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| Effective From  | AY 2024/25 (Fall term) |
| Compliance From | AY 2025/26 (Fall term) |

## SCHOOL POLICY

on

# CURRICULUM



### Introduction

All schools in Abu Dhabi must ensure that students have a right to a broad, balanced, creative, and inclusive curriculum which promotes learning and personal growth and development for all children. A school's curriculum needs to follow a formal learning pathway aligned to national and international standards supported by extracurricular activities and enrichment programs which nurtures a holistic and balanced development of the student.

This policy sets out the requirements and standards to support schools in their delivery of a high-quality curriculum which strengthens students' knowledge and skills and strives for pedagogical excellence.

### Purpose

- Outline the curriculum requirements and their standards to provide students with a high-quality education, making them independent and collaborative learners to reach their full potential.
- Ensure curricular choices and cross-curricular links are provided for meaningful and authentic learning experiences required to achieve world-class standards.
- Define the requirements for the compulsory “core” subjects and the rationale behind the curriculum development of schools.
- Enable all students, throughout the curriculum, to develop broad understanding of and respect for the UAE culture and national identity to acquire necessary skills and values that will contribute to nation building and meeting national priorities.
- Specify structured progression within the curriculum to ensure a stimulating and challenging program of learning and development for all students.

## Definitions

|                                    |   |
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| <b>Academic Plan</b>               | A plan which sets out the academic focus of the school including: the mission, vision, core values, goals, quality teaching and classroom instructional methods, materials, curriculum (content, concepts, and skills), timetables, policies, procedures, and accreditation, authorization and/or affiliation plans.  |
| <b>Accreditation</b>               | A quality assurance process, based on a time-bound cycle of continuous improvement against rigorous standards. Schools are evaluated and verified by an external body to determine whether defined standards are met.   |
| <b>Additional Learning Needs</b>   | <p>Individual requirements for additional support, modifications, or accommodations within a school setting on a permanent or temporary basis in response to a specific context. This applies to any support required by students of determination and those who have special educational needs and/or additional barriers to learning, access, or interaction in that specific context (e.g., dyslexic, hearing or visually impaired, twice exceptional, or gifted and/or talented).</p> <p>For example, a student with restricted mobility may require lesson accommodations to participate in Physical Education and building accommodations to access facilities but may not require any accommodations in assessments. Equally, a student with hearing impairment may require adaptive and assistive technology to access content in class and may also require physical accommodations (e.g., sit in the front of the class to be able to lip read) to access learning.</p> |
| <b>Affiliation</b>                 | A school's association with an external body whereby they are approved to offer specific external exams (e.g., Cambridge Education, CBSE, Kerala, etc.).  |
| <b>Attainment</b>                  | The academic content standards that students reach on assessments and/or exams. It is typically recorded as grades, scores, or levels, and indicates a student's achievement result at a point in time in a grade/year level.   |
| <b>Compulsory Subjects/Courses</b> | Mandatory subjects/courses required for successful completion of a grade/year level.  |
| <b>Course</b>                      | Organized units of study for a subject that is recognized by a school for meeting an educational requirement.   |
| <b>Cross-Curricular</b>            | Involves an intentional effort to apply knowledge, skills, and/or concepts to more than one academic subject simultaneously. The subjects may be related through a central theme, project, problem, process, topic, vocabulary, and/or experience. Cross-curricular learning recognizes multiple viewpoints and seeks to build more knowledgeable and transferable understanding of content and skills.   |

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| <b>Curricular</b>                       | Relates to all subjects comprising a course of study in a school.   |
| <b>Curriculum</b>                       | The intended, enacted, assessed, and learned academic content based on national standards of the relevant Department/Ministry of Education facilitated in a school. Curriculum typically refers to the academic content, concepts, and skills students are expected to master. This includes the learning standards or learning objectives and the instructional materials used to deliver the academic content within a defined period of time.              |
| <b>Curriculum Map</b>                   | A description of the horizontal and vertical plan for a subject's education standards/outcomes, skills, and concepts, and the resources that a teacher uses to address those standards in the classroom during the academic year for all grade/year levels. Curriculum mapping — the process of making a curriculum map — is a procedure for collecting and maintaining an operational database of the curriculum in the school.                              |
| <b>Educational Program</b>              | Teaching and learning framework organized to achieve pre-determined learning objectives/criteria or accomplish a specific set of educational tasks over a sustained period. A program may have major components not normally characterized as courses, units, or modules.   |
| <b>Equivalency</b>                      | The process by which the UAE Ministry of Education officially endorses a secondary school certificate and declares it to be equivalent to the UAE General Education Certificate (Al Thanawiya), as per relevant ministerial decrees and their amendments.   |
| <b>Examination Center</b>               | A location that provides the opportunity for students to undertake board/pre-collegiate exams (e.g., ACT, AP, CBSE, EmSAT, IB DP/IB CP, GCSE/IGCSE, AS/A Level, SAT).   |
| <b>Extracurricular Activities (ECA)</b> | Organized activities that students can participate in that are usually external to the school curriculum (but may be connected to it). Activities can be scientific, athletic, cultural, intellectual, philanthropic, and/or social in nature, and include, but are not limited to sports teams, clubs, private sports lessons, competitions, performances, recreational activities, field trips and overseas travel, as well as activities hosted virtually. |
| <b>IB Authorization</b>                 | An extensive approval process to offer one or more of the four programs of the International Baccalaureate (IB) educational framework based on the IB standards, practices, and a commitment to the IB mission and philosophy based on a time-bound cycle.  |
| <b>Learning Pathways</b>                | Specific courses/subjects and learning experiences tailored to meet individual student interests, abilities, and/or aspirations as they progress in their education toward graduation.  |

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| <b>Multilingual Learners</b>   | Students who are acquiring the language of instruction and require additional support to address any language barrier to access and attainment.   |
| <b>Progress</b>                | The student's longitudinal achievement over a designated period of time which can be represented year-on-year, or within a term, curricular unit, or lesson in school. Progress marks the difference between a student's previous attainment and current attainment. When measuring a student's progress, the results take into account the progress made in comparison to a norm group with similar starting points over the designated time period.       |
| <b>Progression of learning</b> | An increase in the level of difficulty and acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies over time. The complexity in the learning increases with the level of skill and knowledge transfer.   |
| <b>Scope and Sequence</b>      | Scope is the breadth and depth of the curriculum of any course or grade level identified as topics, learning experiences, activities, organizing integrative threads, content, and skills which constitutes the scope of the curriculum for that course or grade level.<br>Sequence is accomplished in a variety of ways, including arranging the order of the content and skills to ensure that prerequisite learning is mastered prior to the next level. |
| <b>Subject</b>                 | A field or branch of study comprised of knowledge and skills within a specific discipline (e.g., Arabic, Mathematics, Science, English, Social Sciences, Arts)  |
| <b>Units of Instruction</b>    | A well-defined portion of an instructional course, centering on a single topic or cluster of learning outcomes and skills for the planned, taught, and assessed curriculum.   |
| <b>Yearly Overview</b>         | Represents a curriculum map for one subject, in one grade level, over one academic year.  |

## Policy

### 1. Academic Plan

- 1.1 Requirements: Schools shall develop and implement their academic plan which should include the following at a minimum:
1. A clear rationale underpinning the school's ADEK-licensed curriculum that is aligned with the mission, vision, and values of the school, the Emirate, and the UAE.
  2. Details of the language(s) of instruction in which subjects/courses will be delivered.
  3. A commitment to the delivery of teaching and learning through high academic content standards/learning outcomes, with a focus on pedagogical excellence and innovation.
  4. Alignment of the educational program (e.g., Cambridge International Examinations, IB Program) to the licensed standards/learning outcomes.
  5. Implementation of internal and external assessments relevant to the curriculum, as per the [ADEK School Assessment Policy](#).
  6. Plans to academically prepare Cycle 3 students to meet equivalency requirements including:
    - a. Course Offerings: (e.g., program of study, catalog/description guide) with required core subjects and elective courses with associated credit hours (if applicable).
    - b. Course Syllabi: Each syllabus shall include course requirements, course description, course units (including learning outcomes/objectives, principles, concepts, skills, activities, assessments, and digital/textbook resources), other resources, learning outcomes/objectives, instructional time, grading criteria, and pre-requisites.
  7. A curriculum design and adaptations to meet the needs of students with a wide range of abilities, including students with additional learning needs and multilingual learners as per the [ADEK School Inclusion Policy](#).
  8. The provision of academic support, interventions, and guidance as appropriate for each student.
  9. Adherence to the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) compulsory subjects with details pertaining to the promotion of the Arabic language and UAE culture and national identity.

### 2. Curriculum Requirements

- 2.1 Approved Curriculum: Schools shall seek and obtain approval for their curriculum from ADEK, in line with the relevant UAE Ministry of Education requirements for curriculum adoption and equivalency (as issued in the relevant ministerial resolutions and

amendments for the applicable year). The approved curriculum shall fulfill all the requirements of the school's licensed curricula, their national statutory requirements, and applicable standards.

- 2.2 Provision of Curricular Choices: Schools shall adopt a curriculum, where appropriate and in line with the requirements of their approved curriculum (see [Section 2.1 Approved Curriculum](#)), that offers a wide range of curricular options that interest multidisciplinary groups of students of differing ages, cultures, and ability levels with extensive multidisciplinary choices and opportunities for students to benefit from learning experiences that nurture their talents, interests, and aspirations.
- 2.3 Provision of Curricular Pathways Leading Towards Nationally and Internationally Recognized Qualifications: Schools shall ensure that their curriculum programs, courses, syllabi, and activities promote challenge, relevance, opportunity, and choice for all students. The curriculum shall include creative, physical, and practical experiences to strengthen knowledge and skills relevant to the career choices of students, both nationally and internationally.

### 3. Curriculum Design and Implementation

- 3.1 Curriculum Design: Schools shall include the following when designing their curriculum:
  1. A vertically (across grade level) and horizontally (within grade level) aligned progression of learning with a set of learning outcomes clarifying what students are expected to know, understand, and be able to do in every cycle, aligned to standardized benchmark and international assessment frameworks. This is evidenced by the school's scope and sequence, yearly overviews, and/or curriculum map.
  2. Continuity, referring to a "spiral" curriculum with repetition of selected content at subsequent levels, each time at an increased level of complexity. This is evidenced by recurring and continuing opportunities for essential skills to be practiced, developed, and understood.
  3. A range of subjects, specific educational units of instruction with rigorous, coherent, and relevant assessments aligned to grade level learning outcomes.
  4. A listing of learning resources (digital or textbook) and the rationale for how the resources will be utilized to support learning.
  5. Identification of how academic progress and attainment will be assessed, monitored, supported, and recorded as learning outcomes are mastered.
  6. Minimum time requirements for the subjects/courses, and relevant activities.
  7. Identification of compulsory subjects/courses and optional or elective subjects/ courses.
  8. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's planned, taught, and assessed curriculum.

- 3.2** Integration of UAE National Priorities: Schools shall offer a curriculum that provides students with world-class standards in education while fostering UAE culture and national identity. This shall be achieved through focusing on high-quality teaching that is mindful of cultural values and national identity and promotion of the Arabic curriculum, in line with MoE compulsory subjects.
- 3.3** Breadth and Balance: Schools shall provide an inclusive learning environment encompassing a breadth and depth of study, with the flexibility of learning pathways, choice, and maximum opportunities for learners.
- 3.4** Cross-Curricular Links: Schools shall ensure that the integration across subjects and cross-curricular links are meaningful, innovative, aligned, and planned purposefully.
- 3.5** Enhancements: The curriculum shall enhance the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, including character, collaboration, communication, analysis, synthesis, critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, innovation, transferable life skills, and growth mindset, to explore the curriculum across planned programs, including the adoption of a positive school environment as per the [ADEK School Student Behavior Policy](#) and values such as teamwork, integrity, transparency, innovation, etc. as per the [ADEK School Values and Ethics Policy](#) and the [ADEK School Cultural Consideration Policy](#).
- 3.6** Promotion of Academic and Social and Emotional Learning Skills: The curriculum shall promote higher-level thinking skills, (e.g., critical thinking, mental flexibility) along with creativity, positive attitudes, strong ethics, self-management, and adaptability, as per the [ADEK School Wellbeing Policy](#).
- 3.7** Promotion of Holistic Student Wellbeing: Schools shall promote awareness of their wellbeing strategy and associated wellbeing policies and integrate aspects of an overarching positive behavior model, safe and healthy eating practices, mindfulness, social and emotional learning, including emotional regulation and resilience, etc., as per the [ADEK School Wellbeing Policy](#).
- 3.8** Sustainability Principles: Schools shall integrate sustainability principles into the curriculum across all grades that address the school's goals and vision to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and those of the Abu Dhabi Environmental Agency and other relevant entities (e.g., Abu Dhabi Agricultural and Food Safety Authority, Department of Energy), as per the [ADEK School Sustainability Policy](#).
- 3.9** Continuity, Transition, Review, and Equivalency: Schools shall ensure that:
- 1.** The curriculum prepares students through the provision of opportunities for success in their next level of education and future careers.
  - 2.** Where students are seeking to transfer between curricula, parents are aware of the impact of changing curricula and the potential challenges that may arise from a break in the continuity and progression of learning.
  - 3.** Seeking Equivalency (Al Thanawiya)/Qualifying for Graduation: In instances where UAE National students are enrolled in a curriculum or framework that relies heavily on high-stakes exams and should fail such exams, these students shall successfully complete a series of compulsory subjects and courses as measured by a continuous assessment system, to be able to

qualify for graduation through seeking equivalency for the UAE's General Education Certificate (Al Thanawiya), subject to meeting the standards. The school shall communicate this, as appropriate, to both students and parents.

4. The curriculum shall be broad and balanced for structured progression of learning within and across all subjects so that students progress through a structured scope and sequence of learning outcomes.
5. The curriculum shall be evaluated annually and reviewed to reflect the range, quality, and impact of the curriculum on students' academic outcomes and personal wellbeing. Adjustments shall be made as needed.

### 3.10 Resources: Schools shall ensure that:

1. The Principal is responsible for making sure that a Resource Selection Committee has been established and that all textbooks and other learning resources in use have been vetted in line with the [ADEK School Cultural Consideration Policy](#).
2. High-quality materials are aligned to learning outcomes/standards at the targeted grade levels.
3. Additional teaching and learning resources are utilized to support and enrich the teaching of all subjects.

### 3.11 Topics in the Approved Curriculum: The school shall ensure that potentially controversial topics are addressed in the manner outlined in the [ADEK School Cultural Consideration Policy](#).

## 4. Licensing and Declaration of Programs (e.g., BTEC, IBCP, MYP, PYP)

### 4.1 Initial Licensing and Adding/Amending/Canceling Curricula

1. For any new school completing the Temporary License application, ADEK requires the school's curriculum to clearly outline the academic plan with details of student learning outcomes at every cycle of the educational process, as per the [ADEK School Licensing Policy](#).
2. ADEK reserves the right to:
  - a. Provide additional guidance to new school owners on changes to the proposed curriculum that ADEK will require before a Temporary License is granted.
  - b. Specify improvements to the curriculum that will be required for the school's continuing operation through the ongoing licensing and inspection processes for existing schools.
3. During the licensing evaluation process, for academic plans that are derived from curricula based on international curriculum, ADEK requires evidence that such curricula are in alignment with the curriculum standards and requirements applicable to those countries.



4. Schools shall provide evidence of curriculum or framework accreditation/affiliation/authorization by the relevant body. This evidence is considered when successfully granting and renewing a license.
5. Schools shall seek approval from ADEK through the licensing process when proposing significant changes to their curriculum.
  - a. The proposed changes must comply with the approved curriculum and its requirements.
  - b. “Significant changes” include, but are not limited to, the addition, cancellation, or amendment of any subjects and/or courses, and changes to the syllabus and examinations.

## 5. Accreditation

- 5.1 Accreditation, Authorization, and Affiliation (AAA): Schools shall obtain the relevant accreditation, authorization, or affiliation as per the requirements of each curriculum, as indicated in Figure 1. AAA Requirements by Curriculum.

Figure 1. AAA Requirements by Curriculum

| Curriculum                          | Accreditation  | Authorization  | Affiliation* |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
|                                     | Cycles 1, 2, 3 | Cycles 1/ 2/ 3 | Cycle 3      |
| American (PK-12)                    | !              |                | !            |
| British                             | !              |                | !            |
| Canadian – Alberta and Nova Scotia  | !              |                | !            |
| International Baccalaureate Program | !              | !              |              |
| MOE                                 | !              |                |              |
| SABIS                               | !              |                | !            |
| Other (i.e., Indian, French etc.)   |                |                | !            |

! Required

\* Board/country requirements may vary.

1. Exemption Criteria: The following types of schools are exempt from seeking accreditation, authorization, and affiliation:
    - a. Schools that report losses (<0% EBITDA) in the previous year (to be assessed on a case-by-case basis).
    - b. New schools or schools that switch to a new curriculum will be given a grace period of 2 years.
- 5.2 Enhanced Quality Assurance: Schools that have authorization and/or affiliation for a curriculum that does not require accreditation shall additionally seek accreditation from the relevant approved and/or recommended accreditation bodies as per [Figure 1. AAA Requirements by Curriculum](#).

## 6. Enrichment

6.1 **Extracurricular Activities:** Schools shall offer a wide and varied range of extracurricular activities that complement and enrich the formal curriculum to enhance the students' academic and personal development, as per the [ADEK School Extracurricular Activities and Events Policy](#).

1. Schools shall also ensure that the extracurricular activities include a wide range of social, cultural, scientific, athletic, intellectual, artistic, and/or philanthropic enrichment programs, in line with the [ADEK School Extracurricular Activities and Events Policy](#), across all cycles to ensure opportunity, access, and participation by all students.

6.2 **Creativity, Innovation, and Enterprise:** Schools shall ensure that the curriculum embeds opportunities and activities for enterprise, innovation (e.g., using Artificial Intelligence driven tools), social contribution, and creativity to motivate and inspire students to gain a well-rounded education and to aspire to contribute to the development of their society.

## 7. Adaptation for All Student Groups

7.1 **Accommodations:** Schools shall accommodate and cater to the educational needs of all students (see [Section 1.1.7](#)).

7.2 **ADEK Compulsory MoE Subjects:** All schools shall teach compulsory subjects as per the MoE requirements.

7.3 **Minimum Instruction Time for Compulsory MoE Subjects:** All schools shall teach the minimum time for compulsory subjects consistent with the MoE requirements.

7.4 **Non-exemption from ADEK Compulsory MoE Subjects:** Exemptions from the requirements of teaching ADEK compulsory MoE subjects are not authorized. Schools shall make adjustments and provide support and resources to accommodate all students' needs to meet the equivalency requirements of the UAE General Education Certificate (Al Thanawiya).

## 8. Compliance

8.1 This policy shall be effective as of the Academic Year 2024/25 (Fall term). Schools are expected to be fully compliant with this policy by the start of the Academic Year 2025/26 (Fall term).

8.2 Failure to comply with this policy shall be subject to legal accountability and the penalties stipulated in accordance with the ADEK's regulations, policies, and requirements, notwithstanding any other penalties imposed by Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments or any other relevant law. Concerning the Penal Code or any other relevant law. ADEK reserves the right to intervene if the school is found to be in violation of its obligations.

## References

- Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments

### Publication

2024 (September) ADEK\_School\_Curriculum Policy\_v1.1

Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

This policy applies to Private and Charter Schools. However, any circular issued prior to this policy or issued specifically for Charter Schools thereafter supersedes the requirements of this policy.

Past version:

2024 (January) ADEK\_School\_Curriculum Policy\_v1.0

