



**Student & Parent  
High School Diploma Handbook  
2019 - 2020**

## Table of Contents

|                                       |           |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Mission Statement</b>              | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Accreditation</b>                  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Admissions Policies</b>            | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Technology Requirements</b>        | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Enrollment Process</b>             | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Academic Operations</b>            | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>School Operations</b>              | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Credit for Courses</b>             | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Grading Policies</b>               | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Graduation Requirements</b>        | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Transfer Credits</b>               | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Transcripts</b>                    | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Satisfactory Academic Progress</b> | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Tuition and Fees</b>               | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Code of Conduct</b>                | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Discipline</b>                     | <b>11</b> |

*NOTICE: The reader should take notice that while every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided herein, The American Academy reserves the right to make unlimited changes at any time without prior notice. The school provides the information herein solely for the convenience of the reader and, to the extent permissible by law, expressly disclaims any liability which may otherwise be incurred. Additionally, the policies and procedures set forth in this handbook are not a right or part of the enrollment contract. The procedures herein do not confer any contractual rights on any student, but instead, serve as an aid to the school in its everyday decision-making responsibilities.*



## **Conditional Enrollment**

Students will be *conditionally enrolled* pending completion of the following items:

- Submitted transcript
- Submitted first full payment
- Submitted first assignment

While *conditionally enrolled*, students may begin their first courses but do not have full access to all services and courses. Once the above items are complete, students will be considered *fully activated*. Fully activated students are assigned to a Student Services representative, receive the transcript evaluation, and are able to self-register for courses.

Conditionally enrolled students will be deactivated after 45 days if any of the above components are missing. Payment is refundable, but credit will not be issued, for courses completed during the conditional enrollment period, if the student is deactivated prior to full activation.

TAA courses with their associated credits required materials, and descriptions are published in the course catalog on the TAA website. Fully activated students may self-register in courses from the student dashboard. If preferred, Student Services is available to assist students with selecting and registering for courses.

Contact Student Services to withdraw from a course or swap a course. Changes to course registrations must be made within 5 business days. Students can withdraw from a course at any point without a GPA penalty.

## **Academic Operations**

### **Academic Calendar**

The American Academy is an open-entry, open-exit school. The academic year is calculated to begin Tuesday after Labor Day and goes through the Friday before Labor Day. The school office will be closed on weekends and federal holidays. There are no scheduled academic breaks.

### **Pacing**

Courses are scheduled for four weeks, and students are expected to complete a minimum of two courses in the four week period. The academic week begins the Tuesday closest to the registration date and ends each subsequent Monday at midnight. Assignments that are not completed by the deadline will be automatically scored 0%. Students can self-pace throughout the week, provided the weekly deadline is met. However, daily logins are strongly recommended for optimal success. Coursework can be completed ahead of schedule. Students

may register for additional classes as soon as the current classes are completed. If a student needs a short break, they may work ahead to still meet the pacing deadline requirements.

### **Pause**

A Pause status is granted in the event of an emergency that incapacitates the student's ability to complete schoolwork, or the student needs an unscheduled break from school that would otherwise interfere with satisfactory academic progress. The Pause status must be requested via Student Services and is evaluated by the Director of Student Services or designee. The duration of this status lasts for up to four weeks and may be used up to two times per year.

### **Accommodations**

#### **Non-English Native Language Speakers**

TAA does not currently provide ELL curriculum. All instructional content and instructional interactions are provided in English, with the exception of World Languages courses.

Placement tests will be required of students who live outside of the United States and have not demonstrated the ability to successfully engage in English-language course work. The ability to successfully engage can also be determined by previously completed course work at a U.S. institution.

Students who have English reading and writing skills in question may be placed into TAA's English 9 course to assess their ability to learn, comprehend and communicate in English. If it is determined that a student's skills are not at a level to be successful, the student's tuition for the course will be refunded.

### **Special Education**

As a private school program, TAA does not administer or provide for the administration of special education services. Students who are in need of special education services are encouraged to obtain services through their local school districts.

TAA does honor accommodations that are listed on a student's current IEP or 504 plan. A copy of the current IEP should be sent to Student Services.

### **School Operations**

#### **Change of Student Information**

Students should inform TAA Student Services of changes in address, telephone number, email, parent contact(s), or any other important directory information within two school days of the change via email or phone.

### **Withdrawal**

To withdraw a student from The American Academy, students or parents/guardians of

non-emancipated minors should notify the school office in writing by emailing [student.services@graduationalliance.com](mailto:student.services@graduationalliance.com). All requests for transfer of student records will be initiated by the school into which the student will be enrolled. However, records will not be transferred until all School fees have been paid current.

### **Student Privacy**

TAA has done due diligence to protect students' personal information and to guard against cyber predators by using a password-protected learning management system, password-protecting and securing all computers on which student data is stored, and locking cabinets in which student records are kept. Personally identifiable information or directory information contained within a student's educational records will not be made public unless authorized by the student.

The American Academy, in compliance with Federal Laws 93-308 and 93-568, presents these facts for the information of parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and students.

1. TAA, in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), permits parents and/or guardians or students to do the following:
  - a. Inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access. Under state public disclosure law, the School must acknowledge the request in writing within five (5) working days, and unless the documents are presented at that time, an estimate will be provided as to when they will be available within the 45-day response period. Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) or eligible students should submit to the school principal (or appropriate school official) a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent/guardian or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected;
  - b. Request amendment of the student's education records that the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) or eligible student believes to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's rights to privacy. They should write the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record to be amended as well as specify why the information in question is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's rights to privacy. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student, the School will notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student of the decision and advise them of the right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing;
  - c. Consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the District as an administrator,

supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility;

- d. File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education under Section 99.64 concerning alleged failures by TAA to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA follows:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
600 Independence Avenue,  
SW Washington, DC 20202-4605

### **National Standardized Achievement Testing**

The American Academy's ACT/College Board school code is **450480**.

### **Credit for Courses**

Credit for coursework is awarded as a percentage with a corresponding letter grade. Students must earn at least 60% of the total points possible in the course and pass the final exam to earn credit. However, students may be exempt from the final exam if the overall course score is a minimum of 80% with all assignments completed.

### **Grading Policies**

The following grade scale will be used to determine letter grades and associated point values:

| Percentage | Letter Grade | Grade Point Values |
|------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 93-100%    | A            | 4.0                |
| 90-92.9%   | A-           | 3.7                |
| 87-89.9%   | B+           | 3.3                |
| 83-86.9%   | B            | 3.0                |
| 80-82.9%   | B-           | 2.7                |
| 77-79.9%   | C+           | 2.3                |
| 73-76.9%   | C            | 2.0                |
| 70-72.9%   | C-           | 1.7                |
| 67-69.9%   | D+           | 1.3                |
| 63-66.9%   | D            | 1.0                |
| 60-62.9%   | D-           | 0.7                |
| 0-59.9%    | NC           | 0.00               |

The minimal passing mark is D- (0.7).

Grade Point Average (GPA) is calculated as the total of the point values earned for all courses attempted divided by the sum of the credits for all courses attempted. Courses can be retaken to improve the GPA, but all grades received, except NC, will be recorded on the transcript. Similar courses should be taken to improve GPA for previously failed courses.

Grading policies are established by the principal and are in compliance with state and school guidelines. Grading information and other course-specific information are provided online within each course.

Teachers have three business days from the submission date to grade students' assignments.

Students wishing to appeal a grade in a course must follow the appeals process: Identify and submit to the course instructor, in writing, any assignment(s) that he/she would like re-evaluated, explaining why the student believes the grade on each identified assignment should be revised. Instructors will respond to the student's questions in writing. The instructor reserves the right to assign a grade that is either higher or lower than the original grade. If the student is not satisfied, he/she may request an evaluation of the identified assignments by another instructor of the School's choice. The student must submit all of the documentation from the process described above. The School's designated evaluator's decision will be final.

### **Graduation Requirements**

TAA students may take a maximum of 23 credits via the diploma program pathway, including transfer credits. Exceptions to the credit limit may be made pending written approval.

Diploma-seeking students must meet all TAA diploma requirements published at the time the student begins coursework at TAA. Diploma candidates must earn at least 20 credits in the subject areas listed below:

| <b>Subject Area</b>  | <b>Credits Required</b> |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>English</b><br>Required: English 9,10,11                          | 3.0                     |
| <b>Math</b><br>Required: Algebra I, Geometry                         | 2.0                     |
| <b>Science</b><br>Required: Earth Science, Biology                   | 2.0                     |
| <b>Social Studies</b><br>Required: World Civilizations, U.S. History | 2.5                     |
| <b>Health &amp; PE</b>   | 2.0                     |
| <b>The Arts</b>  | 1.0                     |

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Career &amp; Technical Education</b> | 1.0         |
| <b>Educational Technology</b>           | 0.5         |
| <b>Financial Math</b>                   | 0.5         |
| <b>Electives</b>                        | 5.5         |
| <b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>                    | <b>20.0</b> |

Note: College-bound students intending to apply to a four-year university should consider using elective course credits to meet the minimum entrance requirements. Check with the higher education institute for requirements, as they may vary by institution and program.

### **Transfer Credits**

Transfer students must provide or authorize a transfer of official transcripts for all previous high school work at the time of enrollment. Credits may be transferred to TAA from an accredited institution. TAA reserves the right to refuse transfer credits from non-accredited institutions.

Credits earned from institutions outside of the United States must be evaluated prior to transfer, and may or may not be accepted. The World Education Service (WES) performs this service. The student is responsible for the associated fees for the transcript evaluation. More information is available at the WES website: <https://www.wes.org/evaluations-and-fees/>.

### **Transcripts**

Transcripts requested by students will be forwarded to colleges, educational institutions, and/or employers as requested by the student, provided there are no unpaid fees, fines, or monthly payments. Transcripts only include courses that have had the final grade submitted.

Official transcripts will be mailed directly to the institution or employer-requested by the student. To complete this process a student can select “Additional Products” and then choose “Transcript Mailing.” There is a \$5 fee per transcript, which must be paid at the time of service.

Unofficial transcripts contain all of the information contained on an official transcript. These transcripts are available on-demand at no cost in electronic format through the student portal, provided there are no outstanding fees.

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress**

Students are expected to meet satisfactory academic progress by following the weekly pacing and successfully completing two courses every four weeks. Students begin in a Clear academic status, by default. To be considered in good academic standing, students must consistently pass their classes. Students who fail to meet this expectation drop in academic standing as follows for each subsequent month of not passing courses:

- Warning
- Probation
- Deactivation

Students may only be on Academic Probation one time. If a student falls to Probation again, the student will be deactivated.

Deactivation will automatically occur after three consecutive months of failing to meet satisfactory academic progress. Students wishing to re-enter after being deactivated for lack of satisfactory progress must apply to re-enroll and submit an appeal for approval to the principal or a designee. Students may only be re-admitted one time following an academic appeal.

### **Tuition and Fees**

A current schedule of tuition and fees for courses and services, such as enrollment and transcript verification, are available to current and prospective students on The American Academy's website.

### **Payment Plan**

Payment plans are available for students who require an option to pay for their studies.. Students who choose the payment plan option are expected to make and commit to regular monthly payments.

The plan balance may be paid in full at any time, even if enrolled in a payment plan. Students enrolled in the extended period payment plan (four or more total payments) may elect to pay the reduced total cost in full, less the amount of the payments currently made, within the timeframes from enrollment outlined below:

| <b>Pay Off</b> | <b>Time Period From Enrollment</b> |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>\$799</b>   | 0-60 days                          |
| <b>\$999</b>   | 61-120 days                        |
| <b>\$1199</b>  | 121-180 days                       |
| <b>\$1351</b>  | 181+ days                          |

An extension may be granted to delay a payment. The maximum extension is 10 business days. In the event of missing a payment, the school will contact the student to make arrangements for payment. If payment is not made within the late payment grace period (10 days), the student will be blocked from course access until payment is current. After 45 days of non-payment, the student will be deactivated.

Students deactivated for lack of payment may re-enroll, contingent on renewing payments. After deactivating once for lack of payment, students seeking to re-enroll must make full payment

prior to regaining access to coursework. If a future monthly payment is missed, the student will be deactivated again. Students who wish to re-enroll after being deactivated twice for missed payments will be converted to a short-term payment plan in order to makeup all missed payments prior to being re-enrolled.

Students who participate in the payment plan and elect to withdraw without completing the diploma program will be responsible for paying the difference owed at the individual per credit cost from TAA's credit enhancement/recovery program to release the credits earned.

## **Refund**

Refunds are available to students who pay the full cost of the diploma upfront or are enrolled in the short-term month payment plan (less than three total payments). A refund must be requested in writing via email to [student.services@graduationalliance.com](mailto:student.services@graduationalliance.com) within 10 business days of enrollment. A full refund will be issued if the request is received within the allotted time frame and the courses have not been started. If coursework has been attempted and the refund is requested within the designated time frame, a full refund will be issued minus a \$99 administrative fee. (Students who have paid upfront in full may request a refund within the first four weeks of enrollment, but the administrative fee will apply if courses were attempted.)

Students on an extended long-term monthly payment (four or more monthly payments) are not eligible to receive a refund. By agreeing to participate in the program and committing to diploma completion with the associated financial obligation, students who withdraw early are no longer financially associated with the diploma program. They are responsible for the individual credit cost for completed courses, instead. The per-credit cost is published on the TAA website.

## **Code of Conduct**

### **Academic Honesty**

The American Academy has a zero-tolerance policy for academic dishonesty.

Cheating (giving or receiving information) and plagiarism on classwork will result in a 1% grade for the assignment. Students will not have the opportunity to complete an extra credit assignment to make up lost points.

The following procedure governs identification and discipline for instances of academic dishonesty:

For a first offense, the instructor assigns a 1% grade, notifies the student in writing that an instance in which the work's authorship is in question has been identified, and reports the incident. The student will be permitted a retry after discussing plagiarism with the teacher or designee. The student is placed on internal academic watch. For subsequent offenses, the

instructor assigns a 1% grade and will notify the student in writing. No retry will be permitted. Continued academic dishonesty will result in a referral to the principal for disciplinary measures. Additional disciplinary action may be taken.

Cheating on a final exam will result in an automatic NC failed grade for the course and will require retaking the course.

### **Online Conduct**

The American Academy believes the school should reflect the desires and expectations held by our community for our students and that the school must provide an environment that ensures the safety and wellbeing of students. For this reason, the following guidelines regarding online interaction have been put in place:

Students are expected to adhere to “netiquette” guidelines; respectful interactions with peers and instructors. The American Academy has a zero-tolerance policy towards intimidation, bullying, fighting, and/or harassment of any kind.

TAA will promptly and thoroughly investigate reports of harassment and bullying. If it is determined that either has occurred, the School will act appropriately within the discipline codes of the School.

### **Discipline**

#### **Discipline Philosophy**

Discipline should be thought of as a learning experience with behavior modification as its objective. Unwanted behaviors are modified easiest when the school and parents work together as a team. In addition, any consequences that are used to modify unwanted behaviors should be supported at home, imposed immediately, be firm, fair, consistent, and progressive.

#### **Discipline Process**

Internal interventions are first implemented to modify behavior. If warning(s) is insufficient and inappropriate behavior continues, the student will be referred to the principal, who will determine the appropriate disciplinary steps. Inappropriate behavior may result in removal from the online classroom. Behaviors such as: violence toward others, bullying, harassment, intimidation, disrespect toward instructors, non-compliance, and other behaviors deemed disruptive to an orderly learning environment may result in an automatic referral to the principal.

#### **Readmission**

A student, who has been long-term suspended or expelled from The American Academy and wishes to be considered for entrance or readmission to TAA must appeal to the TAA principal or designee in writing via email.

#### **Appeals Process**

A parent or student has a right to appeal disciplinary action. If an appeal is desired, the school office must receive an email to Student Services within 10 business days with an official request for an appeal hearing. The hearing will be held within five business days of receipt of the appeal request.