

Arabian Education Development

Al Ittihad Private Schools

**CULTURAL CONSIDERATION POLICY
& VETTING PROCEDURES**

AY 2024-2025

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* Refer to Appendices I–III for operational procedures, assessment protocols, and regulatory content restrictions related to cultural consideration.

I. Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has witnessed significant demographic growth over the past few decades, resulting in a diverse and multicultural society. In Abu Dhabi's private schools, the high representation of non-national students and staff has enriched the educational environment, fostering an international spirit within Al Ittihad Private Schools' community.

While diversity is celebrated and supported through initiatives such as the UAE's National Tolerance Program, it is equally vital to ensure that all members of the school community remain aware of and adhere to culturally and nationally appropriate topics, practices, and values. Al Ittihad Private Schools must promote respect for the UAE's social norms, traditions, and national identity, ensuring alignment with the laws and regulations governing educational institutions.

This policy aims to guide Al Ittihad Private Schools in fostering cultural awareness and maintaining practices that uphold the UAE's cultural values, national identity, and legislative requirements. To ensure consistent application of this policy, the school has developed detailed procedures for vetting and selecting teaching and learning resources (Appendix I) and an assessment policy to guide the handling of culturally sensitive topics (Appendix II), both of which form integral parts of this framework.

II. Purpose

This policy has been developed to:

- Provide clear guidance to Al Ittihad Private Schools on promoting cultural consideration within the UAE educational context.
- Support the development of knowledge and awareness among community members regarding culturally appropriate topics, practices, and behaviors.
- Ensure that teaching and learning resources, school activities, and communication practices align with the UAE's cultural values, national identity, and legislative requirements.
- Define the expected standards and responsibilities to uphold cultural respect and sensitivity across all aspects of school operations.

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- Ensure the implementation of internal procedures such as the Teaching and Learning Resource Vetting Process (Appendix I) and the Assessment Policy for Culturally Sensitive Topics (Appendix II), which support operational consistency and cultural alignment across campuses.”

III. Definitions

| Term | Definitions |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 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. |

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IV. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Al Ittihad Private Schools community, including but not limited to students, staff, parents and families, visitors, and external partners.

It governs all Al Ittihad Private Schools activities, including teaching and learning practices, resources, communications, events, and operations, to ensure full alignment with the UAE's cultural values, national identity, and applicable legislation.

All members of the school community are expected to understand and adhere to the principles and requirements of this policy across all school-related activities.

V. Objectives

This policy aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Promote cultural awareness and understanding across all members of Al Ittihad Private Schools community.
- Ensure that all Al Ittihad Private Schools practices, activities, communications, and resources align with UAE cultural values, national identity, and applicable legislation.
- Provide clear expectations and responsibilities to prevent cultural insensitivity, indoctrination, and inappropriate practices.
- Maintain a school environment that reflects respect for the traditions, norms, and social values of the UAE.
- Support Al Ittihad Private Schools in establishing systematic processes for vetting resources, monitoring communication, and responding to any breaches of cultural consideration requirements.

VI. Policy Requirements

6.1 Adherence to UAE Legislation

Schools shall ensure that all members of Al Ittihad Private Schools 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.

The principal shall be responsible for ensuring that Al Ittihad Private Schools 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:

- 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).
- 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).
- Respect for national identity and sovereignty (Clause 12, Article 11, Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments).
- Avoiding any acts that manufacture, import, export, possess, acquire, or transfer with the intention of exploitation, distribution, or display to others, writings, drawings, photographs, films, symbols, or other items that violate public morals (Article 416, Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law and its amendments).

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6.2 Addressing Cultural Consideration in Schools

6.2.1 School Requirements

Al Ittihad Private Schools shall have in place the following elements to address cultural consideration:

- Induction and Refresher Training**

Al Ittihad Private Schools SLTs shall organize an induction program on cultural consideration awareness for all new staff, parents, and students. Refresher training shall also be provided annually to returning staff, parents, and students to maintain their awareness of cultural consideration in the UAE.

- Vetting Resources**

Al Ittihad Private Schools shall follow established processes and procedures for vetting, reviewing, and selecting teaching and learning resources, as outlined in Section 6.2.3 Learning Resources and Activities of this policy.

- Observation of UAE Cultural Practices**

Al Ittihad Private Schools shall adhere to national cultural practices, including:

- Singing the UAE National Anthem daily.
- Observing official public holidays and national celebrations.
- Following the approved protocol for the display of the UAE flag and portraits of UAE leaders, as per the Positions of their Highness' Pictures and Placements and Uses of Flags Manual. Only the UAE flag may be raised, and only approved portraits of UAE leadership shall be displayed.

- Monitoring of School Communications**

Al Ittihad Private Schools shall regularly monitor all official and unofficial school-related communication channels (such as newsletters, social media, and parent communication groups) to ensure compliance with this policy.

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- Response Mechanism for Non-Compliance**

Al Ittihad Private Schools shall establish clear processes and procedures for reporting, investigating, and responding to any breaches of this policy.

6.2.2 Community Conduct

All members of Al Ittihad Private Schools community shall conduct themselves in ways that reflect cultural consideration, including the following:

- Respecting the UAE's cultural and social norms, values, and traditions.
- Refraining from (directly or indirectly) promoting inappropriate stereotypes, preconceptions, or assumptions about the UAE and the region.
- Refraining from directly or indirectly encouraging any behavior, practice, or display that is culturally inconsiderate, such as:
 - Drug and alcohol use
 - Smoking
 - Violence
 - Promotion of alternative gender identity and sexual orientation
 - Indoctrination
 - Other culturally inappropriate topics
- Refraining from using symbols, colors, or imagery associated with political, social, or extremist religious groups, including but not limited to:
 - Misrepresentations of prominent figures
 - Gratuitously violent or sexual images
 - Pride movement imagery
 - Extremist ideas

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- Refraining from conducting activities or using any content that promotes religious or political extremism, racism, bullying, or any other form of discrimination.
- Refraining from holding rallies, demonstrations, or protests on school premises or during any school-related events held offsite.
- Ensuring that personal appearance is culturally appropriate. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Covering visible body tattoos
 - Avoiding visible body piercings for men and women
 - Wearing clothing that complies with the school's dress code
- Ensuring that all school-organized events and celebrations align with UAE culture and adhere to this policy.
- Adhering at all times to the laws of the UAE in conduct and behavior.

6.2.3 Learning Resources and Activities

Resource Selection

Al Ittihad Private Schools shall establish a **Resource Selection Committee** to ensure that all teaching and learning resources are vetted for cultural consideration. Schools must ensure the following when reviewing and selecting any teaching and learning resource:

- **Age Appropriateness:**
Resources must be suitable and appropriate for the intended age group.
- **Cultural Appropriateness:**
Resources (including topics, content, and images) must be appropriate to the UAE's culture, values, and national identity.
Resources that encourage or depict culturally inconsiderate or undesirable habits or behaviors shall not be accepted, including:

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- Drug and alcohol use
- Smoking
- Violence
- Gambling
- Alternative gender identity and sexual orientation
- Indoctrination
- Any other content that conflicts with UAE values

- **Political Content**

Political topics must align with the approved UAE Social Studies curriculum. Unapproved political content is not permitted.

- **Vetting Process Documentation**

Al Ittihad Private Schools must adhere to the *Processes and Procedures for Vetting, Reviewing, and Selecting Teaching and Learning Resources to Ensure Cultural Alignment in Al Ittihad Private Schools (Appendix I)*.

6.2.4 Topics in the Approved Curriculum

Schools should ensure the following when addressing potentially controversial topics:

- **Biological Reproduction, Human Evolution, and Sex Education:**

If the approved curriculum includes topics relating to biological reproduction, human evolution, or sex education:

- Schools shall limit the use of figurative explanations and scientific images/photos to only what is necessary to meet the relevant learning outcomes, in a manner that is respectful and culturally considerate.
- Schools should inform parents in advance about the lesson content, including whether the topic will be assessed.

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- Parents must be given the option to excuse their child from attending the relevant lesson by submitting a written exemption request.

- **Revolution, Wars, and Violent Conflict**

If the approved curriculum includes topics relating to revolutions, wars, or any other violent conflict:

- Schools shall present the required content objectively and within a formal educational context.
- Schools should limit the use of figurative explanations and scientific images/photos to those strictly necessary for addressing the learning outcomes, ensuring that the presentation is respectful and culturally considerate.

- **High-Stakes Exams**

If controversial topics are required as part of the preparation for any high-stakes examinations:

- Abu Dhabi Schools are authorized to teach these topics only after obtaining prior approval from ADEK.

- **Current Events**

If controversial topics arise due to high-profile current events outside the approved curriculum:

- Schools shall follow UAE government directives and comply with any instructions issued by relevant federal or local authorities.

For further guidance on how to address these topics in assessments, schools must refer to Appendix II: *Assessment Policy Ensuring Compliance with Culturally Sensitive Topics*.

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6.3 Language, Communication, and Event Planning

While English is the primary language of instruction, Al Ittihad Private Schools recognize the importance of Arabic as the official language of the United Arab Emirates and as the mother tongue of many members of the school community. The school supports the continuous development of Arabic language learning for students and staff to foster respect for local culture and heritage.

In addition, the school promotes awareness of cultural nuances, including appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, to ensure respect for the UAE's cultural values. Staff members shall exercise careful consideration when planning school events, ensuring that activities do not conflict with religious observances or cultural sensitivities.

VII. Roles and Responsibilities

Al Ittihad Private Schools shall ensure that explicit responsibilities related to cultural consideration are conveyed to all relevant parties:

7.1 Teachers

Teachers shall:

- Develop lesson plans using resources that have been vetted and approved through the school's official resource selection process.
- Conduct additional screening of all lesson content, including online materials, to ensure cultural appropriateness.
- Prepare and review all materials in advance of lessons to ensure they are free of culturally inappropriate content, including (but not limited to) images, texts, color schemes, and terminologies referencing prohibited topics.
- Avoid indoctrination when discussing political, social, or cultural matters in class.
- Immediately report any discovered content that may violate cultural consideration policies to their line manager and the principal.

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- Adhere to confidentiality and data protection expectations when posting any school-related information on public forums and social media platforms.

7.2 Senior and Middle Leaders

Senior and Middle Leaders shall:

- Review and approve all lesson plans and resources developed by teachers.
- Ensure that all instructional materials selected or created are appropriate for the students' age group and culturally sensitive.
- Supervise the use of resources during lessons to ensure compliance with this policy.
- Continuously monitor both physical and digital resources, including online platforms, educational software, and shared digital spaces, to ensure ongoing compliance with national regulations, UAE legislation, and this policy.
- Immediately report any non-compliant content to the principal.

7.3 Head Librarians

Head Librarians shall:

- Review, vet, and sign off on all requested teaching and learning resources to ensure they meet cultural, age, and legislative appropriateness.
- Submit a list of acceptable and non-acceptable resources to the Resource Selection Committee for review and approval.
- Monitor the ongoing usage of digital and non-digital resources to maintain compliance with this policy.
- Immediately report and remove any resource found to be in violation of cultural consideration expectations.

7.4 Principals

Principals shall:

- Form a Resource Selection Committee responsible for reviewing, vetting, and approving all school resources.

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- Implement and document a clear school-level process for the selection and review of teaching and learning materials.
- Ensure that all approved materials are age-appropriate, culturally appropriate, and aligned with UAE legislation.
- Communicate school processes and procedures related to cultural consideration to all staff and ensure staff compliance.
- Organize and ensure the delivery of induction and refresher training on cultural consideration.
 - For Abu Dhabi Schools: Report any non-compliance to ADEK and ensure immediate removal of any inappropriate materials.
 - Engage parents in monitoring students' internet use at home and encourage prompt reporting of any concerns regarding cultural consideration breaches.

VIII. Compliance

This policy is effective from AY 2024-2025. Abu Dhabi Schools are expected to be fully compliant.

8.1 Monitoring Compliance

- ADEK will actively monitor compliance with this policy through inspections, investigations, and reporting mechanisms.
- Reports of potential violations will be investigated thoroughly, and non-compliance will be determined if malicious intent is established.

8.2 Sanctions for Non-Compliance

Sanctions for breaches of this policy may include, but are not limited to:

- Revocation of appointment letters for individuals where malicious intent is determined.
- Issuance of warning letters to the school leadership and investors.

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- Financial penalties ranging from AED 50,000 to AED 350,000, subject to the approval of the ADEK Chairman.

8.3 Continued Non-Compliance

- Continued failure to comply may result in further legal accountability and penalties under ADEK regulations, Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law and its amendments, or any other applicable UAE legislation.
- ADEK reserves the right to intervene where necessary to protect the integrity of the UAE's cultural values and national identity.

This policy is effective immediately and shall remain in force across all Al Ittihad Private Schools. It will be reviewed periodically to ensure its continued alignment with UAE cultural values, evolving educational best practices, and updated regulatory requirements. All staff, students, and stakeholders are expected to uphold the principles outlined herein, and school leadership is responsible for ensuring full and consistent implementation across all campuses.

Appendix I

Processes and Procedures for Vetting, Reviewing, and Selecting Teaching and Learning Resources to Ensure Cultural Alignment in Al Ittihad Private Schools

These processes and procedures aim to systematically vet, review, and select teaching and learning resources in alignment with the cultural considerations in the UAE.

Formation of Resource Selection Committee in each school:

- The school shall establish a Resource Selection Committee responsible for vetting, reviewing, and approving all teaching and learning resources.

Documentation of the Vetting Process:

- The principal shall ensure the implementation and documentation of a school-level process for the selection of teaching and learning resources.
- Full documentation of the vetting process, including criteria for selection and approval, shall be maintained and made available upon request to the relevant regulatory authorities.

Vetting Responsibilities of Head Librarians:

- Head librarians will be responsible for reviewing, vetting, and signing off on all resources requested.
- Head librarians shall submit lists of acceptable and non-acceptable resources to the Resource Selection Committee for review and approval.

Continuous Monitoring of Resources:

- Head librarians will continuously monitor digital and non-digital resources, including textbooks, to ensure compliance with regulations, policies, guidelines, and circulars issued by regulatory authorities.

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- Any content discovered in resources that may violate the cultural alignment policy shall be immediately reported to the Principal and the resource removed from circulation and title shall be prohibited.

Review and Approval by Middle/Senior Leaders:

- Middle/Senior Leaders will review and approve lesson plans and resources developed by teachers.
- Continuous supervision of the use of resources and materials during lessons to ensure adherence to the cultural alignment policy is essential.
- Any content discovered in resources that is non-compliant with the policy shall be immediately reported to the Principal. The Principal shall share the information with the Academic Team and proper action must be taken immediately and all other campuses to be informed.

Responsibilities of Teachers:

- Teachers shall develop lesson plans using resources approved by the school's vetting process.
- Additional screening of resources to ensure cultural appropriateness shall be conducted by teachers.
- All online resources used in lessons shall be vetted in advance to ensure they are free of culturally inconsiderate content.

Reporting Mechanism for Non-Compliance:

- Teachers, Middle/Senior Leaders, and Head Librarians shall have a reporting mechanism to immediately notify the Principal of any content discovered in resources that may violate the cultural alignment policy.
- The Principal shall ensure the prompt removal of non-compliant resources from circulation.

*Refer back to Section 6.2.3 / 6.2.4 for how this procedure integrates with the overall policy.

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Appendix II

Assessment Policy Ensuring Compliance with Culturally Sensitive Topics

Objective:

This policy aims to ensure that assessments align with the Cultural Alignment Policy, particularly regarding potentially controversial topics in the approved curriculum. It outlines guidelines for addressing sensitive subjects in assessments while respecting cultural considerations and promoting transparency with parents.

Biological Reproduction, Human Evolution, and Sex Education:

- Assessments covering topics related to biological reproduction, human evolution, or sex education will utilize language that is respectful and culturally considerate.
- Prior to the assessment, schools shall inform parents in advance about the specific topics to be covered and whether the assessment will include such content.
- Parents will be given the option to excuse their child from participating in the assessment on these topics, provided they submit a written exemption.

Revolution, Wars, and Potential Violent Conflict:

- Assessments addressing topics related to revolution, wars, or potential violent conflict will be conducted with sensitivity, avoiding offensive, violent, or obscene imagery or themes.
- Schools shall limit the usage of figurative explanation and scientific images/photos to address relevant learning outcomes in a respectful and culturally considerate manner.
- Content related to these topics will be presented objectively within the appropriate educational context.

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Potentially Controversial Topics in High-Stakes Exams:

- If high-stakes exams require the inclusion of potentially controversial topics, Abu Dhabi schools are authorized to teach these subjects after obtaining prior approval from ADEK.
- Abu Dhabi school will submit detailed documentation to ADEK outlining how the sensitive topics will be covered in the exam, ensuring transparency and adherence to cultural considerations.

High-Profile Current Events:

- Should controversial topics arise outside of approved curricula due to high-profile current events, schools will follow UAE government direction.
- Schools will adhere to any directives issued by relevant federal or local UAE authorities concerning the inclusion of such topics in assessments.

Parental Communication:

- Schools will maintain open communication with parents regarding upcoming assessments, providing clear information about topics covered.
- Any concerns raised by parents regarding the sensitivity of assessment topics will be addressed promptly and with respect for parental decisions.

Continuous Review and Training:

- The school will conduct regular reviews of assessment materials to ensure ongoing compliance with cultural considerations.
- Faculty and staff will receive training on the proper handling of sensitive topics in assessments, fostering a culturally respectful educational environment.

*Refer back to Section 6.2.3 / 6.2.4 for how this procedure integrates with the overall policy.

Appendix III

Regulatory Guidance on Prohibited and Restricted Content Important

ADEK Guidelines: [Cultural Consideration](#)

The following topics and content are prohibited unless formal approval is obtained from ADEK or other competent authorities:

- References to certain political or religious topics (e.g., Israel, Judaism, Jewish identity) require prior formal approval from regulatory authorities. Use or display of six-pointed stars.
- Discussion of World War II, Hitler, or the Holocaust without ADEK pre-approval.
- Any defamatory or incorrect information about Islam or the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH).
- Drawings or images depicting Islamic prophets, or Allah.
- Promotion or depiction of:
 - Drug use
 - Alcohol consumption
 - Smoking
 - Promiscuity
 - Nightclubs or entertainment venues inconsistent with UAE values
 - Non-Muslim worship practices

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- Sensitive imagery related to abuse or trauma (e.g., child abuse, fetal alcohol syndrome).
- Depictions or references to pigs, pork, or pork products.
- Magic or magical themes, wizardry or witchcraft.
- Evolution presented as a factual account of human development.
- Promotion or favorable depiction of communism without prior approval.
- References to customs that contradict Islamic teachings.
- Use of offensive language, swearing, tribalism, sexual language, racism, or disrespectful terms.
- Rainbow imagery used only in a scientific (meteorological) context, with correct color order (ROYGBIV).

All Al Ittihad Private Schools resources, communications, activities, and displays must comply with the above requirements to protect cultural integrity and comply with UAE regulations.

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Disclaimer

This policy was developed by Al Ittihad National Private School. It is intended for use exclusively by school staff and students. Any external use, whether in whole or in part, requires management approval. Any exceptions to this policy must also be approved in advance by the school management.

Date created: Academic Team

Date reviewed: April 28, 2025