AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF ABU DHABI

CULTURAL CONSIDERATION POLICY

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1. SCHOOL VISION

Australian School of Abu Dhabi (ASAD) fosters globally minded graduates through inclusive education, nurturing a sense of belonging, understanding, and respect. We empower students with skills, empathy, and awareness to contribute locally and globally.

2. SCHOOL MISSION

Australian School of Abu Dhabi (ASAD) provides a diverse curriculum with global perspectives to all students. We foster inclusion, embrace diversity, promote understanding, and empower students to excel academically and socially. Our commitment to inclusivity ensures every student feels valued and supported.

3. INTRODUCTION

At the Australian School of Abu Dhabi (**ASAD**) we recognise the rich cultural diversity of the United Arab Emirates and are committed to fostering a school environment that respects, reflects, and celebrates the cultural values, traditions, and heritage of the UAE. As an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School operating in Abu Dhabi, we are guided by the principles of international-mindedness and intercultural understanding, while fully aligning with the regulatory expectations set forth by the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK).

This Cultural Consideration Policy (**Policy**) outlines ASAD's approach to integrating cultural considerations into all aspects of school life, including teaching, learning, communication, and events. It affirms the school's responsibility to ensure that practices align with Islamic values, local customs, and the cultural framework of the UAE. At the same time, it supports an inclusive environment that considers the diverse backgrounds of our school community.

Through this Policy, we aim to promote mutual respect, cultural awareness, and an educational environment that honours the host country's cultural framework while nurturing the IB learner profile across all programmes.

4. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Cultural Considerations Policy is to:

- Provide guidance to the school community on cultural considerations in the UAE to support the development of awareness and practices that are culturally appropriate within the local context.
- Define expected school-wide practices to ensure alignment with current UAE legislation and compliance with ADEK requirements.
- Identify specific requirements to ensure that teaching and learning resources, curriculum content, and school activities reflect and respect the cultural values, traditions, and sensitivities of the UAE.
- Promote an inclusive, respectful, and culturally responsive school environment that upholds the values of the UAE while aligning with the principles of the IB programmes.

5. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all members of the ASAD school community, including staff, students, parents, contractors, and visitors. It governs all school-related activities, events, communications, curriculum content, and teaching and learning materials. The Policy is designed to ensure that all aspects of school operations

are culturally appropriate and aligned with the values and regulations of the United Arab Emirates, as well as the expectations of the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK).

6. DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Cultural Consideration	Knowledge, awareness, and understanding of appropriate topics and practices of a culture.
Culture	The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs (UNESCO, 2001).
Indoctrination	Biased teaching to further a doctrine, principle, religion, or ideology.
Legislation	The set of legal documents (laws, bylaws, regulations, policies, directives, standards, rules, etc.) that govern and regulate practices in a specific area of jurisdiction.
Malicious Intent	Having a predetermined purpose to disregard cultural consideration and consequently, cause cultural offense.
National Identity	A system of social and moral values associated with the lifestyle of the people in the past, present, and future (Ministry of Culture and Youth, as cited in Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.).
School Community	Staff, students, parents/families, alumni, and others, who share responsibility for one another, provide an environment for intellectual learning, and create a healthy social atmosphere where all the members of the community are supported.
Teaching and Learning resources	Any written, audio-visual, and/or e-learning/technological document, material, object, event, person, etc. that supports and enhances teaching and learning, directly or indirectly.

7. POLICY

7.1 Adherence to UAE Legislation

7.1.1 ASAD will ensure that members of the school community understand, respect, and adhere to the requirements identified in this Policy, the Code of Conduct for Education Professionals in General Education (MoE, 2022), MoE Circular No. 1 of 2022 Regarding Private School's Compliance with National Identity Requirements in the School Environment, MoE Circular No. 1 of 2023 Regarding Promoting a Safe School Environment, and all other legislation in the UAE.

7.1.2 The Principal will be responsible for ensuring that school practices and the content of all teaching and learning resources align with and respect cultural consideration as regulated within the laws of the UAE, including but not limited to the following:

1. "Respecting the constitution, laws, and orders issued by public authorities in implementation thereof, observance of public order and respect for public morals is a duty of all residents of the union" (Article 44, Constitution of the UAE).

2. "Preserving the Islamic and Arab principles and values, public morals, and the values, traditions, and systems of the state" (Clause 11, Article 11, Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments).
3. "Respect for national identity and sovereignty" (Clause 12, Article 11, Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments).
4. Penalties apply to persons who manufacture, import, export, acquire, possess or transport writings, drawings, photographs, films, symbols or other materials that violate public morals, with the intention of exploitation, distribution or display to others (Article 416, Federal Decree-Law No. 31 of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law, as amended).

7.2 Addressing Cultural Considerations In Schools

7.2.1 School Requirements: ASAD will have in place the following elements that address cultural consideration:

1. **Induction and Refresher Training:** ASAD will organise an induction on cultural consideration awareness for all new staff, parents, and students. Refresher training will equally be provided annually to returning staff, parents, and students to enable them to maintain their awareness of cultural consideration in the UAE.
2. **Vetting Resources:** ASAD will establish processes and procedures for vetting, reviewing, and selecting teaching and learning resources as per Section 7.2.3 Learning Resources and Activities of this Policy.
3. **Observation of UAE Cultural Practices:** ASAD will adhere to cultural practices such as singing the UAE national anthem daily, observing official public holidays and national celebrations, and following protocol for flags and portraits as per the Positions of their Highness' Pictures and Placements and Uses of Flags Manual. This includes ensuring that the only flag raised in schools is that of the UAE and portraits are those of the UAE's leaders.
4. **Monitoring of School Communications:** ASAD will regularly monitor all official and unofficial school-related communication channels (newsletters, social media, parent communication groups, etc.) to ensure their compliance with this Policy.
5. **Response Mechanism for Non-Compliance:** ASAD will establish processes and procedures for reporting and responding to any breaches of this Policy in school.

7.2.2 Community Conduct: Members of the ASAD community will conduct themselves in ways that are mindful of cultural consideration, including the following:

1. Respecting the UAE's cultural and social norms, values, and traditions.
2. Refraining from (directly/indirectly) promoting inappropriate stereotypes, preconceptions, and assumptions about the UAE and the region.
3. Refraining from directly or indirectly encouraging any behavior, practice, or displays that are culturally inconsiderate, such as drug and alcohol use, smoking, violence, promoting alternative gender identity and sexual orientation, indoctrination, etc.
4. Refraining from using symbols, colors, or imagery associated with any movement/beliefs related to political, social, or extremist religious groups that are culturally inconsiderate, such as misrepresentations of prominent figures, images that are gratuitously violent or sexual in nature, representation of pride movement, extremist ideas, etc.).

5. Refraining from conducting any activities and/or using any content that leads to the indoctrination and promotion of religious/political extremism, racism, bullying, and all other forms of discrimination.
6. Refraining from holding rallies, demonstrations, and protests on school premises or while holding a school-related event offsite.
7. Ensuring that one's appearance is culturally considerate. Examples include but are not limited to:
    a. Covering of visible body tattoos and any type of piercings for men and women.
    b. Appropriate clothing in line with the school's dress code.
8. Ensuring the appropriateness of all school-organized events and celebrations to UAE culture, in adherence with this Policy.
9. Adhering to the laws of the UAE by conducting themselves accordingly.

7.2.3 Learning Resources and Activities: ASAD will establish a *Resource Selection Committee* to ensure that all teaching and learning resources are vetted for cultural consideration. The Resource Selection Committee will comprise of:

- Principal
- IB PYP, MYP and DP Head of Teaching and Learning
- Librarian
- Heads of Department: English, Arabic, Islamic Studies, Moral Education, Science, ICT, Mathematics, Individuals and Society and PE.

ASAD will ensure the following while reviewing and selecting any teaching and learning resource:

1. The suitability and appropriateness of the teaching and learning resources intended for a certain age group.
2. The suitability and appropriateness of the materials (topic/content/images) to the UAE culture, values, and national identity: For example, topics/content/images that are culturally inconsiderate or encourage undesirable habits/ behavior such as drug and alcohol use, violence, smoking, gambling, alternative gender identity and sexual orientation, indoctrination, etc., will not be accepted.
3. The suitability and appropriateness of political topics as per the approved UAE Social Studies curriculum.
4. ASAD will establish a process, with full documentation, to vet or verify the suitability of all resources, which includes a final signing-off by the head librarian, the Resource Selection Committee, and the Principal.

7.2.4 Topics in the Approved Curriculum: ASAD will ensure the following when addressing potentially controversial topics:

1. If the approved curriculum includes topics relating to biological reproduction, human evolution, or sex education, ASAD will limit the usage of figurative explanations and scientific images/photos required to address the relevant learning outcomes in a manner that is respectful and culturally considerate.
    a. ASAD will inform parents in advance of the lesson, including the topics that will be covered (and whether the topic will be covered in any assessments),

and allow parents to excuse their child from attending the relevant lesson with a written exemption.

2. If the approved curriculum includes topics relating to revolution, wars, or any other potential violent conflict, ASAD will ensure that the required content is discussed and handled in the right formal educational context and presented objectively as related content may involve offensive, violent, or obscene imagery or themes. ASAD will limit figurative explanations and scientific images/photos required to address the relevant learning outcomes in a manner that is respectful and culturally considerate.
3. If the approved curriculum includes any potentially controversial topics as part of the learning resources or activities required for the preparation of any high-stakes exams, ASAD is authorised to teach these topics after seeking approval from ADEK.
4. Where controversial topics may surface outside of approved curricula due to high-profile current events, ASAD will follow UAE government direction and adhere to any directives issued by relevant federal or local UAE authorities.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 ASAD will ensure that explicit responsibilities have been conveyed to all parties. "Respecting the constitution, laws, and orders issued by public authorities in implementation thereof, observance of public order and respect for public morals is a duty of all residents of the union" (Article 44, Constitution of the UAE).

1. Teachers will show "Respect for national identity and sovereignty" (Clause 12, Article 11, Federal Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments) and therefore will:
    a. Develop lesson plans using resources approved by the school's vetting process.
    b. Conduct additional screening to ensure resources used and content presented to students are culturally appropriate.
    c. Prepare and vet all online resources in advance of all lessons to ensure they are free of any culturally inconsiderate content, including (but not limited to) images, texts, color schemes, and terminologies referencing any of the topics covered in this Policy.
    d. Teachers will avoid indoctrination when discussing political or cultural matters in class.
    e. Immediately report any content discovered in resources that may violate this Policy to senior leaders and the Principal.
    f. Ensure adherence to this Policy, including data confidentiality requirements when posting school information on public forums, such as social media channels.

2. Senior leaders will:
    a. Review and approve lesson plans and resources developed by teachers.
    b. Ensure all resources and materials selected and/or developed are age and culturally considerate and have been approved by the school's vetting process.
    c. Supervise the use of resources and materials during lessons to ensure adherence to this Policy.
    d. Continuously monitor the content of the approved digital resources to ensure compliance with the regulations, policies, guidelines, and circulars issued by ADEK.
    e. Immediately report any content discovered in resources that are noncompliant with this Policy to the Principal.

3. Head librarians will:
    a. Review, vet, and sign off all resources requested and ensure that they are compliant with relevant requirements and are age- and culturally appropriate.
    b. Submit the list of acceptable and non-acceptable resources to the *Resource Selection Committee* for review and approval.
    c. Continuously monitor digital and non-digital resources and textbooks including their usage to ensure compliance with the regulations, policies, guidelines, and circulars issued by ADEK.
    d. Immediately report any content discovered in resources that may violate this Policy to the Principal and remove the resource from circulation.

4. The Principal will:
    a. Form a *Resource Selection Committee* to review, vet, and approve all resources.
    b. Implement and document the school-level process for the selection of teaching and learning resources as per Section 7.2.3 of this Policy.
    c. Provide, upon request, the full set of documentation for the vetting process as indicated in Section 7.2.3 to ADEK.
    d. Communicate school-level processes and procedures to all staff.
    e. Ensure all resources and materials selected and/or developed at the school are age- and culturally appropriate.
    f. Ensure the delivery of cultural consideration awareness induction and refresher training.
    g. Report any content discovered in resources that are non-compliant with this Policy to ADEK and ensure it is immediately removed from circulation.
    h. Ensure relevant staff engage parents to communicate that their school:
        I. Entrusts parents to oversee their child's use of the internet at home to minimize their exposure to inappropriate content.
        II. Expects parents to immediately report to both the school and ADEK Parent Hotline (800 2335) any content in school resources that is noncompliant with this Policy and always exercise caution when posting school information on public forums and social media channels.

9. COMPLIANCE

This Policy will be effective as of 9 January 2024 and schools are to be fully compliant by this date.

1. ADEK will actively and rigorously monitor compliance with this Policy. Any report of potential violations will be investigated and will lead to a determination of noncompliance if malicious intent is established.
2. Sanctions for non-compliance may include the following, subject to the approval of the ADEK Chairman:
    a. Revocation of the appointment letter of the individual(s) for whom malicious intent was determined.
    b. A warning letter to the school and its investors.
    c. A penalty ranging from 50,000 AED to 350,000 AED.

3. Continued failure to comply with thisolicy will be subject to legal accountability and the penalties stipulated in accordance with 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. ADEK reserves the right to intervene if the school is found to be in violation of its obligations.

10. REFERENCES

- Constitution of the United Arab Emirates. https://uaecabinet.ae/en/the-constitution
- Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments.
- Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its
- amendments.
- Ministry of Education (MoE). (2022). Code of Conduct for Education Professionals in
- General Education.
- Ministry of Tolerance. (n.d.). The National Program for Tolerance. http://tolerance.gov.ae/en/uae-national-program-of-tolerance.aspx
- Official Portal of the UAE Government. (n.d.). Preserving the Emirati National Identity. https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/preserving-the-emirati-national identity#:~:text=The%20ministry%20defines%20national%20identity,the%20past%2C%20present%20and%20future
- UNESCO. (2001). UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

11. RATIFICATION AND REVISION HISTORY

Document Title	Cultural Considerations Policy
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Next Review Date	November 2028
Ratified By	Director: Mr Adel Salman