



What does it mean to be a UN School?

UNIS Hanoi has a multifaceted identity and at its centre is its relationship with the United Nations. The following statement articulates what this UN identity means for our learning community today and for the future:

The United Nations International School of Hanoi is committed to inspiring and equipping young people to build a better world. We bring the world together on one campus and guided by the Principles of the United Nations mentor peace makers and problem solvers. Our young global citizens are curious, compassionate and confident to take action against issues confronting humanity; bold in the face of complexity and resilient in an uncertain world. We are a learning community that cares enough to create a better tomorrow. Starting today. Together.

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Our Journey

In the year that the UN Celebrated its 70th anniversary and launched its Sustainable Development goals to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030, the Board of Directors at UNIS Hanoi also looked to the future, to clearly articulate what it means to be the United Nations International School of Hanoi.

As one of only two UN International Schools in the world, our relationship with the United Nations in Viet Nam is at the core of our School identity.

The School was founded in 1988 through a Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Viet Nam Ministry of Education. The role of the school was to “provide a high quality education for children of the international community in Viet Nam and for Vietnamese children if desired and requested by the Government; and so facilitate the execution of economic development programmes, as well as promotion of multi-national cooperation.”

For nearly three decades UNIS Hanoi has committed to educate learners to help change the world, guided by UN Principles, and in service to the development of Viet Nam.

Much has changed in that time.

Viet Nam has transformed from one of the poorest countries in the world into a lower middle-income country, and is now considered to be one of the most dynamic emerging countries in the East Asia region.

The work of the United Nations in Viet Nam has been at the forefront of UN reform. It was one of the first pioneering countries in the world to start to “Deliver as One”, with all agencies working together, making the UN in Viet Nam more responsive and effective to the country’s rapidly evolving needs.

And UNIS Hanoi has grown from 11 students in the borrowed classroom of a local high school with a teacher on secondment from UNIS New York, to today’s purpose built campus welcoming daily more than 1100 students and representing more than 60 nationalities and 40 mother tongue groups.

So as the School prepares to celebrate 30 years of Learning to Inspire in 2018, what does it mean for the future, for our learning community and for Vietnam to be the United Nations International School of Hanoi?

A Shared Vision

When UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, visited UNIS Hanoi in 2010 and inspired our students with his passionate and wise advice as they assume their roles as leaders of tomorrow, he also framed an important piece of work for the School's leaders. He told us; *"It is the right moment to be talking about our future... You have to have a big dream, aim high but keep your two feet firmly on the ground."*

His visit in 2010 came as the Board of Directors embarked on their journey to define the School's Vision, and that also gave rise to the formal articulation of the School's Values and Beliefs.

The Vision statement was to embody an entire community's hopes and dreams for our students, and drive the school's strategic planning for the future. The Values were to underpin all that we do.

Both the Vision statement and the Values were born out of more than two years of work involving students and parents, faculty and staff, administration and Board, as we learned what was important to our community and how our community wanted to embrace the future.

The values of the United Nations resonate throughout UNIS Hanoi's guiding statements and is at the heart of our Vision which sits boldly on the horizon, as something we will strive constantly towards reaching. It serves to motivate continuous improvement, be used as the ultimate measure of our success as educators, and the acid test by which our plans for the future are selected.

"Our learning community will be an inspirational role model for a better world"

Education for a Better World

UNIS Hanoi is not an Agency of the United Nations, but we are educating agents of change. What is the impact on teaching and learning of being a United Nations School?

UNIS Hanoi is an inclusive school which does not discriminate for enrollment based on race, sex, religion, political or other opinion. It does not select students based on academic achievement and will enroll all students whose learning needs can be effectively supported. All students are encouraged and supported to take the IB Diploma in our non-selective programme.

Programmes and Curriculum

The School chose to partner with the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) in the 1990s because of the close philosophical alignment of the two organisations. The IBO is committed to “develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.”

UNIS Hanoi chose the IBO to deliver a programme reflecting the School’s Mission and Guiding Principles, and became the first IB World School in Asia using the three IB programmes; Primary Years (PYP), Middle Years (MYP) and Diploma Programmes (DP).

Many elements in all three programmes, closely align with the principles of the UN. For example, the PYP Unit of Inquiry, “Sharing the Planet”, the global context of “Globalization and Sustainability” for MYP units, and the framing for Diploma investigations and debate in issues of social, economic, political and cultural challenges.

In addition UNIS Hanoi develops curriculum and makes explicit links when appropriate directly to the work of the United Nations from Elementary School through to the Diploma. For example, in Grade 4 when students are learning the skills of persuasive writing, they are asked to make the case for a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Viet Nam; In Grade 10 Humanities, students study conflict resolution with case studies from UN peacekeeping missions, and in Grade 11 Chemistry the student’s study of energy is contextualized by UN initiatives to double global sustainable energy resources by 2030.

UNIS Hanoi has always used the work of the United Nations, and the challenges it strives against, to set context and provide case studies and problem solving challenges for its students. And with the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015, the commitment has only grown stronger and new curriculum with direct links to the SDGs has been introduced across Elementary, Middle and High School with more initiatives in development.

Service Learning

Service Learning is widely adopted by schools around the world. Rarely is it embedded into the curriculum and mandated for all students as part of the regular learning day as it is at UNIS Hanoi.

“By addressing real and authentic community needs, the Service Learning programme at UNIS Hanoi aims to provide opportunities for our students as individuals, and as part of the UNIS Hanoi community, to gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their community and their world.

Our Service Learning programme aims to provide opportunities for our students to develop the knowledge, skills and outlooks required to play their part in creating a fair, inclusive and cohesive society and to encourage them to drive and inspire sustainable change.”

At UNIS Hanoi our students are engaged in Service Learning at all grade levels ensuring that taking action and service are real and meaningful learning experiences, linked to real issues and situations. And with the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals the School’s Service Learning programme in Middle and High School is now framed, and will be measured, with reference to those 17 goals.

Service is considered essential at UNIS Hanoi and as such is embedded into the curriculum and scheduled for all students in Middle and High School. In Elementary School, service is introduced to the programme through the transdisciplinary units of inquiry.

In addition to the promotion of individual service, UNIS Hanoi has provided service to the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training in its goals to improve its educational programmes; At its request, for more than 15 years we have been providing significant on-campus professional development for Vietnamese Kindergarten teachers through our Early Childhood Education Renovation Programme; more recently a programme to provide swimming lessons and reduce deaths from drowning was created; and sponsorship is provided for Vietnamese teachers to attend the bi-annual Vietnam Tech Conference hosted by UNIS Hanoi promoting greater use of accessible open source ideas to support national education.

UN Day and Model United Nations

The United Nations, the role it plays and the diverse work it carries out across the globe is an important part of teaching and learning at UNIS Hanoi throughout the year. But on one day every year it is brought to the fore in every classroom and to every student at UNIS Hanoi as part of celebrations to mark UN Day.

UN Day is celebrated across the world by international schools and UN agencies every year. At UNIS Hanoi a more meaningful link between the learning that takes place in the classroom and the work of the UN is forged through a range of activities, often with direct involvement by UN Agencies.

In the 70th anniversary year, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Vietnam Dr Pratibha Mehta, inspired students to action: “One million people, many just like you, helped shape these new set of Sustainable Development Goals to see ‘the world that they want’, to help protect the planet and to make the world a safer, fairer and more just place for everyone.

“If there is any school that can help promote a vision of a world protected from climate change, that is more fair and just, then it is UNIS Hanoi and all of you.”

The Model United Nations at UNIS Hanoi has grown from a group of 30 to more than 100 Middle and High School students in the last five years as the programme has developed. In addition to sending delegations to MUN conferences internationally, UNIS Hanoi hosts annually a three day MUN conference focusing on engaging Vietnamese high schools with more than 200 students from 15 Schools attending in 2015.

In addition the Elementary School has created its own Model United Nations forum, inspired by the Paris Summit in 2015, as a culminating activity for Grade 5 students studying climate change.

Teaching Faculty

“Become an agent for change... and be ready to have the experience change you.”

This has been the faculty recruiting campaign in recent years to emphasis UNIS Hanoi’s commitment to making a difference in the world through education.

UNIS Hanoi has become a destination school for teachers, not only because of its reputation for teaching and learning, but also because of the direct link to the mission and vision of the United Nations and the desire in teachers to be connected directly with its work. In 2015 the School’s connection to the United Nations became the most highly rated influencing factor for our new teachers in choosing to apply for a position at UNIS Hanoi.

UNIS Hanoi is a community of learners committed to making a difference in the world, and furthering the work of the United Nations through the education of young people.

A Changing World

The Memorandum of Understanding established UNIS Hanoi to serve the “children of the international community in Viet Nam and for Vietnamese children if desired and requested by the Government.”

The School Constitution states the School’s purpose “is to promote and provide an international education conforming to the spirit and principles of the United Nations for the children of persons officially connected with the United Nations, as well as for the children of the expatriate community and other persons desirous of obtaining a similar education for their children.”

The first class in 1988 was made up of students from the United Nations (3), Embassies (6) and the Private Sector (2).

As the School grew, admissions policy was established by the Board to ensure that families prioritised in the Memorandum of Understanding and the Constitution could secure places (*see section 5: Practical Partnership*) and the School has remained committed to being the most inclusive School it can be with a nationality policy adopted to ensure we remain truly international, and a Scholarship Programme to help with socio-economic diversity.

For the start of the 2016-2017 school year a record 1,123 students enrolled at UNIS Hanoi. The School has grown both in numbers and in its campus size, and although the proportions have shifted with the changing terrain of the Vietnamese economy, UNIS Hanoi still serves families from UN agencies, diplomatic missions and the private sector.

The demographic shifts of our learning community reflect the steady economic growth of Viet Nam in recent years, with one of the fastest per capita GDP growths in the world (averaging 6.4 percent per year in the 2000s) and with Foreign Direct Investment up year on year for the last five, topping \$4BN USD in the first quarter of 2016.

Increasingly our identity as a United Nations International School is not defined by the community we serve, but through our ambitions as educators to shape the next generations and contribute to creating a better world. Our commitment to bring the world together on one campus to deliver our Mission and strive for our Vision has grown stronger over the decades. And today, with a diversity policy in place to ensure international representation, UNIS Hanoi is proud to welcome students from more than 65 UN member states and help shape those futures.

In addition UNIS Hanoi is proud to continue to provide an international education for Vietnamese families in a country facing so much fast change and to build capacity for the country’s future. It was this investment in our host country’s future that also inspired the UNIS Hanoi Board to establish a scholarship programme, enabling some of the country’s most talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to a UNIS Hanoi education.

A Valuable Partnership

In 1988 the international diplomatic community requested that the United Nations establish an international school in Hanoi to support the development of Viet Nam.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Ministry of Education and a start up loan of 75,000 USD was made available by UNDP and UNICEF with UN HQ approval. The Head of School at UNIS NY, Joe Blaney, was instrumental in establishing the Hanoi school premises and furnishing resources, including the secondment of a UNIS NY teacher to become the first Head of School, Dr Alice Ann Winter. The Vietnamese government granted tax exemption and the right to charge fees and to fundraise for the School, and the first teachers, hired through the UNDP were afforded comparable status to UN Agency workers.

A governance structure for the new school was established, which has been amended over the decades, but has always included Board members appointed and/or approved by the UN Resident Coordinator for Vietnam as an important part of the structure. Today the UN Resident Coordinator in Viet Nam remains the highest authority for the School, appoints the three UN Board members, ratifies all Board appointments and reserves the right of school dissolution and the right of veto for constitutional amendments which might affect the UN nature of the School.

Since its pioneering early days, UNIS Hanoi has repaid its start up loan and become a financially independent non-profit institution. It has become a school at the forefront of international education and as such plays a significant role in the UN's ability to attract the highest quality talent for its programmes in Viet Nam.

As one of only two UN International schools, UNIS Hanoi can also be considered a point of pride for the UN in Viet Nam. A success story in its mission to ensure the relevance of the United Nations with young people and to provide an outstanding legacy of the UN's investment in Viet Nam.

The School has retained admissions priority for its founding UN and diplomatic community members, with a policy explicitly stating: "Priority is given in the following order to: 1) families working for the United Nations and in the diplomatic corps, Scholarship Students and UNIS Hanoi faculty children; 2) Siblings of enrolled students 3) Returning Alumni students; 4) expatriate families temporarily resident in Hanoi."

And the School retains operational benefits afforded to it by the Vietnamese Government due to its status under the auspices of the United Nations including; tax, visa and work permit benefits; not-for-profit legal framework and the right to fundraise; use of the UN logo and the support of the UN Resident Coordinator for Viet Nam.