

UK SCHOOLS IN

Saudi Arabia

A practical pathway from market entry
to a high-quality school.



STRATEGY



LICENSING



LAUNCH

WORLD CLASS ACADEMIA

MARKET ENTRY GUIDE

Build a school that belongs.

Combine the strength of a British educational identity with a school designed for its Saudi community.



02



BOARD PRIORITY

**British identity / Saudi
relevance / Quality
oversight**



British identity



Saudi relevance



Quality oversight

An educational proposition before a property transaction

A successful entry begins with a precise promise to families: who the school serves, what children will experience and achieve, and why the school deserves their trust. Validate demand at catchment level before selecting a campus or committing the UK brand.

A credible British identity

Define curriculum, teaching, pastoral care and the UK school's continuing quality oversight.

A locally grounded offer

Design Arabic provision, Saudi identity, inclusion and family communication into the model.

Inside this guide

- 03-05 Entry models, roadmap and feasibility
- 06-08 Corporate setup, licences and campus
- 09-13 Academic model, people, protection, finance and operations
- 14-17 Delivery plan, opening gates, WCA support and document room
- 18-19 Official sources and verification priorities



BOARD CHECKPOINT

Confirm the evidence, accountable owner and next decision before moving forward.

Scope: in-person, fee-paying UK-branded schools. Planning guidance; obtain project-specific legal, tax and technical advice.

Decide who owns, funds and operates.

The commercial agreement must match the actual licence holder and the level of control the UK school can exercise.

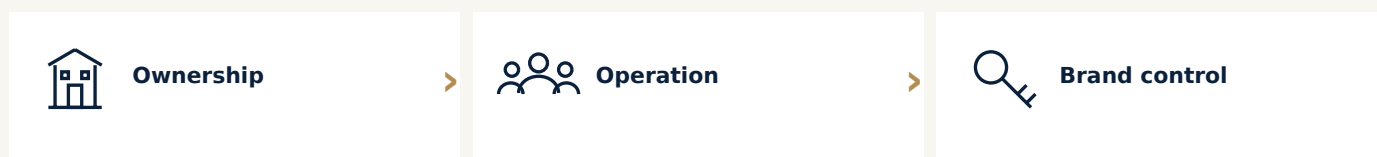




BOARD PRIORITY

**Ownership / Operation /
Brand control**

03



Owned campus

Structure and advantage: Saudi operating entity with UK investment, subject to activity eligibility. Strong operational control; substantial capital exposure.

Board decisions: Who funds losses, owns assets and appoints leaders?

Joint venture

Structure and advantage: UK school or group and an investor share ownership. Can combine brand, funding and local capability.

Board decisions: Reserved matters, dilution, deadlock, dividends and exit.

Brand licence / franchise

Structure and advantage: A licensed Saudi operator uses agreed brand and educational IP. Lower direct capital exposure for the UK school.

Board decisions: Inspection rights, minimum quality, royalties, step-in and debranding.

Management agreement

Structure and advantage: Saudi owner funds and holds the school operation; UK partner supplies defined management services.

Board decisions: Authority over staffing, budgets, safeguarding and performance.

Acquisition / conversion

Structure and advantage: Acquire or partner with an existing operator. Existing pupils and campus may shorten mobilisation.

Board decisions: Check licence transfer/change approval, liabilities, culture and parent consent needs.

Do not assume ownership eligibility. Confirm the precise school activity, proposed shareholders and any capital, experience or sector conditions with MISA and MoE. A Saudi partner is a commercial choice to assess against the applicable rules, rather than a universal assumption. [1-3]



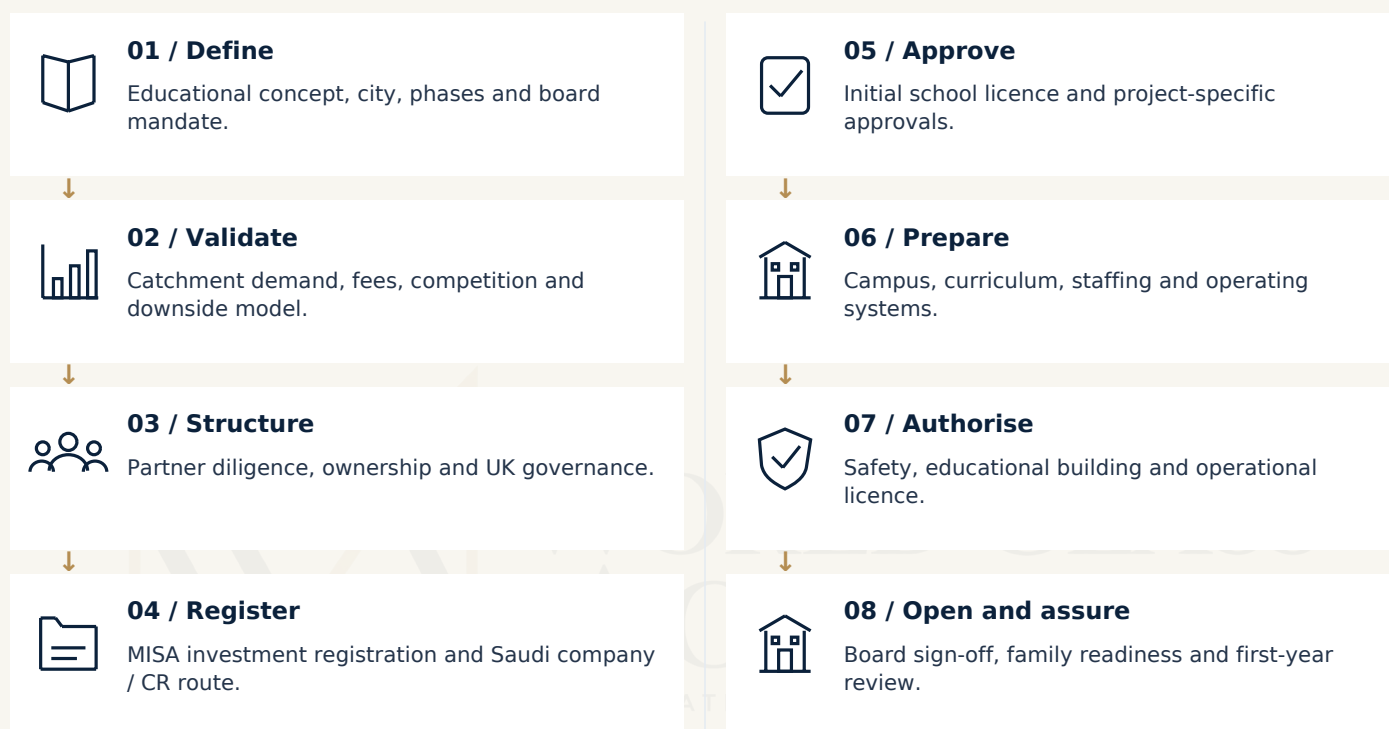
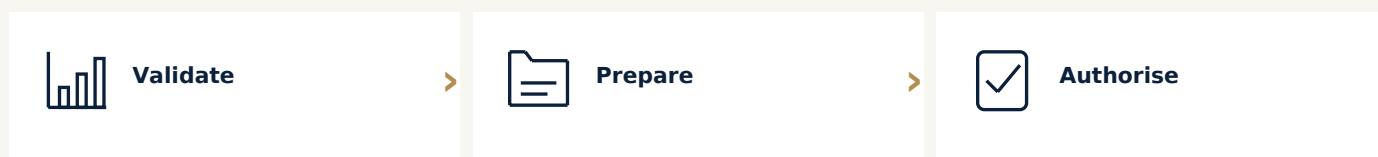
WCA SUPPORT

Compare routes, create a partner scorecard and define the educational controls the UK board needs.

Illustrative planning framework. Confirm project-specific requirements with the relevant authorities.

One programme. Four decision gates.

Workstreams can overlap. Formal approval dependencies determine what can proceed safely.



DECISION GATES A / Commercial case · B / Funding & structure
C / Viable campus & delivery plan · D / Authorised and ready



BOARD CHECKPOINT

Confirm the evidence, accountable owner and next decision before moving forward.

Illustrative planning framework. Confirm project-specific requirements with the relevant authorities.

Prove the catchment, then commit.

A national opportunity does not establish demand for a particular school, location or fee level.

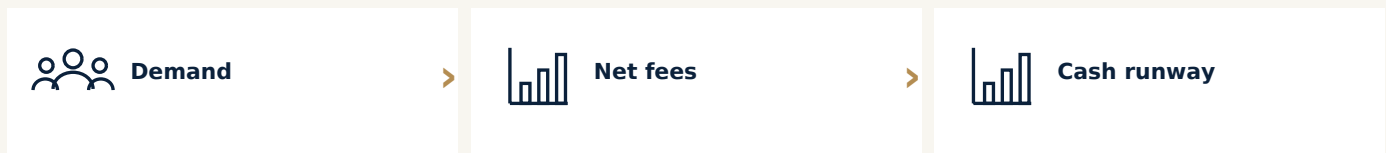




BOARD PRIORITY

Demand / Net fees / Cash runway

05



1 / Set the school brief

Specify city and catchment; age range and opening year groups; intended capacity; curriculum and qualifications; fee positioning; pupil mix; inclusion offer; and whether the school is day-only. Confirm the permitted pupil and gender configuration with MoE before designing the campus.

2 / Collect decision-grade evidence

Map competing schools, published fees, admissions availability, parent priorities, employer demand, planned housing and real journey times. Test the British brand proposition with prospective families. Treat expressions of interest as an indicator, rather than contracted enrolment.

3 / Test commercial resilience

Build a five-year model by year group with annual pupil growth, retention, discounts, collections and staffing. Test a slower intake, delayed opening, higher payroll and construction overrun. Agree the cash runway and the minimum funded opening scale.

Feasibility and options paper

Is there evidence of a viable catchment at realistic net fees?

Investment and mobilisation plan

Who funds pre-opening costs and downside losses?

Go / no-go decision

What evidence would make the board defer or stop?



WCA SUPPORT

Research the market, interview stakeholders, test the proposition and translate findings into a board decision paper.

Illustrative planning framework. Confirm project-specific requirements with the relevant authorities.

Give the school a sound legal base.

Appoint Saudi counsel and a tax adviser early; agree how the UK school will protect its assets and reputation.

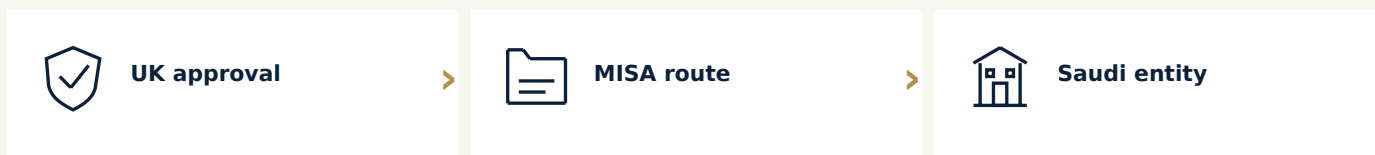




BOARD PRIORITY

UK approval / MISA route / Saudi entity

06



4 / Complete UK and partner approvals

Secure governing body / trustee approval, assess conflicts and reputational risk, and authorise the investment or contract. For charitable schools, obtain advice on charitable powers, trading risk, a subsidiary and public benefit. Review applicable UK charity rules and the home jurisdiction. Check the investor's beneficial owners, source of funds, track record and delivery capacity.

5 / Confirm the foreign investment route

MISA's updated framework uses investment registration. Confirm activity eligibility and the applicant-specific conditions before applying. Prepare the foreign company's registration and latest financial statements in the required authenticated form; confirm translation and authentication requirements for every receiving authority. Follow the current Investor Guide rather than older generic "MISA licence" checklists.

6 / Incorporate and activate

With counsel, choose the Saudi vehicle, reserve the trade name, agree constitutional documents and obtain the Commercial Registration (CR) through the applicable Ministry of Commerce / Saudi Business Center route. Confirm sequencing against any required prior sector approval. Complete beneficial ownership, national address, banking, tax and employer onboarding as applicable.

Contract essentials Brand and IP ownership; territory and exclusivity; quality standards; leadership appointments; budget authority; royalty / management fee tax; reporting; audits; disputes; termination; pupil continuity; and debranding. Reserve control over material safeguarding failures.



WCA SUPPORT

Coordinate the advisers, prepare the educational due diligence brief and track corporate and commercial actions.

Know what each permission does.

Core approvals for a conventional foreign-invested school; additional permissions depend on the delivery model.





BOARD PRIORITY

**Register / Secure premises
/ Licence to operate**



Investment registration

Authority / route: MISA / Invest Saudi

Purpose and dependency: Foreign investor entry; confirm activity eligibility. Does not authorise a school to open.

Commercial Registration (CR)

Authority / route: Ministry of Commerce / Saudi Business Center

Purpose and dependency: Registers the operating entity and activities. Does not replace education approval.

Initial school licence

Authority / route: MoE / applicable business platform

Purpose and dependency: Required before operational licensing. Obtain the current category-specific application checklist.

Educational building licence

Authority / route: Competent municipal / building route; coordinate with MoE

Purpose and dependency: MoE lists this as a requirement for opening a private school. Verify premises, use and documentation.

Salamah safety licence

Authority / route: Civil Defense / Salamah

Purpose and dependency: Explicit prerequisite listed by MoE for operational licensing.

Operational school licence

Authority / route: MoE via the Business Platform

Purpose and dependency: Permission for the approved school operation; check licensed premises, phases, curriculum and conditions.

Conditional approvals to scope: construction / change of use and completion or occupancy evidence; school transport; clinic / health services; food provision; boarding; signage; and online programmes. Use licensed providers where appropriate and confirm who holds each permission. A commercial municipal licence for an institute or centre is not automatically the same requirement as a school's educational building licence. [3-4, 15]



WCA SUPPORT

Build a live approval register showing owner, prerequisites, submissions, conditions, expiry dates and evidence.

Secure a site that can be licensed.

A signed lease is a liability if the premises cannot support the approved school.





BOARD PRIORITY

**Assess / Design /
Commission**



7 / Complete technical diligence

Commission a licensed Saudi architect / engineer to assess title or leasing authority, lawful educational use, planning, permitted capacity, access, traffic, parking, utilities, fire strategy and accessibility. Confirm room use, outdoor provision and pupil circulation against the intended ages and configuration.

8 / Design, approve and deliver

Translate the academic brief into room schedules: classrooms, laboratories, library, specialist provision, prayer spaces, toilets, shaded outdoor areas, PE, administration and pastoral support. Check segregation / shared spaces as applicable, safe arrival and departure, emergency access and provision for pupils with disabilities.

9 / Commission before handover

Secure the applicable design, construction, safety and completion approvals; close defects; test fire systems and utilities; establish maintenance contracts; and retain as-built drawings and certificates. Align the educational building licence and Salamah documentation with the operating application.

Property protections: use conditions precedent, realistic long-stop dates, landlord works obligations, delay remedies, fit-out permissions and exit provisions. New construction typically needs a longer programme than an existing suitable campus.



WCA SUPPORT

Turn the educational model into a campus brief and coordinate academic reviews with appointed technical specialists.

[3-4] Current municipal requirements must be checked for the chosen site.

British foundations. Saudi relevance.

Protect the educational character of the UK school while meeting the requirements of the Saudi licence.





BOARD PRIORITY

Curriculum / Local alignment / Quality evidence

09



10 / Design the approved academic offer

Map the intended English / wider UK curriculum, stages and qualifications against the school's approved category. Seek confirmation of Arabic, Islamic education, Saudi history / geography and national identity requirements by pupil group and phase. Do not use a general minimum in an older regulation as the complete timetable specification.

11 / Build the teaching system

Create progression maps, schemes of work, assessment and reporting arrangements, English language support, SEND identification and support, pastoral provision and enrichment. Review books and digital resources for local suitability and applicable content approval. Plan national assessments and reporting where the school or cohorts are in scope.

12 / Plan recognition separately

Arrange examination-board approval and centre requirements directly with the chosen awarding bodies for GCSE / IGCSE and post-16 qualifications. Check Saudi equivalency and university-entry implications with the relevant authorities. DfE's British Schools Overseas (BSO) scheme is voluntary; BSO accreditation does not replace Saudi operational licensing.

Quality assurance from day one

Confirm the school's ETEC evaluation / accreditation route and timetable. Build evidence of teaching quality, pupil progress, leadership, wellbeing and improvement. Agree the UK school's visits, reporting and escalation rights. [8]



WCA SUPPORT

Support curriculum alignment, assessment design, SEND capacity, leader development and accreditation readiness.

[5-7] Confirm the latest cohort-specific Saudi subject and timetable requirements.

Recruit the team that delivers the promise.

Staffing, immigration and localisation should be costed together before offers are made.





BOARD PRIORITY

Plan / Recruit / Mobilise

10



13 / Workforce plan

Required work: Define leadership, teaching, Arabic / Islamic, SEND, support and operational posts by opening cohort. Check current localisation rules and Nitaqat position for the activity and roles.

Evidence to retain: Approved organisation chart; role and cost matrix.

14 / Appoint leaders

Required work: Check MoE leader-selection criteria and any required approval. Recruit the founding principal early enough to shape curriculum, staffing and admissions.

Evidence to retain: Verified qualifications; experience; appointment approvals where applicable.

15 / Vet and contract

Required work: Use references, identity and qualification checks, safeguarding checks across countries of residence and role-appropriate professional licensing checks.

Evidence to retain: Recruitment register; reference evidence; lawful contracts.

16 / Mobilise

Required work: Arrange lawful work authorisation, residency, employer onboarding and medical insurance; use Qiwa / GOSI and wage protection processes as applicable.

Evidence to retain: Permit tracker; payroll controls; insurance and staff files.

17 / Induct and develop

Required work: Train staff in the school's teaching model, Saudi context, safeguarding, SEND, assessment, systems and emergencies.

Evidence to retain: Induction sign-off; coaching plan; training record.

Budget the full employment cost: salary, allowances, recruitment, relocation, visas, medical cover, flights where contracted, professional development, substitute cover and end-of-service obligations. Do not deploy staff on business-visit status as a substitute for lawful work permission.



WCA SUPPORT

Develop the staffing brief, leadership selection criteria, induction and a professional development programme.

[5, 9-10] Confirm role-specific professional and immigration requirements.

Trust must be designed into operations.

The board needs assurance that concerns can be reported, acted on and escalated promptly.





BOARD PRIORITY

Protect pupils / Secure data / Escalate concerns

11


Protect pupils

Secure data

Escalate concerns

Safeguarding

Appoint accountable leads; set local reporting and referral routes; train every adult; maintain secure case records.

Safe daily routines

Control visitors, collection, supervision, transport handovers, trips, first aid, medication and emergency response.

18 / Test the child-protection system

Adopt a locally reviewed policy, staff code of conduct, safer recruitment process, allegations procedure, anti-bullying approach and accessible complaints routes. Make responsibilities explicit across the Saudi operator, UK partner, contractors and board. Rehearse a serious incident and confirm who informs families and the authorities.

19 / Make data governance operational

Map pupil, parent, staff, health and safeguarding data. Under Saudi PDPL, determine lawful processing grounds, privacy notices, access rights, retention, processor contracts, security, incident handling and any need for a data protection officer. Assess transfers to UK head office, cloud platforms and other countries under the transfer rules; Saudi compliance is not replaced by UK GDPR compliance.

Practical checks: restrict sensitive pupil files; review permissions and vendor contracts; protect records shared with the UK partner; set photo / marketing controls; test backup restoration; and define breach escalation. Assess UK data obligations separately where they apply.



WCA SUPPORT

Facilitate policy design, staff training and readiness reviews, with legal and data specialists validating compliance.

[7, 12] Safeguarding recommendations require alignment with Saudi law and local reporting arrangements.

Fund the journey to a stable school.

The opening budget must cover the period before enrolment and fee collections become reliable.



12



Pre-opening investment

Research; legal and advisory work; design; permits; recruitment; technology; marketing; rent and mobilisation.

Campus and equipment

Land / lease commitments; fit-out; furniture; labs; library; ICT; safety systems; accessibility and contingency.

Operating expenditure

Full payroll; utilities; facilities; insurance; licences / renewals; resources; transport arrangements; UK support and brand fees.

Working capital

Collection delays; phased intake; refundable deposits; tax cash flows; retention risk; debt service and delayed opening.

20 / Establish financial controls

Approve capital commitments, delegated spending, procurement, banking signatories, collections and refund processes. Use a monthly cash forecast and report enrolment by year group, net fees, retention, staffing ratio and cash runway. Agree any equity calls and investor support before downside losses arise.

21 / Confirm tax treatment and fees

Obtain advice on income tax / Zakat, VAT, cross-border withholding tax, transfer pricing, treaty relief and e-invoicing. MISA's overview states a 20% income-tax rate for the non-Saudi ownership share in a resident company, subject to the applicable rules. VAT is generally 15%; qualifying education for Saudi citizens has a state-borne VAT mechanism with conditions. Avoid treating all school revenue as exempt.

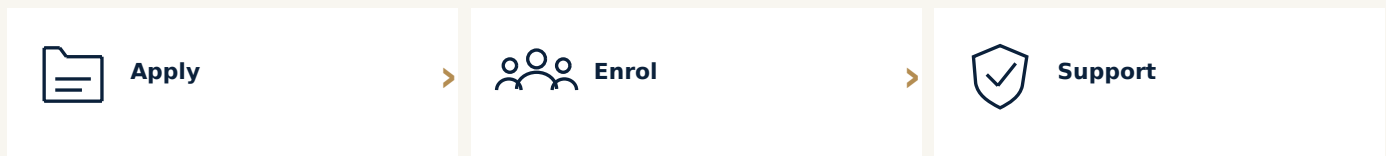
Planning formula: operating break-even pupils = fixed operating costs ÷ (net annual fee per pupil - variable cost per pupil). This excludes capex, financing and tax; use a full cohort model for an investment decision. Check MoE fee rules and family contract terms before publishing fees.



[5, 13-14] Obtain project-specific Saudi and UK tax advice.

Make the family experience dependable.

Every promise in the prospectus should have an operating process behind it.



22 / Build admissions responsibly

Define entry ages, year placement, English assessment, SEND support capacity, transfers and records. Prepare clear bilingual family information, approved fee terms, refunds, complaints and withdrawal procedures. Confirm when advertising, applications, deposits and enrolment are permitted; never imply final approval before it is obtained.

23 / Configure the operating platform

Set up admissions / CRM, school information system, learning platform, finance, attendance, reporting, safeguarding records and parent communications. Confirm Noor and other official reporting obligations for the licensed school. Test access, data migration, invoicing, report cards and parent support before opening.

24 / Contract reliable services

Procure facilities, security, cleaning, catering, transport, IT, insurance and health support. Verify contractor licences and staff checks as applicable. Write service levels, incident reporting, data duties, audit rights and continuity arrangements into contracts. Confirm any separate permissions for a clinic, food operation or transport model.

If the model changes, recheck the route.

Boarding, standalone early childhood provision, adult training, online programmes or new campuses are not automatically covered by the original school licence. NELC has a programme licensing route for e-learning; confirm applicability before offering such provision. [15]



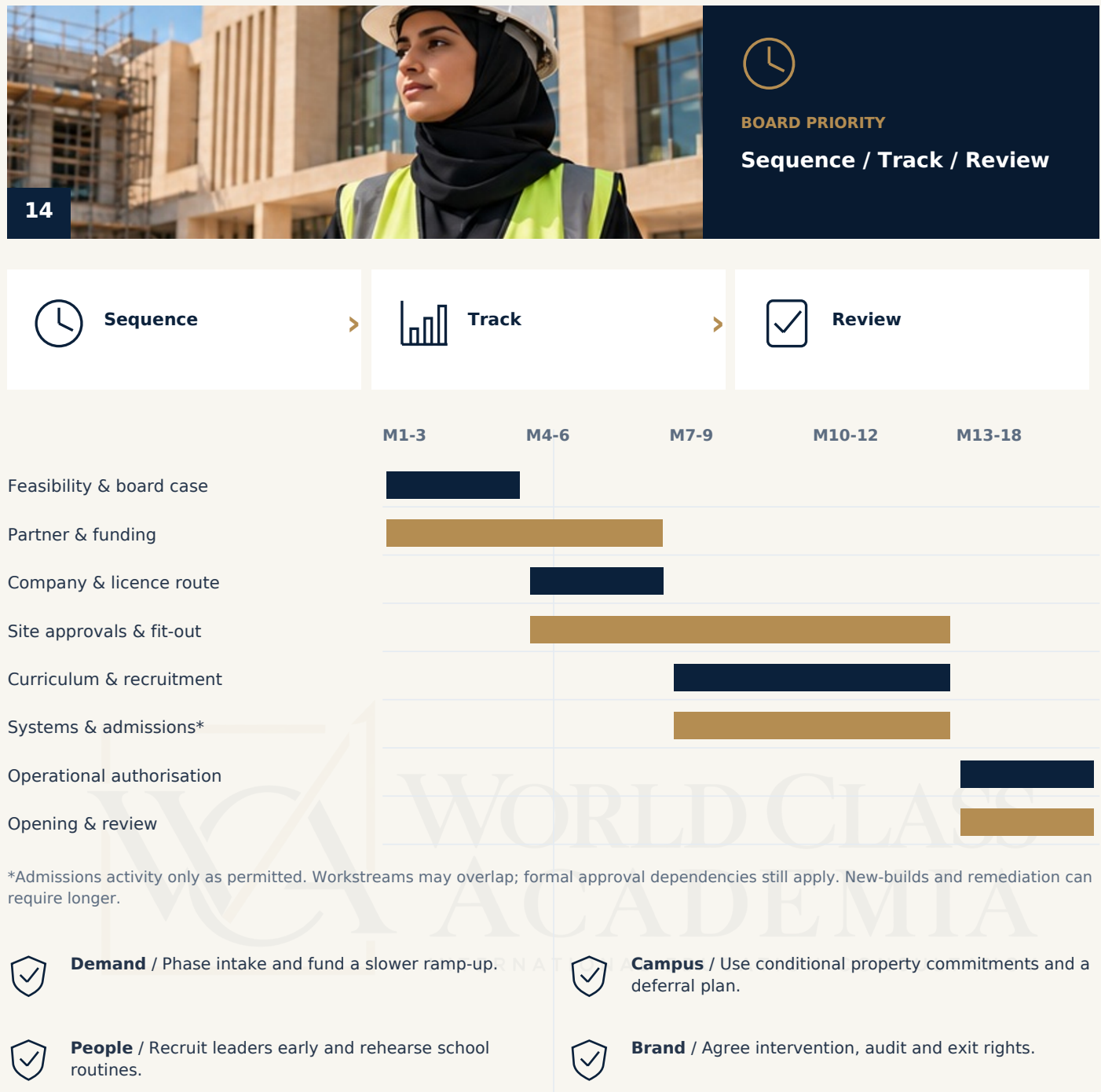
WCA SUPPORT

Map the parent journey, admissions standards and operating policies; coordinate system and supplier readiness.

[5, 12, 15] Confirm service-specific approvals and current school reporting requirements.

Plan backwards from an authorised opening.

Illustrative programme for an existing suitable campus; this is not a regulator's service commitment.



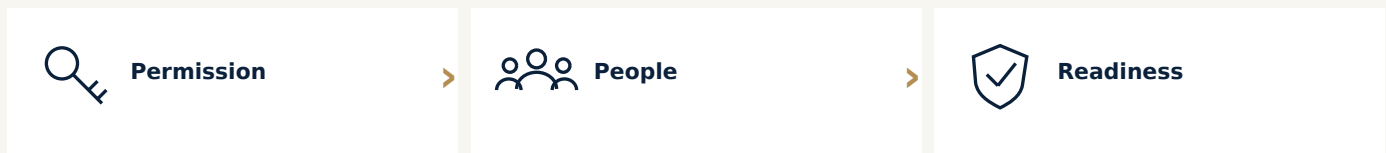
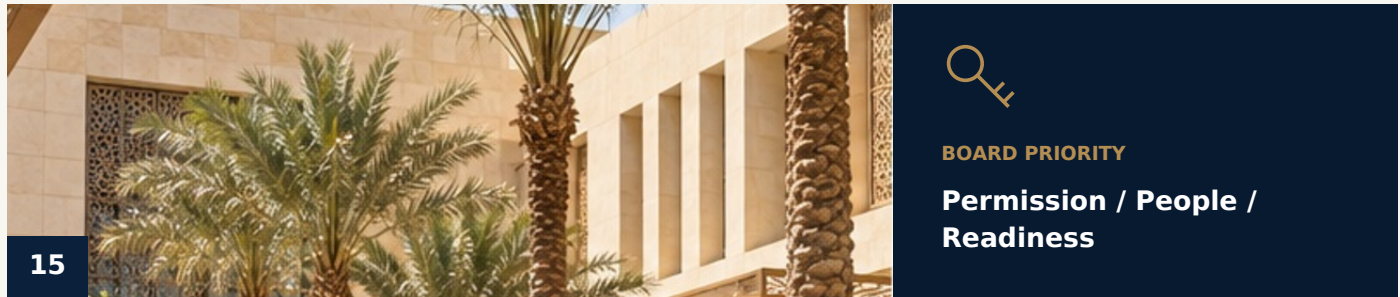
BOARD CHECKPOINT

Confirm the evidence, accountable owner and next decision before moving forward.

Illustrative planning framework. Confirm project-specific requirements with the relevant authorities.

Open when evidence is complete.

Recommended board checklist: the accountable operator confirms legal readiness, and the UK partner confirms educational readiness.



Permission to operate

Operational licence issued for the intended school scope; conditions closed; campus / safety evidence valid. Confirm capacity and any limits on phases, premises or provision.

A commissioned campus

Safety systems tested; critical defects closed; utilities live; accessibility reviewed; insurance active; maintenance and emergency arrangements in place.

A ready workforce

Principal and necessary leaders appointed; staffing adequate; checks and required permissions complete; payroll, induction and safeguarding training ready.

An executable school day

Timetable, resources, pupil records, learning platform, attendance, medical response, arrivals / collection and parent communications tested.

A funded and accountable operation

Opening budget and cash runway signed off; family contracts / fee handling reviewed; incident escalation and UK board reporting agreed.

First 30 / 60 / 90 days

Review pupil safety and attendance; teaching quality; parent concerns; staffing stability; progress baselines; admissions conversion; collections; cash; and licence conditions. Record actions and report to both governing bodies.

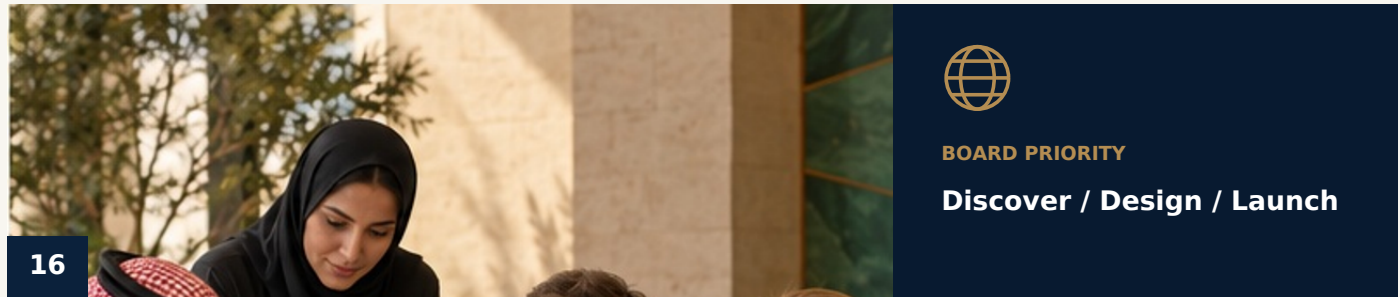


BOARD CHECKPOINT

Confirm the evidence, accountable owner and next decision before moving forward.

From first conversation to school readiness.

World Class Academia offers a proposed advisory pathway connecting UK educational expertise with the Saudi school context.



Discover

WCA support: Clarify ambition, school identity, target market and entry options.

Concrete output: Readiness review and agreed research brief.

Validate

WCA support: Coordinate market research, concept testing, partner mapping and educational due diligence.

Concrete output: Feasibility paper, partner scorecard and preferred route.

Structure

WCA support: Coordinate licensed advisers and translate the educational offer into a delivery plan.

Concrete output: Responsibilities matrix, approval tracker and mobilisation plan.

Design & prepare

WCA support: Support curriculum alignment, assessment, inclusion / SEND, leadership development and policy preparation.

Concrete output: Academic framework, training plan and readiness evidence.

Launch & improve

WCA support: Facilitate mock reviews, opening assurance and first-year improvement monitoring.

Concrete output: Action plan, board dashboard and quality review cycle.

A clear division of responsibility

The investor / operator funds and owns the licensed operation. The UK partner owns its brand and agrees its educational oversight. WCA provides scoped advisory and coordination support. Saudi legal counsel, tax advisers, engineers and other regulated professionals provide specialist opinions, certifications and filings within their authorisation. Authorities issue approvals.



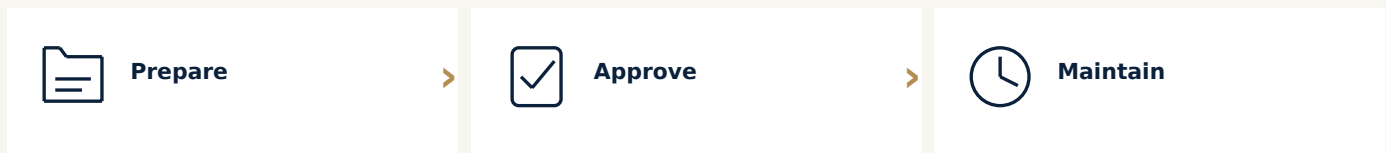
WCA SUPPORT

Start with a scoping meeting: bring the UK school profile, preferred city, target ages, fee ambition, investment parameters and opening horizon.

Illustrative planning framework. Confirm project-specific requirements with the relevant authorities.

Prepare the evidence once. Keep it current.

Recommended preparation list; the formal submission checklist must come from the relevant authority and your appointed advisers.



01 / UK sponsor

School / company profile; incorporation documents; governing approvals; financial statements; authority to use the brand; authorised signatories.

02 / Investor & corporate

Shareholder and beneficial owner information; source of funds diligence; partner agreements; MISA record; constitutional documents; CR; banking mandates.

03 / School approvals

Confirmed school classification; initial licence; application register; authority correspondence; operational licence and conditions; renewal / update schedule.

04 / Premises

Title / lease rights; approved use; plans and technical reports; building / completion evidence as applicable; educational building and Salamah licences; insurance.

05 / Academic & people

Curriculum and subject mapping; resources; staffing plan; leader approvals where required; qualification / vetting files; contracts; permits; induction and training.

06 / Finance & operations

Funded business plan; cash forecast; tax advice / registrations; fee and family terms; safeguarding and data policies; vendor contracts; emergency and continuity plans.

Run one controlled register with document owner, version, approval status, next action and expiry / review date. Store sensitive personal records with restricted access. Maintain original Arabic decisions and reviewed translations. Track MISA annual updates, CR annual data confirmation and school / premises permissions separately. [1, 16]

Protect the name as well as the operation

Check the school name with the education authority and reserve the company trade name through the corporate route. Separately, instruct an IP adviser to search and protect the English / Arabic brand and relevant marks with SAIP. A trade-name reservation does not itself register a trademark. [17]



BOARD CHECKPOINT

Confirm the evidence, accountable owner and next decision before moving forward.

[1-5, 9, 12-14] File requirements vary by entity, activity and school category.

Verify the route. Keep the evidence.

Clickable official sources behind the regulatory guidance; commercial recommendations remain planning proposals.



1 / MISA / Updated Investment Law

Investment registration precedes CR and other competent-authority licences.

2 / MISA / Investor Guide, June 2026 file

Registration documents, activity conditions and post-registration services. Confirm the live guide and activity-specific annexes.

3 / MoE / Operational licensing for private education institutes

Initial licence, Salamah and educational building licence; Business Platform application route.

4 / Ministry of Municipalities and Housing / Private educational building requirements

Current requirements listing, marked in force; page dated 25 October 2026. Obtain the applicable technical text from the authority.

5 / MoE / Regulations for private and international schools

School leaders, resources, calendars, fees and other operating regulations.

6 / MoE / International Schools Regulations

General framework including Arabic, Islamic culture and Saudi history / geography. Confirm subsequent category-specific instructions.

7 / DfE / British schools overseas: accreditation process and support

Voluntary BSO scheme and its requirements.

8 / ETEC / National Portal / National school accreditation request

National accreditation service for private and international schools.

9 / HRSD / Private-school localisation procedural guide

Role and school-category localisation framework; obtain current applicability advice.



WCA SUPPORT

Obtain school-specific advice and written authority clarification before committing capital.

Verify the route. Keep the evidence.

Clickable official sources behind the regulatory guidance; commercial recommendations remain planning proposals.



19



People



Data



Tax and IP

10 / HRSD / Labour education FAQs

Employment matters, Qiwa contract authentication and wage protection.

11 / Charity Commission / Trustees trading and tax (CC35)

Charitable trading and trading-subsidary considerations. Check the UK school's jurisdiction.

12 / SDAIA / Laws, regulations and data-protection guidance

PDPL, implementing rules, international transfer guidance and DPO appointment rules.

13 / MISA / Tax laws and regulations overview

Income tax, Zakat, VAT, withholding tax, transfer pricing and e-invoicing overview.

14 / ZATCA / State bears VAT on education

Mechanism for qualifying education services to Saudi citizens; check current detailed guidance and implementation.

15 / National Portal / Programme licence issuance (NELC)

Programme licensing for e-learning; applicability depends on the proposed provision.

16 / Ministry of Commerce / Annual CR data confirmation

Annual confirmation of company commercial registry data through the Saudi Business Center.

17 / SAIP / Trademark registration

Saudi trademark application and registration service; confirm name and IP strategy with an adviser.



WCA SUPPORT

Obtain school-specific advice and written authority clarification before committing capital.

Confirm the current requirements directly with the relevant authorities and appointed specialist advisers.