

Your Dubai offer, decoded

Nine checks before you sign, and the three asks that actually move money. Written for British expats moving to the UAE.

Start here. A UAE offer is not one number. Only the **basic salary** line builds your end-of-service gratuity — every allowance below it earns you nothing when you leave. Two offers paying the same each month can differ by tens of thousands of dirhams on the way out.

The nine checks

1 What percentage is basic salary?

Aim for at least 50%. Gratuity is calculated on basic pay alone. Many UAE offers set basic at 35–40% — perfectly legal, and it costs you.

2 Is housing paid monthly or annually in advance?

Dubai landlords still expect rent in one or a small number of cheques. A monthly housing allowance and an annual rent demand is the most common cash-flow shock a new arrival hits.

3 Are school fees capped per child or per family?

Get the number in writing, not the intention. A family cap across two children is a very different offer from a per-child cap.

4 Does the offer match the contract that gets registered?

The signed offer and the contract lodged with the authorities should say the same thing. If the registered basic is lower, your gratuity is worked out on the lower figure.

5 What are the notice periods — both ways?

A long notice you owe and a short one they owe is a one-sided contract. Probation cannot exceed six months and cannot be extended.

6 What happens to the visa if you resign?

Your residence visa is tied to employment. Establish the grace period and who cancels what.

7 Are flights cash or booked, and for how many people?

“Family” sometimes means the employee only.

8 Does medical cover extend to a spouse and children?

Cover is mandatory for the employee. Everything beyond that is negotiable and often is not offered until you ask.

9 Is the non-compete limited in time, place and type of work?

A restriction with no stated limits is a warning about how the rest of the relationship will be run.

The basic-salary trap, in numbers

Two offers. Both AED 30,000 a month. Identical cash in your account. Not identical at all when you leave, because gratuity is 21 days of *basic* pay for each of your first five years.

After three years	Offer A — basic 30%	Offer B — basic 60%
Basic salary	AED 9,000/mo	AED 18,000/mo
Days of basic earned	63	63

Gratuity	AED 18,900	AED 37,800
After five years	AED 31,500	AED 63,000

Same monthly money. Double the exit payment. That is the whole argument for moving money from allowances into basic before you sign — and it costs your employer nothing per month.

The three asks that move money

1. Raise the basic, hold the total

“Could we set basic at 50% of the package rather than 40%, keeping the total unchanged? It makes no difference to your monthly cost and it matters to my end-of-service position.”

2. Match housing to the area

“Two-bed rents in that area run around AED [X] a year. The allowance covers AED [Y]. Could we close the gap, or is a one-off relocation payment easier?”

3. Put school fees in writing, per child

“Could the offer state education support as up to AED [X] per child per year, for two children?”

Ask before you sign. Afterwards, every one of these becomes a favour rather than a term.

Red flags

- No written offer — a verbal package is not a package.
- Basic below 40% of the total.
- “Housing to be discussed” — the largest allowance should not be the vaguest line.
- School fees promised in conversation. The most expensive verbal promise there is.
- A non-compete with no stated time, place or type of work.
- Any request that you fund your own recruitment or permit costs — query it in writing before you sign.

Run your own numbers. The gratuity and take-home calculator is at payslipiq-ae-pro.vercel.app/salary-tax-calculator, the offer decoder at [/decode-job-offer](#), and the UK-versus-UAE comparison at [/relocation-cost-calculator](#). All free, all in your browser, nothing stored. Questions: WhatsApp **+44 7944 014111**.

Sources: UAE Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 on the Regulation of Labour Relations (uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/1541); u.ae guidance on private-sector employment contracts and end-of-service benefits; MOHRE. Figures are educational estimates. Your entitlement depends on your contract, your registered basic salary, unpaid absence, lawful deductions and your zone. This document is not legal, immigration or employment advice — take advice on any contract that matters.