BELVEDERE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

# CULTURAL CONSIDERATION POLICY

# 2026-2027

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| Approvals: | | | |
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| Principal | **Mr. Ismat Daou** | | |
| *Signature* | | *Date:* | 10/9/26 |
| BIS Board of Governors | **Dr. Naim Alradi** | | |
| *Signature* | | *Date:* | 14/9/26 |

## Introduction

At Belvedere International School (BIS), we recognise that we all have a part to play in celebrating the cultural diversity of our community, the UAE and the world.

This Cultural Consideration Policy provides guidance to the school community to raise awareness of culturally and nationally acceptable topics and practices linked to understanding and respecting the UAE's specific cultural norms and practices.

Through implementing this policy, we will be supporting the promotion of understanding and tolerance within our school community.

## Aims

- To support BIS in raising awareness of topics and practices that are culturally appropriate within the UAE
- To make explicit expected BIS school practices to ensure compliance with the UAE legislation
- To ensure all BIS resources reflect the UAE's cultural sensibilities

## Definitions

*These definitions are taken from the ADEK Cultural Consideration Policy (2024)*

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| **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. |

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| **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. |

**Adherence to UAE Legislation**

*This section is taken from the ADEK Cultural Consideration Policy (2024)*

Schools 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 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 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 Arabic 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 Concerning Private Education)

3. "Respect for national identity and sovereignty" (Clause 12, Article 11, Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 Concerning Private Education)

4. Penalties are applied for "Manufactur[ing], import[ing], export[ing], process[ing], acquir[ing] or transfer[ing] with the intention of exploitation, distribution or display to others, writings, drawings, photographs, films or symbols or other things, if they violate public morals" (Article 416, Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law)

**Addressing Cultural Consideration in Schools**

*The bullet points below are taken from the ADEK Cultural Consideration Policy (2024)*

To ensure that Belvedere International School is meeting the requirements of the Cultural Consideration policy, we undertake to:

- Provide induction training on cultural consideration awareness for all new staff, parents, and students

- Provide refresher training on awareness of UAE cultural considerations on an annual basis for returning staff, parents, and students

- Establish processes and procedures for vetting, reviewing, and selecting, teaching, and learning resources as per Section 2-3 Learning Resources and Activities of the ADEK policy

- Observe 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'. (ADEK Cultural Consideration Policy (2024)

- Monitor all official and unofficial school-related communication channels (newsletters, social media, etc.) to ensure their compliance with the ADEK Cultural Consideration policy 2024

- Establish systems and procedures for reporting and responding to any non-compliance with the school's and ADEK''s Cultural Consideration Policy (2024), breaches of this policy in school

**Language and Communication**

At Belvedere International School English is the primary language of instruction however we recognise the importance of Arabic both as the official language of the United Arab Emirates and the mother tongue for almost all of the families attending the school. Through supporting the learning of Arabic for all students and staff, we aim to continuously develop communication within the school community.

This is further supported by awareness training linked to cultural nuances including verbal and non-verbal (gestures or behaviours) which are unacceptable.

The school will exercise careful consideration when planning events to ensure that they do not conflict with religious observances or offend any cultural sensitives.

**Community Conduct**

*This section is taken from the ADEK Cultural Consideration Policy (2024)*

Members of the school 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 behaviour, 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, colours, or imagery associated with any movement/beliefs related to political, social, or extremist religious groups which 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 protest 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-organised events and celebrations to UAE culture, in adherence with this policy

9. Adhering to the laws of the UAE by conducting themselves accordingly

**Learning Resources and Activities**

BIS has established a Resource Selection Committee who ensure that all teaching and learning resources are vetted for cultural consideration. This includes:

- Ensuring the suitability and appropriateness of the resources for identified age groups

- Ensuring 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/behaviour such as drug and alcohol use, violence, smoking, gambling, alternative gender identity and sexual orientation, indoctrination, etc., shall not be accepted.

*This example is taken from the ADEK Cultural Consideration Policy (2024).*

- Ensuring the suitability and appropriateness of political topics as per the approved UAE Social Studies curriculum

- Maintaining an evidence base which demonstrates compliance with this policy and the vetting/verification of suitability of all resources. This process needs to include a final signing off by the Head Librarian, the Resource Selection Committee, and the Principal

**Topics in the Approved Curriculum**

*This section is taken from the ADEK Cultural Consideration Policy (2024)*

Schools shall ensure the following when addressing potentially controversial topics:

- If the approved curriculum includes relating to biological reproduction, human evolution or sex education, schools shall limit the usage of figurative explanation and scientific images/photos required to address the relevant learning outcomes in a manner that is respectful and culturally considerate

    a. Schools 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

- 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 a related content may involve offensive, violent, or obscene imagery or themes. Schools shall limit figurative explanation and scientific images/photos required to address the relevant learning outcomes in a manner that is respectful and culturally considerate

- 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, schools are authorised to teach these topics after seeking approval from ADEK

Where controversial topics may surface outside of approved curricula due to high-profile current events, schools shall follow UAE government direction and adhere to any directives issued by relevant federal or local UAE authorities.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

*The following is taken from the ADEK Cultural Consideration Policy (2024)*

***Teachers shall:***

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, colour schemes, 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 polity to Middle/Senior Leaders and the Principal

f. Ensure adherence with this policy, including data confidentiality requirements when posting school information on public forums, such as social media channels

***Middle/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 with 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 non-compliant with this policy to the Principal

***Head Librarians shall:***

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 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

***Principal 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 this policy.

c. Provide, upon request, the full set of documentation for the vetting process as indicated in Section 2.3.4 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:

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

2. Expects parents to immediately report to both the school and Abu Dhabi Contact Centre (800-555) any content in school resources that are non-compliant with this policy and always exercise caution when posting school information on public forums and social media channels

**Cultural Consideration Policy ( Violations Handling Procedures)**

Violations to ADEK cultural Consideration policy are handled through a structured and fair procedure to ensure that the issue is addressed appropriately. Here is a general guideline for the procedure:

1. **Policy Communication:**

   - The cultural consideration policy will be communicated well to all students, staff, and stakeholders

   - All stakeholders are aware of the expectations and consequences for violating the policy

2. **Reporting Mechanism:**

   All staff feel safe in reporting violation of the Culture consideration policy. The reporting is done confidentially.

3. **Investigation:**

   In case of infractions a senior leadership team will investigate the reported violations. The team will conduct a thorough investigation, gathering evidence and interviewing relevant staff.

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4. **Documentation:**

   - SLT will document all findings and maintain a record of the investigation process

   - The records are kept confidential, sharing information only with those directly involved in the resolution process

5. **Notification:**

    - SLT will notify all parties that are involved in the reported violation about the initiation of an investigation

    - The team will maintain confidentiality while ensuring transparency about the process

6. **Interviews:**

    SLT will conduct interviews with the individuals involved in the reported violation, ensuring a fair and unbiased approach while gathering statements from witnesses if available.

7. **Decision-Making:**

    The senior leadership team will review the evidence and statements to determine if a violation has occurred. The team will consider the severity of the violation and any previous incidents when making decisions.

8. **Consequences:**

    - SLT will apply appropriate consequences based on the severity of the violation

    - Consequences may include counseling, education, warnings, probation, suspension, or expulsion and termination depending on the circumstances

9. **Educational Initiatives:**

    - The school will implement educational initiatives to promote a better understanding of the cultural consideration policy and its importance

    - The school will offer several training sessions to enhance cultural awareness and sensitivity

10. **Prevention Strategies:**

    - The school will develop and implement strategies to prevent future violations, such as ongoing education, awareness campaigns, and fostering a positive cultural environment

11. **Follow-up:**

- The school will monitor the individuals involved to ensure compliance with the consequences and provide any necessary support

- The school will regularly review and update the cultural consideration policy violations handling procedure as needed

**Compliance**

The school understands that ADEK will monitor compliance with this policy. Any violations will be investigated and will lead to a determination of on-compliance if malicious intent is established which may lead to sanctions being implemented.

**Annex 1: References**

*This section is taken from the ADEK Cultural Consideration Policy (2024)*


- Constitution of the United Arab Emirates. Retrieved from https://uaecabinet.ae/en/the-constitution
- 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 https://www.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
- UNESCO (2001). UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity

**Annex 2: Examples of Guidance issued by ADEK**

- It is against UAE educational law to mention Israel as a country
- Judaism as a religion, or anything mentioning the words Jew or Jewish should not be mentioned
- 6 pointed stars must not be used or displayed
- World War II topics which refer to Hitler and / or the Holocaust need permission from ADEK for inclusion within the school's registered curriculum
- Defamatory or incorrect information about Islam or the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) must not be shared
- Drawings or pictures depicting any Islamic prophet, Allah or Angels are not permitted
- The resource must not be strongly negative or emotional
- There must be no pictures or drawings which violate public manners
- It is not permitted to promote habits such as drug abuse, mixing of men and women, promiscuity, drinking alcohol and smoking etc.
- Resources cannot include images or references to alcohol, love scenes, non-Muslim worshiping, or entertainment places (night clubs etc.)
- There are no sensitive images of abuse (e.g. child abuse, foetal alcohol syndrome)
- The history of the UAE must be factually correct in its presentation and must not contain any defamatory information about the government, the country's history, heritage or society
- There cannot be any pictures, drawings or mention of pigs, pork or pork products
- There cannot be any reference to, or illustration of, of magic
- Evolution must not be presented as a factual account of Man's development

- There must be no detailed references to family celebrations and commemorations such as births, marriages and funerals

- Communism as a political movement must not be mentioned unless permission has been sought from ADEK for inclusion within the school's registered curriculum

- There cannot be any reference to customs that contradict the teaching of Islam

- There cannot be any instances of swearing, tribalism, and defamation of Islam, sexual language, racism or disrespectful language

Rainbows can only be present as a scientific phenomenon (in the context of a (in the context of a meteorological phenomena) following the colours in order (ROYGBIV)