

# External Benchmark Assessments Requirements

for the Academic Year 2022-2023

**The following requirements have been developed to:**

- ◆ help school leaders and teachers establish a baseline of their students' cognitive potential and achievement over time, and to facilitate necessary modifications to their learning;
  - ◆ support schools to better understand the extent to which the achievements of students are aligned to their cognitive potential;
  - ◆ help validate the school's internal attainment and progress data;
  - ◆ support schools with their whole school self-evaluation and improvement planning; and
  - ◆ facilitate KHDA's role in (i) monitoring and quality assurance of schools and (ii) supporting national and Dubai priorities and strategies.
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**Please note that:**

- ◆ Schools must choose a provider of assessments that comply with all external benchmark assessment requirements stated below.
- ◆ In the required grades, all students must take the assessment, to enable schools to track individual progress during the school year and to monitor trends in attainment over time. Schools are then able to identify any gaps in learning, at both an individual level, and for different groups of students.
- ◆ Assessments for each component should be sourced from a single external assessment provider across all age groups. This promotes a greater consistency and reliability of data and generates information that can be compared and tracked over time; allowing schools to accurately measure how students are performing and progressing.
- ◆ Schools ensure that all assessments and data sharing are conducted within the stipulated testing windows and all the indicated student groups are registered. Further requirements on testing windows and test administration are available from the test providers.
- ◆ Schools must adopt digital approaches for testing, and not paper and pencil formats.
- ◆ New schools that have not previously carried out assessments of cognitive abilities must test all their students G3 – G9 (Y4 – Y10).
- ◆ All schools are required to sign a data-release document, provided by the test provider, to allow KHDA access to the data.

- ◆ During test registration, schools should clearly identify all Emirati students.
- ◆ Schools must ensure that all necessary measures are in place to ensure the integrity, validity, and usefulness of the assessment data.
- ◆ These guidelines are applicable for schools in which the language of instruction is English or Arabic; and are able to participate in PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA in the UAE. Where in schools the language of instruction is other than English or Arabic, we still encourage those schools to participate in external benchmark assessments.

## Students of Determination

The required external assessments should be completed by as many students of determination as possible, as they provide valuable information to promote the subsequent development of curricula, alongside approaches to teaching, support and learning.

To enable equitable access to the assessments and ensure the outcome is reliable and useful, some students may benefit from support from 'access arrangements.' In these cases, students of determination should have the same accommodations that are used to support the student to access, participate and achieve within the school's routine assessment and examination protocols. It is expected that with support from these access arrangements, almost all students of determination will participate in, and complete the required external assessments.

For a small number of students of determination, usually those who experience the most complex and significant barriers to learning, participation in these external assessments may not be appropriate. In these cases, schools can exempt these students from the requirement to participate.

**Students who may benefit from such exemption / withdrawal (as per the revised categorisation framework for students of determination), may include those with:**

- ◆ moderate to severe barriers to learning (moderate or severe intellectual disability);•
- ◆ moderate to severe specific barriers with understanding verbal language (moderate to severe receptive language disorder);
- ◆ moderate to severe barriers with social interaction, communication and flexibility (autism spectrum disorder level 2 or 3); or
- ◆ moderate to severe emotional and psychological barriers (moderate to severe psycho-emotional disorders).

This list is not exhaustive, and in some cases, schools may choose to withdraw a child from one type of assessment and not others (partial exemption / withdrawal). For example, a school may choose for the student to complete the cognitive ability assessment but be withdrawn / exempt from participating in the attainment and progress assessments.

In all cases, schools must keep records of evidence that justify why the student has been fully or partially withdrawn / exempt from participation in required external assessments. Additionally, in all cases, schools must gain parental consent for the student to be withdrawn from these assessments (whether partially or fully). Evidence of parental consent must form part of the evidence that supports the school's decision to exempt the student from participation in these assessments.

In all cases of full or partial withdrawal from assessment, schools must ensure that alternative methods of gaining relevant, reliable and valid information similar to that relating to the focus domains of KHDA's external assessment requirements are implemented and utilised.

As part of the regulatory and monitoring function, KHDA will refer to the school's record of evidence for students of determination for whom the school has permitted partial or full withdrawal from these assessments.

## **Components Required for 2022-2023**

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- A. Measure of cognitive abilities
- B. Measure of attainment and progress
- C. Reading literacy

## A. Measure of cognitive abilities

<p><b>Assessment Requirements</b></p>	<p>Assessments that measure cognitive development must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. be applicable and relevant for all students;</li> <li>2. measure cognitive abilities in at least four areas of reasoning: verbal, non-verbal, quantitative and, spatial;</li> <li>3. measure cognitive reasoning skills without any reference to a specific curriculum or required subject knowledge, i.e, the test must be completely independent of any prior curriculum knowledge;</li> <li>4. ideally provide forecasts for the typical future attainment of students with similar cognitive profiles across different years/grades in external examinations for the major international curricula in Dubai private schools – E.g., iGCSE, A level, IBDP;</li> <li>5. provide schools with comprehensive data analyses and reports on gaps and skills development for all grades, with detailed and clear identification of improvement paths for each student/teacher/group/year and for the school, and</li> <li>6. measure cognitive development for students from grades 4-9; different grades using the same assessment tool.</li> </ol> <p>The data analysis and results for each student should be comparable with the benchmark, curriculum-linked assessments (below) that your school chooses to use.</p>
<p><b>Grades</b></p>	<p>Grades 3, 5, 7, 9 (UK curriculum schools Y4, 6, 8, 10)</p>
<p><b>Number of students</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students in the required grades (students who sat a cognitive ability test last academic year need not to repeat it this year)</li> <li>• All new students who have just joined the schools and do not have any cognitive ability test data.</li> </ul>

## B. Measure of attainment and progress - appropriate curriculum-linked international benchmark assessments

### Assessment Requirements

#### **Subjects to be assessed:**

**English Language, Arabic Language (A and B), science and mathematics.**

#### **Benchmark assessments that you use to measure attainment and progress must achieve the following objectives:**

1. They should test language proficiency (English and Arabic), reading, mathematical and scientific literacy, all in line with a particular school's curriculum and include general competencies on how well students can apply their knowledge and skills to real-life challenges.
2. Tests must arise from a single assessment provider for all required grades. That provider must offer all required subjects, other than Arabic, which may be sourced from an alternative provider.
3. These assessments should routinely be used to evaluate education systems worldwide; testing the skills and knowledge of students, for all required grades and at least on an annual basis.
4. Assessments must be externally designed and externally assessed.
5. They must offer a clear measure of students' attainment based on the same depth of curriculum knowledge as do schools' internal and external curriculum-based assessments.
6. Test results should provide a clear measure of students' progress against curriculum standards and changes in attainment over time.
7. Schools must ensure assessment integrity and security at all times; from the point of test material delivery to schools, through invigilation and submitting test materials back to the assessment provider, through to marking and reporting of results by the assessment provider.
8. Test providers must offer schools comprehensive data analyses and reports on attainment, progress, and skills development for mathematics, language/reading and science for all assessed grades. Ideally, this will include detailed and clear identification of curriculum gaps for each student /teacher /group /year and for the school.
9. The results of each assessment should be aligned to and be compared with the results of cognitive abilities tests.

Curriculum alignment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. US Curriculum schools: The assessment should be aligned to the US curriculum, based on state standards, Common Core standards and Next Generation Science standards. There should be an option to test students at least 3 times during one academic year.</li> <li>2. UK and Indian curriculum schools: The assessment should test attainment and progress against the National Curriculum for England and the Indian curriculum respectively.</li> <li>3. IB Curriculum schools: The assessment should test attainment and progress against PYP and MYP programmes. Therefore, schools can choose any of the assessments, depending on how their curriculum is designed.</li> <li>4. Other curriculum schools - The schools should choose assessments depending on how their curricula are designed.</li> </ol>
Grades	All students in Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (UK curriculum schools Years 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10)

### C. Reading literacy

Assessment Requirements	<p><b>Assessments that measure reading literacy should meet the following objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They should be external, standardised and reliable assessments of reading and applicable for all students and across all curricula.</li> <li>2. Tests must assess reading skills across a range of domains, with appropriate age-related emphases, including, but not limited to, phonemic awareness, word recognition and phonics, reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, interpretive and comparative analysis of passages, application of understanding and critique of text, comprehension of different genres, including poetry.</li> <li>3. They should be aligned with the international definition of reading literacy and assess reading skills in line with those evaluated through international assessments, PIRLS and PISA.</li> </ol>
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4. Assessments should maintain a consistent focus on reading literacy, and not assess spelling, grammar or writing within the same assessment.
5. Providers should present the results showing each student's reading age in comparison to grade/year level, at the time of year each assessment is given. Assessments should also produce a SAS (Standard Age Score) for each student, to facilitate comparison of data.
6. They should provide a detailed analysis of results and diagnostics of domains to support identification of individual student needs and the design of support interventions. Assessments should allow for tracking of growth and verification of the impact of intervention and support at key points throughout the school year.
7. Providers should provide schools with comprehensive data analyses and reports for all grades.
8. Outcomes should be disaggregated by nationality (Emirati students), boys/girls, devices used, year level, whole school data Etc.,
9. The analyses should enable schools to align the results of the reading assessment to be compared with the verbal component of the cognitive ability test.

## Grades

Assess all students aged 6-15 at three key points throughout the school year, using computer adaptive assessments.