opportunity to attend a chosen work placement that enables them to get an overview of working in a professional environment linked to their chosen career pathway.



Student Testimonials



I am currently studying A Level Mathematics,, Physics, and Information Technology, along with Arabic and Islamic studies.

Being a senior at GNS is special because of the supportive environment created by both students and teachers. It has made my academic journey truly enjoyable.

I have a passion for mathematics and its application which I plan to pursue further by studying Electronic Engineering.

Taha Chenaf (Year 13)

I am currently studying A Level Biology, Mathematics, and Chemistry along with Arabic and Islamic studies.

Being a senior in GNS is a truly amazing and unique experience since we have many advantages that make school more enjoyable, yet there are also challenges. My teachers' assistance and encouragement allow me to find studying slightly less difficult.

My goal is to pursue pre-medical studies at University, and I believe I hold every skill that is required to fulfil my dreams.



(Year 13)





Being a senior at GNS opens up incredible opportunities, from leading school-wide business projects to representing the school in regional events. The practical experience and leadership roles available to us make the final year rewarding.

My goal is to pursue my passion in business further at University.

Mohammad Allouz

(Year 13)





Further Information

Equivalency

What is Equivalency?

Equivalency is the process by which the Ministry of Education officially endorses qualifications, in this case High School qualifications, and declares the document to be equal to UAE standard. It typically involves attestations from relevant authorities, following which the letter of equivalency is issued from the Ministry of Education.

In order to achieve equivalency, **students must complete five approved GCSE or IGCSE subjects with a minimum grade of 3 or better**. Arabic and Islamic Studies are not included in the approved subjects

Why is Equivalency important?

- Equivalency is a Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) requirement for University admissions in the UAE. This is important for all students, including non-Emirati students.
- Equivalency is a requirement for applications to Scholarships for UAE Nationals.
- For UAE National males, the mandatory national service duration is determined by the educational qualifications. Equivalency will result in a shorter period of national service.
- For jobs in the UAE mainland, equivalency is required.

Costs

Parents should note that fees for external examinations are the responsibility of the parent. Parents will receive an invoice for each examination cycle the student is entered for, including resits. The cost per subject ranges from approximately 450AED to 850AED depending on the course.

Students that require additional access arrangements during examinations, for example, the use of a reader or a scribe, will incur additional costs for invigilation.

Empowering Through Excellence



Further Information

British System - Graduating 2025 & Beyond

The British System without specifying paths according to the following conditions:

- The student shall complete the 12th Grade or equivalent
- The student shall pass five (5) subjects in the (IGCSE or GCSE) with one of the passing marks (A^*, A, B, C, D) or (3,4,5,6,7,8,9) including below subjects:
- 1. Mathematics
- 2. English Language or English Literature
- 3. One science subject (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) or Dual Science subject
- 4. Two other subjects
- \cdot The student shall pass two (2) subjects in the UK Advanced Level with one of the passing marks (A*, A, B, C, D).
- · Islamic Education and Arabic Language shall not be included in those subjects.
- The students can select the subjects to study among the specified subjects by the ministry in the relevant regulatory decisions



Further Information

Contact information of key staff members you may require if you have further queries:

Mr Ahmed Sahbi Assistant Principal	a.sahbi_gns@gemsedu.com
Mrs Georgina Michaelides Head of Secondary	g.michaelides_gns@gemsedu.com
Admission Office	registrar_gns@gemsedu.com

Contact us: 04 506 9222

School website: https://www.gemsnationalschool-barsha.com/en

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