



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

SCHOOL POLICY

on

LICENSING



Introduction

Any natural person (individual) or legal person (company) seeking to open and run a school in Abu Dhabi must acquire an ADEK license for this purpose. This policy sets out the types of licenses that are available to schools, the conditions for obtaining these licenses, and procedures by which these licenses may be obtained, renewed, or amended.

Purpose

- Set out ADEK's requirements in relation to compulsory licensing for the establishment and operation of schools.
- Define the types of licenses available for schools.
- Set out the procedures for obtaining, renewing, and amending school licenses.

Definitions

Academic Plan	A plan explaining the pedagogical focus and academic arrangements of the proposed school, including the grade levels, curricula, examination boards (if applicable), number of classes, capacity, staffing, and any other information specified in the <i>ADEK Licensing Guide</i> .
Financial Plan	A plan explaining the expected capital expenditure and operational expenses of the school for the first 10 years of its operation and the means through which these will be met, prepared in line with the requirements specified in the <i>ADEK Licensing Guide</i> .
General License	The license awarded to a school by ADEK upon satisfactory completion of a Temporary License period. The General License has a validity of 2 years.
Provisional License Letter (PLL)	A letter awarded to any natural or legal person (i.e., a company) wishing to establish a school as part of the first stage of the licensing process. The letter is a supporting document required to obtain the initial licenses/certificates from other government entities.
Temporary License	The license awarded to a new school following a PLL and prior to a General License.



Policy

1. Compulsory Licensing

1.1 Any natural or legal person (i.e., a company) wishing to establish or operate a school shall obtain a license from ADEK in line with the requirements of this policy. No school shall be constructed or operated without a license.

1. Licensing Process: The licensing process for the establishment of a new school has three stages.
 - a. Issuance of a Provisional License Letter (PLL) (see [Section 5. Provisional License Letter](#))
 - b. Issuance of a Temporary License and No Objection Certificate (see [Section 6. Temporary License and No Objection Certificate](#))
 - c. Issuance of a General License (see [Section 7. General License](#))
2. Applicants for a license shall refer to the *ADEK Licensing Guide* for further details regarding the licensing process.

1.2 License Fees: License applicants shall pay all stipulated licensing fees.

2. Gender Status

2.1 Schools shall apply for one of the following gender statuses, as part of the licensing process, in line with the [ADEK School Coeducation Policy](#):

1. Coeducational School: Schools that provide education to students of both genders in a mixed environment on a single campus.
2. Shared School: Schools that provide education to students who are segregated by gender but share facilities.
3. Single-Gendered School: Schools that provide education to a single gender of students.

2.2 Schools are authorized to have different gender arrangements for different grades. Such schools are subject to the requirements of the [ADEK School Coeducation Policy](#).

1. Regardless of their gender status, schools are authorized to be coeducational up to and including Grade 4/Year 5.
2. In case of any other circumstances where the gender arrangement differs by grade, the license application shall state the proposed gender arrangement for each grade.

3. Use of Buildings and/or Land

3.1 Schools shall operate on one of the following types of buildings and/or land:

1. Government buildings and/or land allocated to schools by ADEK through lease contracts.
2. Private buildings and/or land owned by the license applicant.
3. Private third-party buildings and/or land (e.g., private buildings and/or land rented by the license applicant).

3.2 Land that is designated for educational purposes shall not be used for other purposes (e.g., commercial, residential).

4. Eligibility Criteria

4.1 Any natural or legal person who meets the following conditions shall be eligible to apply for a license, in line with the requirements of Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education:

1. License Applicant Requirements: License applicants shall meet ADEK and relevant government licensing authority requirements including:
 - a. Requirements for leasing government buildings for school operation, where applicable.
 - b. Requirements for operating schools on government-owned land, where applicable.
 - c. Requirements for operating schools on private land and private buildings, where applicable.
2. Financial Conditions: License applicants shall demonstrate that they have the financial capability to fulfil all financial requirements, including those relating to licensing, operations, and construction or lease of appropriate buildings and/or land.
3. Individual Conditions: Applicants who are natural persons are required to:
 - a. Be a UAE National or a citizen of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
 - b. Be aged 25 years or older.
 - c. Be of full legal capacity.
 - d. Have sufficient financial ability to meet all financial requirements to establish and operate a school.
 - e. Have no convictions for a crime carrying a custodial sentence or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or dishonesty unless the said person has been rehabilitated pursuant to the law.
 - f. Any other conditions required by ADEK.

4.2 In the event of the license holder's incapacity, they shall formally entrust their responsibilities and obligations to another natural or legal person by power of attorney or court order to carry out those responsibilities on their behalf.

- 4.3 Where the applicant is a company (i.e., a legal person), it shall appoint a natural person as a representative. This representative shall meet the conditions outlined in [Section 4.1.3 Individual Conditions](#) and shall have the authority to sign documents on behalf of the applicant and shall serve as the primary point of contact between ADEK and the applicant.
- 4.4 The award of PLLs and license renewals shall be subject to the applicant passing a security and background check.

5. Provisional License Letter

- 5.1 Obtaining a PLL: Any natural or legal person wishing to establish a new school shall first obtain a PLL. Applicants shall first communicate with ADEK, register on the ADEK Investor Portal, and obtain the relevant economic license. Applicants shall then complete the PLL application as specified in the *ADEK Licensing Guide*. This includes the submission of the following documents:
 1. Governance Rules
 2. Academic Plan (including an Operational Plan)
 3. Financial Plan
 4. Evidence of financial capability, where applicable (see [Section 5.3 Evidence of Financial Capability](#))
- 5.2 Role of the PLL: Applicants shall submit the PLL as a supporting document to obtain approval from other relevant entities specified in the *ADEK Licensing Guide*. Applicants shall not begin construction until they receive the PLL.
- 5.3 Evidence of Financial Capability: Applicants shall provide a letter from a licensed bank in the UAE as proof of their financial capability to meet the project cost. The letter shall be prepared in line with the requirements of the *ADEK Licensing Guide*.
 1. The letter shall be addressed to ADEK.
 2. The letter shall specify that the financing is unconditional, i.e., it shall not contain any conditions that need to be fulfilled prior to the disbursement of funds by the bank.
- 5.4 Performance Bank Guarantee: Where the proposed school is to be located in buildings and/or on land obtained via a lease contract, the applicant shall provide a performance bank guarantee to ADEK as per the requirements of the *ADEK Licensing Guide*.
 1. The value of the guarantee shall be equal to a percentage of the market value of the asset, as specified in the *ADEK Licensing Guide*.
 2. In the case of a new building construction, the guarantee shall be returned to the applicant upon submission of a building completion certificate to ADEK.

5.5 Validity of the PLL: The PLL shall be valid for 2 years.

1. License applicants are authorized to apply for an extension of the PLL up to two times thereafter. Each extension shall be valid for a period of 1 year.

6. Temporary License and No Objection Certificate

6.1 Temporary License: The applicant shall apply for a Temporary License upon receiving the relevant government approvals for the school buildings. The Temporary License shall be issued when the following conditions have been met, as specified in the *ADEK Licensing Guide*:

1. The submission of relevant documents from other entities.
2. The submission of updated school plans.
3. The registration of the principal and staff corresponding to all mandatory positions specified in the *ADEK School Employment Policy* on the ADEK Private Schools Staff Information System (PASS).

6.2 No Objection Certificate: The applicant shall obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) after the award of the Temporary License. The NOC shall be awarded upon verification of the school's compliance with health and safety standards and other ADEK requirements.

6.3 Schools shall not enroll students in eSIS or commence any operations prior to the award of the Temporary License and the NOC.

6.4 The Temporary License shall be valid for a period of 1 year and renewable annually thereafter until the school undergoes an ADEK Inspection, in line with this policy.

7. General License

7.1 Issuance of General License: Schools that successfully convert their Temporary License shall be issued a General License (see [Section 6.4 Validity of Temporary License and Conversion to General License](#)).

7.2 Validity: The General License shall be valid for a period of 2 years.

7.3 Schools shall commit to adhering to capacity limits approved by ADEK at all times.

8. License Renewals

8.1 Schools shall apply for a license renewal at least 60 days prior to the expiry of their existing license, in line with the process specified in the *ADEK Licensing Guide*.

1. ADEK reserves the right to place any school that consistently receives “Acceptable” or below inspection ratings under Financial, Administrative, and Technical Supervision, in line with the [ADEK School Compliance Policy](#).
2. Schools shall clear all fines or show proof of regular payment for approved fine payment schemes to be eligible for license renewal and any other licensing service.
3. Schools that do not clear fines or make payments per the approved fine payment schemes will be considered delinquent and at risk of licensing holds.

9. License Transfer and Amendment

9.1 Change in Ownership:

1. Holders of a Temporary or General License are authorized to change the ownership/legal entity of the school or to add or remove a partner or partners, subject to ADEK’s approval as per the [ADEK Licensing Guide](#). The transferee and/or any new partner(s) shall fulfil the conditions outlined in [Section 4. Eligibility Criteria](#).
2. PLLs are non-transferable. Holders of a PLL are only authorized to add partner(s), by following the process for a License Amendment.

9.2 License Amendment: Holders of a PLL, Temporary, or General License shall apply for ADEK approval to make any PLL or license amendment. Holders are not authorized to make any corresponding operational changes until the amendment approval is granted by ADEK. Changes that require a license amendment are as follows:

1. Change in ownership/legal entity (i.e., addition or removal of a partner or partners (not applicable to PLL holders; see [Section 8.1 Change in Ownership](#)).
2. Addition to/reduction of grades beyond those already specified in the existing license.
3. Change in the school name, address, or contact details.
4. Change in gender status.
5. Addition/reduction/modification of curricula (not applicable to PLL holders)

9.3 Applications for license transfers and amendments shall be made in line with the procedures specified in the [ADEK Licensing Guide](#).

10. Rejection of Applications

10.1 Rejection of Applications: Applications for licenses that do not meet ADEK’s requirements shall be rejected, and a notification will be sent outlining the reasons for

rejection. Applicants are authorized to submit an amended application within 30 working days from the receipt of this notification.

1. Blackout Period for PLL Re-Applications: PLL applicants are authorized to submit 1 amended application. If the amended application is rejected, they are authorized to submit a new application after 6 months.

11. Appeals

11.1 Appeals: License applicants and holders are authorized to appeal any licensing-related decisions made by ADEK as per the [ADEK School Compliance Policy](#).

1. The reply issued by ADEK in relation to the appeal shall be considered the final decision.

12. Voluntary School Closure

12.1 Temporary Voluntary School Closure: Schools are authorized to temporarily suspend their operations for not less than 1 academic year and up to 3 academic years, subject to approval from ADEK.

1. Schools that are temporarily closed for 1-3 years shall follow requirements set out in the *ADEK Licensing Guide*.
2. Schools that exceed the maximum temporary suspension period of 3 academic years will automatically have their licenses cancelled by ADEK (see [Section 12. License Suspension and Cancellation](#)). Such schools shall reapply for an ADEK License if they wish to operate again.

12.2 Permanent Voluntary School Closure and License Cancellation: Schools are authorized to permanently discontinue their operations and shall apply for closure and license cancellation.

12.3 Closure Request: Schools wishing to discontinue their operations temporarily or permanently shall submit a closure request to ADEK which includes:

1. The reason for the closure.
2. The proposed date of closure (such that it coincides with the end of the school's academic year).
3. The proposed arrangements for enabling the transfer of students to other schools.
4. The request shall be submitted at least 6 months prior to the end of the school's academic year.

12.4 Notification to Stakeholders: Schools shall inform staff members and parents within 7 days of receiving approval from ADEK.

12.5 Closure Duties: Schools shall undertake the following measures as part of the closure process on receiving ADEK approval on the closure request and informing stakeholders:

1. Fulfil all legal and contractual commitments towards staff, parents, students, and external parties.
2. Obtain legal and financial clearances.
3. Pay all staff in accordance with the terms of their contract and the requirements of the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation, as per Federal Law No. (33) of 2021 on Regulating Employment Relationship.
4. Return any undeserved fees that have been collected from parents, including registration or re-registration fees collected for the upcoming academic year.
5. Unblock student transfers on eSIS and release all staff on the ADEK PASS system at least 20 working days prior to closure.
6. Submit all student records and files to ADEK within 20 working days of closure.
7. Provide relevant student reports and transfer certificates to parents.
8. In the case of permanent voluntary school closure, apply for the cancellation of licenses awarded by ADEK, in line with this policy.

13. License Suspension and Cancellation

13.1 License Suspension: ADEK may suspend the license of a school in line with the [ADEK School Compliance Policy](#). Schools that are permitted by ADEK to resume their operations shall reapply for an ADEK License. The granting of the License shall be contingent on the school meeting ADEK requirements, as determined through compliance checks and other processes specified in the *ADEK Licensing Guide*.

13.2 Forced School Closure and License Cancellation: ADEK may require a school to close its operations in line with the [ADEK School Compliance Policy](#). Such closure shall lead to the cancellation of the school's license.

14. Compliance

14.1 This policy shall be effective as of the start 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).

14.2 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 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
- Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 on Regulating Employment Relationship
- Chairman of the Executive Council Resolution No. (26) of 2013 on Organizing Regulations of Private Schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi

Publication

2024 (September) ADEK_School_Licensing Policy_v.1.1

Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

This policy applies to Private Schools in Abu Dhabi.

Past version:

2024 (January) ADEK_School_Licensing Policy_v.1.0

