



Sharjah American
International School

2023 . 2024

CULTURAL CONSIDERATION **P O L I C Y**

Abu Dhabi branch

First review: May 2024

Next review: June 2025



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PURPOSE

The purpose of this Cultural Consideration Policy is to ensure that all SAIS educational activities and environments within SAIS adhere to the cultural guidelines set forth by the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK). This policy aims to foster an inclusive and respectful atmosphere that values and celebrates the diverse cultural backgrounds of our students, staff, and community members.

POLICY STATEMENT

SAIS is committed to promoting cultural awareness, understanding, and respect among all stakeholders. SAIS recognizes the importance of incorporating cultural considerations into our educational practices to create an environment that is conducive to learning and personal growth. SAIS upholds the cultural standards outlined by ADEK and strives to integrate them into our curriculum, policies, and interactions.

ENTITLEMENT

All students, staff, and members of the community are entitled to:

- Learn and work in an environment that respects and celebrates their cultural heritage.
- Access educational materials and resources that are inclusive of diverse cultural perspectives.
- Participate in cultural events, activities, and initiatives that promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.
- Receive support and guidance in navigating cultural differences and challenges within the educational setting.

ADHERENCE TO UAE LEGISLATION

SAIS shall 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 2023 Regarding Promoting a Safe School Environment, and all other legislation in the UAE.

The principal shall be responsible for ensuring that SAIS practices and the content of all teaching and learning resources align with and respect cultural consideration as regulated within the laws of the UAE, ADEK Cultural Consideration policy.

ADDRESSING CULTURAL CONSIDERATION IN SAIS

SAIS REQUIREMENTS:

SAIS shall have in place the following elements that address cultural considerations:

1. Induction and Refresher Training: SAIS shall organize an induction on cultural consideration awareness for all new staff, parents, and students. Refresher training shall equally be provided annually to returning staff, parents, and students to enable them to maintain their awareness of cultural considerations in the UAE.
2. Vetting Resources: SAIS shall establish processes and procedures for vetting, reviewing, and selecting teaching and learning resources as per the ADEK Cultural Consideration policy (Section 2.3 Learning Resources and Activities)
3. Observation of the UAE Cultural Practices: SAIS shall 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: SAIS shall regularly monitor all official and unofficial school-related communication channels (newsletters, social media, parent communication groups, etc.) to ensure their compliance with the ADEK Cultural Consideration policy.
5. Response Mechanism for Non-Compliance: SAIS shall establish processes and procedures for reporting and responding to any breaches of this policy in SAIS.

COMMUNITY CONDUCT:

Members of the SAIS community shall 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, 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 SAIS 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 ADEK Cultural Consideration policy.
9. Adhering to the laws of the UAE by conducting themselves accordingly.

LEARNING RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES:

SAIS shall establish a Resource Selection Committee to ensure that all teaching and learning resources are vetted for cultural consideration. The school shall 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., shall not be accepted.
3. The suitability and appropriateness of political topics as per the approved UAE Social Studies curriculum.
4. Schools shall 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.

TOPICS IN THE APPROVED CURRICULUM:

SAIS shall ensure the following when addressing potentially controversial topics:

1. If the approved curriculum includes topics relating to biological reproduction, human evolution, or sex education, schools shall 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. SAIS shall 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, schools shall 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. Schools shall 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, SAIS is authorized 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, SAIS shall follow UAE government direction and adhere to any directives issued by relevant federal or local UAE authorities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

SAIS shall 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 shall: “Respect for national identity and sovereignty” (Clause 12, Article 11, Federal Law No. (18) of 2020 Concerning Private Education).
 - 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 shall 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 shall:
 - 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 shall:

- a. Develop lesson plans using resources approved by the school's vetting process.
- b. Review, vet, and sign off all resources requested and ensure that they are compliant with relevant requirements and are age- and culturally appropriate.
- c. Submit the list of acceptable and non-acceptable resources to the Resource Selection Committee for review and approval.
- d. 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.
- e. Immediately report any content discovered in resources that may violate this policy to the Principal and remove the resource from circulation.

4. Principals shall:

- 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 2.1.2 of the ADEK Cultural Consideration policy.
- c. Provide, upon request, the full set of documentation for the vetting process as indicated in Section 2.3.4 to the ADEK Cultural Consideration policy.
- 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:

- Entrusts parents to oversee their child's use of the internet at home to minimize their exposure to inappropriate content.
- 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.

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the SAIS, including its leadership, faculty, and staff, to:

- Implement and uphold the cultural considerations outlined by ADEK in all aspects of educational planning, delivery, and assessment.
- Provide training and professional development opportunities to enhance cultural competency among faculty and staff.
- Foster an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere where cultural diversity is valued and celebrated.
- Address any instances of cultural insensitivity, discrimination, or bias promptly and effectively.
- Collaborate with students, parents, and the broader community to promote cultural awareness and understanding.

MONITORING OF THIS POLICY

The Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Departments will monitor the application and effectiveness of this policy. It will be regularly reviewed and updated as a working document.

REFERENCES

- Constitution of the United Arab Emirates. Retrieved from <https://uaecabinet.ae/en/theconstitution>
- Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 Concerning Private Education and its amendments.
- Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law.

- Ministry of Education (MoE). (2022). Code of Conduct for Education Professionals in General Education.
- Ministry of Tolerance. (n.d.). The National Program for Tolerance. Retrieved from <http://tolerance.gov.ae/en/uae-national-program-of-tolerance.aspx>
- Official Portal of the UAE Government. (n.d.). Preserving the Emirati National Identity. Retrieved from <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/preserving-the-emirati-national-identity#:~:text=The%20ministry%20defines%20national%20identity,the%20past%20and%20future>
- UNESCO. (2001). UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.
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