

About Accreditation: Frequently Asked Questions

Northern Palms Charter High School is committed to providing students and families with clear and accurate information about accreditation, our status as a Florida public charter school, and the requirements for earning a standard high school diploma.

Is Northern Palms Charter High School currently accredited?

No. Northern Palms Charter High School is not currently accredited by an institutional accrediting organization.

Accreditation is a voluntary external review process conducted by independent accrediting organizations. It is separate from Northern Palms Charter High School's authorization and status as a Florida public charter school.

Our current accreditation status is also disclosed separately in our official **Accreditation Status Notice**, consistent with the School's charter requirements. The charter contract specifically requires the school's accreditation status to be made publicly available on its website.

If Northern Palms is not accredited, is it still a Florida public school?

Yes.

Northern Palms Charter High School is a Florida public charter high school authorized by **The School Board of Lee County, Florida.**

Florida law expressly provides:

"All charter schools in Florida are public schools and shall be part of the state's program of public education." **Fla. Stat. §1002.33(1)**

Northern Palms' original charter contract likewise recognizes the School Board of Lee County's authority under **§1002.33** to grant the charter and establishes the charter contract as the authority under which the school operates.

Does accreditation determine whether a Northern Palms student can earn a Florida standard high school diploma?

No. Florida law establishes the requirements a student must satisfy to earn a standard high school diploma.

For Florida public-school students, standard diploma requirements are governed by applicable Florida law, including **Fla. Stat. §1003.4282** and, for students using the 18-credit ACCEL option **Fla. Stat. §1002.3105(5).**

Florida law provides that a student who earns the required cumulative **2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale** and meets the applicable requirements of §1003.4282 or §1002.3105(5) **"shall be awarded a standard high school diploma."** Fla. Stat. §1003.4282(5)(a).

Students must therefore satisfy all graduation requirements applicable to their individual graduation plan, including required credits, courses, statewide assessment requirements, GPA requirements, and applicable Sponsor requirements.

Does Northern Palms issue a different type of diploma because the school is not accredited?

No. A student's graduation eligibility is determined by satisfaction of the applicable requirements for a Florida standard high school diploma.

Northern Palms' institutional accreditation status does not create a separate category of diploma under Florida's public-school graduation framework. Florida law establishes the requirements for the **standard high school diploma**, and Northern Palms students must satisfy those applicable requirements before being awarded one.

Was Northern Palms modeled after an accredited school?

Yes. This history is documented in Northern Palms' original charter application.

Northern Palms Charter High School was developed using the educational model of **City of Palms Charter High School**, an alternative charter high school that was already operating in Lee County.

The Northern Palms charter application described City of Palms as an **"identically focused alternative charter high school"** and explained that it had been operating in Lee County for eight years when Northern Palms application was submitted. The application also documented that City of Palms was accredited at that time.

Northern Palms was therefore developed from an established public-charter educational model. However, Northern Palms is its **own charter school**, and City of Palms' historical accreditation did not constitute institutional accreditation of Northern Palms.

We make that distinction clear so families receive accurate information about both the history of our educational model and Northern Palms' own accreditation status.

Has Northern Palms always intended to provide students with a recognized high school diploma?

Yes. That purpose is documented in the school's original charter materials.

From its inception, Northern Palms' approved charter application described its educational mission in terms of helping students complete high school and earn a **state-recognized diploma**. The school's educational model focuses particularly on students who are behind on credits, have previously struggled in a traditional high-school environment, or need an alternative pathway for completing their secondary education.

What is the difference between accreditation and charter authorization?

They serve different purposes.

Charter authorization establishes Northern Palms as a Florida public charter school operating under its charter and applicable Florida law. The School Board of Lee County serves as Northern Palms' Sponsor/Authorizer.

Institutional accreditation is an external review or recognition provided by an independent accrediting organization.

One does not transform into the other. Northern Palms is transparent that it is **not currently institutionally accredited**, while it continues to operate as an authorized Florida public charter school.

Who determines whether a Northern Palms student has met graduation requirements?

The school must determine whether each student has satisfied the graduation requirements applicable to that student.

Florida charter-school statute specifically requires a secondary charter school's charter to provide a method for determining whether a student has satisfied applicable graduation requirements under §1002.3105(5), §1003.4281, or §1003.4282.

Northern Palms also operates subject to its charter obligations and applicable Sponsor requirements.

That is why students' individual records, credits, GPA, assessment results, transfer credits, and other applicable graduation requirements are reviewed before graduation.

Does Northern Palms offer the same graduation pathway to every student?

Northern Palms currently offers students the **24-credit standard diploma program** and the **18-credit ACCEL option**, when applicable to the student's individual graduation plan.

The requirements differ between these pathways, and requirements can also depend on factors such as the year the student entered Grade 9, transfer history, assessment history and individual circumstances.

Students and families should work with the school's counselor or registrar to confirm the requirements applicable to their individual graduation plan.

Will every college, employer, military program, or other organization accept Northern Palms diploma?

No school should promise universal acceptance by every third party.

Colleges and universities, employers, military programs, scholarship providers, licensing organizations, athletic organizations, and other third parties may establish their own admission, transfer-credit, eligibility, documentation, or accreditation-related policies.

For that reason, students considering a particular college, career program, military pathway, scholarship, license, or other postsecondary opportunity should verify that organization's requirements directly.

The school **can** provide academic records and information about the student's educational program to assist families with that process.

Does being unaccredited mean Northern Palms is an unregulated private diploma program? No.

Northern Palms is a **Florida public charter school**, not an independent private diploma provider.

Florida law expressly places charter schools within the state's program of public education. Charter schools operate under their charters and remain subject to statutes specifically applicable to charter schools, as well as specified public-school requirements including Florida's student assessment and school accountability framework. Fla. Stat. §1002.33(1), (16).

This distinction is important when evaluating information online about "unaccredited schools," because information concerning private schools, homeschool diploma providers, or other private educational organizations may involve a different legal framework than the one governing a Florida public charter school.

What should families take away from Northern Palms' accreditation status?

We believe transparency is important.

Northern Palms Charter High School is not currently institutionally accredited. Northern Palms is an authorized Florida public charter high school sponsored by The School Board of Lee County, Florida.

Students earn a standard high school diploma by satisfying the applicable Florida statutory graduation requirements and applicable Sponsor requirements – not merely by attending the school. Florida law establishes the requirements governing the standard diploma.

Families with questions about an individual student's graduation plan should contact the school counselor or registrar. Families with questions about whether a particular college, employer, military program, scholarship licensing organization, or other third party has its own accreditation-related eligibility requirements should contact that organization directly.