



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

SCHOOL POLICY

on

EMPLOYMENT



Introduction

The employment of school staff in Abu Dhabi is highly regulated in Abu Dhabi to enhance the quality and process of recruitment, engagement, promotion, professional development, and performance management. This policy sets out the basic requirements for the employment of staff in Abu Dhabi schools.

Purpose

- Mandate ADEK Private Schools Staff Information System (PASS) registration and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and invited visitors.
- Outline staff employment requirements regarding recruitment, mandatory positions, acting/in-training status, and succession planning.
- Describe the rights and responsibilities of staff working in schools.

Definitions

Appointment Letter	A letter issued by ADEK attesting the employment status of internal staff.
Class	A group of students and staff who meet during a scheduled period (or multiple periods) of the school day for the purpose of teaching and learning.
Continuous Professional Development (CPD)	All activities undertaken by staff to improve their knowledge, skills, competencies, and performance on a regular basis. CPD includes in-person training, online training (synchronous or asynchronous), coursework, short certificate and degree programs, mentorship programs, peer/collaborative learning, academic conferences, research projects, observational visits, and community programs to share teaching best practices. CPD excludes planning hours and general staff meetings.
Core Positions	Positions identified in the ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy for which ADEK will verify candidacy.
Cycle	A stage in the primary and secondary educational process and is classified in Abu Dhabi as the following: Kindergarten (Pre-KG/FS1-KG2/Y1), Cycle 1 (G1/Y2-G5/Y6), Cycle 2 (G6/Y7-G8/Y9), and Cycle 3 (G9/Y10-G12/Y13). Private schools teaching Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum may follow MoE cycles: KG, Cycle 1 (G1-G4), Cycle 2 (G5-G8), and Cycle 3 (G9-G12).
Development Days	Dedicated days in the school calendar during which educators are engaged exclusively in CPD activities and not their regular duties.
Educator	Staff members who are directly involved in and support the teaching and learning process. This includes leadership, teaching, teaching support, social care, and relevant healthcare positions (e.g., speech therapist), where applicable, as defined in the ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy . Schools may have a wider range of staff defined as educators than this policy.
Eligibility	Requirements for staff to be employed in a specific position and includes both qualifications and experience.
Employment Agreement	A legal document issued by a school to staff and/or volunteers, specifying the conditions for employment for a specific position.
Invited Visitor	A visitor invited by the school on a temporary basis to interact with students (e.g., a speaker, career fair representative, etc.).

Modalities	The medium of conducting CPD programs, including the distribution of material, instruction or delivery of subject matter, assessments, and feedback.
Non-teaching hours	The total number of hours that teachers spend on activities such as planning, administrative duties, community development, and other activities not included in teaching hours.
Performance Evaluation	Regular review of a staff's performance as part of the performance management process, involving the assessment of knowledge, skills, competencies, and effectiveness of staff in carrying out their duties.
Performance Management	A periodic and ongoing process of communication between a supervisor and staff to achieve the strategic objectives of the organization.
People of Determination	Every person suffering from a temporary or permanent, full, or partial deficiency or infirmity in his physical, sensory, mental, communicational, educational, or psychological abilities to an extent that limits their possibility of performing the ordinary requirements (Federal Law No. (29) of 2006 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its amendments).
Qualification	A credential (such as a certificate, diploma, or degree) attesting to an individual's achievement of a set of learning outcomes as defined by the qualification awarding body.
Staff	An individual employed by a school on a remunerated contractual basis regardless of employment mode (internal, external/ third-party, etc.).
Teaching hours	The total number of hours that teachers spend in planned/ timetabled student interactions (education delivery, office hours, extracurricular activities, etc.).
Teaching Qualification	Minimum qualifications required of teaching positions as per the ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy .
Verification	The process of checking that candidates for core positions meet the eligibility requirements for respective positions.
Vetting	The process of checking that candidates do not have issues that could be a risk to student protection and/or security.
Volunteer	An individual engaged by a school on a non-remunerated non-teaching basis to interact with students (e.g., parent chaperones, etc.).
Working hours	The total number of hours required of a staff member to fulfil their employment agreement.

Work Permission	Approval by ADEK to allow a volunteer or invited visitor to be in the school.
Work Permit	A letter issued by ADEK to allow the employment of external staff in the school.



Policy

1. PASS Registration

- 1.1 PASS Registration for Staff: Schools shall register all staff on ADEK PASS (staff licensing portal) and obtain an appointment letter/work permit for each internal/external candidate respectively, prior to their engagement in the school.
- 1.2 Registration of Volunteers and Invited Visitors: Schools shall register all volunteers and invited visitors on ADEK systems and obtain a work permission for each candidate prior to their engagement in the school.
- 1.3 PASS Vetting Requirements: ADEK shall vet all candidates registered in PASS and approval will be granted only if they pass the latest vetting requirements (e.g., background checks, and police clearance).
 1. Candidates under investigation for student protection-related matters will not pass vetting until they have received clearance from the respective authority.
 2. ADEK reserves the right to recommend amendments and return or reject any PASS applications without disclosing justification.
- 1.4 Verification of Eligibility: ADEK shall verify that candidates for the core positions identified in the [ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy](#) (or any other positions as announced) meet their respective eligibility requirements, prior to the approval of their candidacy in PASS.
- 1.5 Non-Core Positions: Schools shall develop and document their own eligibility requirements for non-core positions (e.g., Executive Assistant, HR Officer, Finance Director), and register them in PASS to undergo vetting, prior to their engagement in schools.
- 1.6 Maintaining Updated PASS Profiles: Schools shall complete PASS registration at the start of the academic year, and update profiles as necessary so that appointment letters match staff positions at all times. Any discrepancies will be subject to non-compliance measures.

2. Staff Employment

- 2.1 Employment Eligibility: Schools shall employ and promote staff based on the eligibility requirements for the core positions identified in the [ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy](#).
 1. Schools have the discretion to employ candidates for other positions based on their own eligibility requirements.
- 2.2 Attestation of Qualifications: Qualifications shall be attested by the relevant authority, and evidence of UAE equivalency shall be provided.

1. Qualifications shall be issued from educational institutions and/or licensing bodies recognized by the relevant local and/or international accreditation agencies.
 2. An appointment letter/work permission remains temporary until the attestation is provided.
- 2.3 Attestation of Experience Certificates: Experience certificates shall be attested by the relevant authority, if applicable. For non-applicable cases, schools shall provide ADEK with a disclaimer that they have verified the authenticity of the experience certificate.
- 2.4 Mandatory Positions: Schools shall ensure that the following positions are occupied at any given time as full-time staff:
- Principal
 - Vice Principal
 - Head of Inclusion
 - Health and Safety Officer
 - Social Worker
 - Nurse
1. Other positions may be mandatory as per other ADEK policies (e.g., Career and University Guidance Counselors for schools with upper cycles) but do not fall under the scope of mandatory positions for licensing purposes.
 2. New schools that have less than 500 students are not required to have a Vice Principal in the first 5 years of operations. However, a Senior Leader must be appointed in an acting capacity.
 3. Schools shall ensure that all teaching positions for all subjects and classes are filled at any given time. In case of a vacancy, this should be temporarily filled by a substitute teaching position.
- 2.5 Grandfathering Provision: Staff employed prior to the issuance of the [ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy](#) who do not meet the new requirements are authorized to continue to be employed in schools under the following conditions (unless otherwise specified for individual positions):
1. Leadership Positions: Staff without the required teaching experience who are already employed in an Abu Dhabi school for a leadership position must obtain a valid educational leadership license by the start of the Academic Year 2026/27 (Fall term).
 2. Teaching Positions: Staff already employed in an Abu Dhabi school for a teaching position who do not have a teaching qualification shall have their appointment letters renewed or accepted in a new school on the following conditions:
 - a. They obtain a QFE 6 (Diploma) qualification (unless otherwise specified) or valid teaching license by the start of the Academic Year 2026/27 (Fall term).
 - b. Renewal or acceptance in a new school will be authorized once upon submission of the completed qualification or a transcript showing

evidence of continuous enrollment and progress of the initial teaching qualifications enrolment.

3. New staff appointments: All new staff appointments (which excludes transfers between schools under the same operators) are subject to the requirements of the [ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy](#).

2.6 Acting Status: Schools are authorized to appoint existing staff who do not meet eligibility requirements for core positions in an acting capacity to fill temporary staffing gaps for a maximum duration of 6 months (unless specified otherwise in other policies, e.g., Acting Vice Principal for new schools with less than 500 students (see [Section 2.4.2](#)), Acting Principal (see [Section 2.6.1](#))). Acting staff are authorized under the following conditions:

1. Acting staff are authorized for all positions except teaching positions (e.g., Acting Finance Director is allowed but an Acting Class Teacher is not allowed).
2. The candidate is a member of existing staff who meets the qualifications but not the experience requirements for a specific position.
3. Have the term “Acting” appended to the title of the position for the entire acting period (e.g., Acting Head of Department).
4. Provide written consent to take on an acting position that is fundamentally different from their current position.
5. Acting experience shall count towards work experience in the role for which the acting experience was undertaken.

2.7 In-Training Status: Schools are authorized to hire “in-training” staff who do not meet eligibility requirements for core positions under the following conditions to gain experience while completing the relevant qualifications. In-training staff shall:

1. Have the required qualifications or show proof of enrollment in a relevant course leading to the awarding of the relevant qualification.
2. Be supervised by a fully qualified staff (holding the position for which the in-training staff is being trained) for the entire period of their training.
3. In-training staff are not authorized to be hired in place of the full position and may only be promoted to the full position after meeting the eligibility requirements if deemed effective.
4. Have the suffix “-in-Training” appended to the title of the position for which they are being trained for the entire period of their training (e.g., Social Worker-in-Training, EAL Teacher-in-Training).
5. The maximum duration authorized for in-training status is 2 years per individual per position.

6. In-training experience shall count towards work experience in the role for which the in-training experience was undertaken.

2.8 Succession Planning: Schools shall have a succession plan to delegate the Principal's responsibilities to the Vice Principal (or the designated Vice Principal if there are multiple) and ensure the continuity of the school's operations in the case of leadership gaps.

1. **Default Appointment:** In the case of a Principal's absence, the Vice Principal shall automatically be appointed as Acting Principal, for a maximum of 1 academic year.
2. **Liability:** The Acting Principal takes on the legal responsibility and accountability associated with the Principal.
3. **Preparatory CPD:** To prepare for such circumstances, schools shall offer training/ shadow opportunities for the Vice Principal as part of their professional development.
4. **Additional Succession Planning for Leadership:** Schools shall plan succession for Vice Principals and their respective successors in delegating and sharing tasks to mitigate the risk of disruption in the school's leadership in the event that Principal succession is activated.
5. **Completion of Acting Term:** Upon completion of the acting term (maximum 1 academic year), Acting Principals must be replaced or promoted to the role of Principal, if deemed effective, and upon passing an ADEK interview.

2.9 Appointment to Multiple Roles: Schools are authorized to appoint staff to hold up to 3 roles in the school, provided they consent in writing to any roles that are fundamentally different as per Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments.

1. If they wish to do so, staff are authorized to hold multiple extracurricular roles (e.g., Triathlon Coach, Jazz Band Director, Math Club Supervisor) in addition to the 3 above.
2. All additional roles must be declared in PASS (e.g., one can be a Subject Teacher, Head of Department, Safeguarding Lead, and also run two extracurricular activities, e.g., as Model United Nations Coordinator and Badminton Coach).

2.10 Employment of Juveniles: As per Article (5) of the Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments, schools are authorized to employ juveniles. In addition to the employment conditions regarding age, parental consent, working hours, etc. stipulated in the above law, the following conditions apply:

1. Juveniles working in schools shall be employed in roles in which they are supervised at all times.

2. Juveniles who are enrolled students of the school in which they are working are authorized for employment only after their regular school hours or during free periods in which they do not have classes or other planned activities.
3. Juveniles who are not students of the school in which they are working shall receive the same rights as students as defined in the [ADEK School Student Protection Policy](#).

3. Rights and Responsibilities

3.1 Legal Framework: The employment of school staff is governed by the Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments, Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments, and Federal Decree Law No. (29) of 2006 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its amendments.

1. [Section 3. Rights and Responsibilities](#) of this policy makes simple reference to relevant selective legal obligations but is by no means exhaustive and should be read in conjunction with the above laws.
2. This policy is specific to labor practices in the education sector, and unless a differing practice is explicitly specified in this policy, the above laws shall prevail in case of any differences between these policies and the above laws.

3.2 Employment Manual: Schools shall develop and publish an Employment Manual containing employment policies and procedures in line with this policy, the [ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy](#), and the Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments.

1. The manual shall be available to ADEK, upon request, at any given time.
2. The manual shall detail the school's employment policies, covering the following topics as a minimum:
 - a. Organizational chart outlining jobs and job descriptions.
 - b. Recruitment policies and procedures such as requirements for criminal checks (no prior convictions), clearance procedures (self-introductory form), and reference letters.
 - c. Induction and training of new staff.
 - d. Performance management arrangements for all staff.
 - e. Service and contractual conditions, including probation, leave, resignation, termination, etc.
 - f. Working hours (including maximum teaching hours for teaching staff).
 - g. Salary scale, gratuity scheme, and allowances.
 - h. Infractions and subsequent disciplinary actions.
 - i. Code of conduct as per [ADEK School Values and Ethics Policy](#), [ADEK School Cultural Consideration Policy](#), [ADEK School Professional Code of Ethics Policy](#), and the *Code Conduct for Education Professionals in General Education* (Ministry of Education, 2022).
 - j. Other relevant employment matters (rights and obligations, etc.).

- 3.3 Non-Discrimination:** As per Article 4 of the Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments, “any discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, national or social origin or disability which would have the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity, or prejudicing equal treatment in the employment, the maintenance of a job and the enjoyment of its benefits, is prohibited”.
1. However, gender restrictions are applicable for certain positions, and schools shall adhere to the staff gender requirements detailed in the [ADEK School Coeducation Policy](#) and [ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy](#).
- 3.4 People of Determination:** Article 16 of the Federal Decree Law No. (29) of 2006 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its amendments stipulates the right of People of Determination to work and hold public office. At the recruitment stage, schools should actively encourage People of Determination to apply for roles within their organization.
1. The needs of People of Determination shall not be a barrier to their application, nomination, and selection for a position.
 2. Schools shall provide all necessary accommodations to allow People of Determination the opportunity to apply for a position.
 3. The needs of People of Determination should be taken into account when evaluating the candidate’s competency for any position.
 4. On appointment to any role, the necessary accommodations to allow People of Determination to fulfill the role shall be provided.
- 3.5 Probation:** Schools shall specify the probation period, if any, up to a period not exceeding 6 months from the staff’s start date as per Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments, which also specifies further details about the termination of probation and its conditions.
1. Staff shall be paid their full wages during the probation period, even if this falls during school holidays.
- 3.6 Leaves:** Schools shall ensure that staff are informed of all leaves to which they are entitled as per the Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments (e.g., maternity, sick, bereavement, parental, study, sabbatical (UAE Nationals only)).
1. Schools shall circulate a staff calendar, which outlines all school holidays and the required working days in line with their approved calendar for the academic year.
 - a. Schools are authorized to have different calendars for different types of staff (teaching vs. administrative, etc.).
- 3.7 Working Hours:** Schools shall determine regular working hours for staff, defined by teaching and non-teaching hours, and communicate this in the Employment Manual (see [Section 3.2](#)) and staff employment agreements to ensure transparency.

- 3.8** Employment Agreements for Teaching Staff: Schools' employment agreements for full-time staff shall be based on a minimum term of 2 years, which includes annual leaves and breaks.
- 3.9** Termination: As per Clause 4, Article 22 of the Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments, the termination of leadership and teaching staff is not authorized during the school term without prior approval from ADEK. This applies to voluntary (resignation) and involuntary terminations.
- 1.** Involuntary Termination: Schools are authorized to terminate the services of staff without notice in exceptional cases involving serious misconduct after conducting a written investigation as per Article 44 of the Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments.
- 3.10** Staff Misconduct: Schools shall have a clear process for investigating accusations of serious misconduct by staff (including members of the Governing Board).
- 1.** The investigation process should be composed of the following steps at a minimum:
 - a. Immediate removal of the concerned staff from the school premises and placement on suspension as per Article 40 of the Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments.
 - b. Written investigation conducted by a committee appointed by the school or Governing Board (if involving the Principal) with members who do not have any conflict of interest in the investigation.
 - c. Termination or reinstatement based on the outcome of the investigation.
- 3.11** Performance Management: Schools shall have a formal performance management process and accompanying policy as part of their Employment Manual, which is to be communicated to staff to ensure that they are aware of and understand the policies, processes, and specifically the criteria against which their performance will be evaluated.
- 1.** Schools shall adopt an annual performance management cycle in which each staff member sets individual performance and development objectives for the upcoming academic year, in line with the school's strategic goals.
 - 2.** Schools shall communicate the criteria for evaluating staff performance annually. The criteria cannot be changed in the middle of a performance management cycle.
 - 3.** Schools shall communicate the rating system for evaluating staff performance annually, with a clear description of each rating. This rating system cannot be changed in the middle of a performance management cycle.
 - 4.** Schools shall carry out performance evaluations based on the annual performance management cycle calendar (e.g., towards the end of the academic year) for each staff and deliver a confidential, written performance evaluation, to which ADEK reserves the right of access.

5. Staff have the right to appeal any evaluations and schools shall have a transparent/published appeals policy and a committee in place to review appeal requests.

3.12 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

1. Compulsory Hours of CPD:
 - a. Schools shall ensure that all staff complete 25 hours of CPD annually, including any ADEK-mandated training, at no cost to the staff as per the Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments.
 - b. Schools shall ensure that staff for whom additional CPD beyond the standard annual 25 hours is required, as outlined in other policies (e.g., teachers as per [ADEK School Quality Assurance Policy](#)) or as part of their UAE licensing requirements, are offered opportunities to fulfill their respective requirements.
2. Link to Staff Performance Management: Schools shall provide staff an opportunity to outline individual CPD plans along with their individual performance and development objectives during every performance management cycle and discuss progress on CPD received in the previous academic year.
3. Documentation of CPD activities: Schools shall maintain accurate documentation of all CPD programs conducted.

3.13 Career Progression: Schools shall define the various career paths available for staff within the school (in line with the [ADEK School Staff Eligibility Policy](#), where applicable) and the guidelines for career progression.

1. In every cycle of performance evaluation, schools shall assess the career progression of all members of staff and consider promotions as appropriate.

3.14 Ethical Obligation to Staff: Schools shall abide by the obligations required of them in accordance with Article 13 of Federal Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments, including the preservation, non-withholding, and provision of records, the communication of policies concerning employment matters (promotions, rewards, penalties), accommodations, commitment to staff safety, insurances, repatriation, and act ethically in the implementation of these obligations.

3.15 Staffing Policy Updates: Policies are subject to review and will be communicated via circulars to schools.

3.16 Provision of Information to ADEK: Schools shall provide ADEK with any data or information requested as per Law No. (9) of 2018 Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Education and Knowledge and Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and its amendments.

4. Compliance

- 4.1 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).
- 4.2 Failure to comply with this policy shall 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.



References

- Federal Decree Law No. (29) of 2006 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its amendments
- Law No. (9) of 2018 Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Education and Knowledge
- 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
- Federal Decree Law No. (33) of 2021 Concerning Regulating Labour Relations and its amendments

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Department of Education and Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)

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

Past version:

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