



KHDA GUIDELINES ON NATIONAL MANDATORY SUBJECTS

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
The Scope of This Guide	3
Compliance.....	3
Curriculum Requirements	4
Timetabling	5
Teaching Staff	6
Set-Up and Structure.....	7
Specific Guidance on Islamic Education for Arab and non-Arab Muslim students.....	7
Specific Guidance on Arabic as a First Language for Arab Students.....	8
Specific Guidance on Arabic as an Additional Language for Non-Arab Students.....	10
Specific Guidance on Social Studies for Arab Students	11
Specific Guidance on Moral, Social and Cultural Studies for Non-Arab Students	12
Specific Guidance on Moral Education for Arab Students	12
Mandatory Requirements for All Private Schools Offering the MoE Curriculum.....	14

Introduction

The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) is committed to supporting private schools in Dubai in delivering an education that reflects the national identity, values, and cultural heritage of the United Arab Emirates. This includes aligning high-quality educational provision with national priorities that foster a strong sense of identity, preserve cultural heritage, and promote responsible citizenship. This guide outlines the expectations and requirements for teaching the UAE national mandatory subjects, ensuring a consistent and purposeful approach that prepares students to thrive with a strong sense of national identity and the skills to engage confidently in a global society.

The Scope of This Guide

This guide highlights the Knowledge and Human Development Authority's (KHDA) expectations and requirements for teaching the UAE national mandatory subjects in all private schools in Dubai. The guide should serve as a reference point to ensure compliance and address any queries related to the provision of the UAE national mandatory subjects from Grade 1/Year 2 up to and including Grade 12/Year 13.

The updated KHDA requirements, announced in Spring 2025, must be implemented by all private schools in Dubai from the beginning of the 2025-26 academic year in August 2025. For schools that start their academic year in April, implementation must begin in April 2026.

Compliance

This section highlights the guidelines all private schools in Dubai must comply with in their implementation of the UAE Ministry of Education's (MoE) requirements for national mandatory subjects. Any failure to meet these guidelines will be considered a breach of KHDA regulations. The schools' implementation of the guidelines will be closely monitored and evaluated by KHDA's quality assurance teams.

Islamic Education, Arabic, Social Studies for Arab Students, and Moral, Social and Cultural Studies (Msc) for Non-Arab Students:

- ▶ The minimum weekly instructional time specified by KHDA for each grade/year group in the mandatory requirements table (below) must be provided to all Dubai private school students in their respective Arab/non-Arab and Muslim/non-Muslim groups.
- ▶ Schools must use the student's nationality, as stated on their Emirates ID, to determine whether they belong to the Arab or non-Arab group.

- ▶ The mandatory subjects must be delivered as standalone lessons during official school hours. The stated requirements are calculated using a 40-minute lesson unit.
- ▶ All schools are required to provide the total instructional time per week as stated in the mandatory requirements table, unless a KHDA-approved exemption curriculum modification has been granted to students (on a case-by-case basis), especially students of determination.
- ▶ Schools may adapt and modify the duration of lessons to best fit their contexts and students' needs as long as the total amount of instructional time meets KHDA requirements.
- ▶ All private schools offering the MoE curriculum must fully implement the ministry's guidelines, including any future updates.

Compliance Requirements for Moral Education for Arab Students:

- ▶ KHDA's compliance and quality assurance teams will continue to allow private schools in Dubai to choose whether to offer Moral Education as a standalone subject for Arab students or embed it in another subject/area of learning in a format that suits their context.
- ▶ All schools must maintain comprehensive evidence of students' work in this subject, particularly where it is offered as an embedded subject, and share it with KHDA when requested.

Curriculum Requirements

This section outlines the general curriculum guidelines that all private schools must follow in the planning, structuring, and delivery of mandatory subjects. Schools are expected to maintain complete records and evidence of their curricular plans and share them with KHDA when requested. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will be considered a non-compliance issue.

- ▶ All private schools in Dubai must follow the MoE's standards and expectations outlined in the UAE National Curriculum documents for each of the mandatory subjects as well as any future supplements that may be published by KHDA and/or the MoE.
- ▶ Curriculum standards for all mandatory subjects are available on the official MoE website. Any updates to curriculum standards will be communicated to private schools by KHDA.

- ▶ Schools should aim for full coverage of the MoE curriculum for all mandatory subjects and ensure appropriate breadth and balance across all skill areas within these subjects in their provision.
- ▶ Schools are expected to review their current school curriculum maps to make the best use of the increased time allocations for Islamic Education for non-Arabs, Arabic as a first language, and standalone lessons for Social Studies/MSC effective from the 2025-26 academic year.
- ▶ Schools are prohibited from implementing any alternative or additional content in place of the MoE curriculum content without prior approval from the MoE. However, enrichment materials, including digital resources designed to enhance the UAE curriculum, are permitted, provided they align with the content of the MoE curriculum and the UAE's values, culture, and laws.
- ▶ Exemptions from, or modifications to, the curriculum for students of determination will be considered by KHDA strictly on a case-by-case basis. Requests must include comprehensive, professionally substantiated reports from qualified specialists. These reports must clearly articulate the nature and extent of the student's barriers to learning and provide a robust, evidence-based rationale for the proposed exemption or curriculum adaptation. KHDA will evaluate each application with due diligence, and approval will be granted only if the submitted documentation sufficiently justifies that the educational adjustment is in the best interest of the student's learning and development. Schools should refer to the Guidelines and Standards for the Use of External Assessment Reports for Students of Determination in Dubai Private Schools to support this process. This guidance outlines the expectations for report quality and content, helping ensure that submitted assessments provide the necessary clarity and depth to inform decision-making.

Timetabling

To ensure equitable access and effective implementation, all schools must adhere to the following guidelines when designing their school timetables. Failure to adhere to these guidelines is considered a non-compliance issue.

- ▶ Lessons for mandatory subjects must be scheduled during regular school hours as part of the official school timetable.
- ▶ Due to the additional time allocated to Arab and non-Arab students for certain mandatory subjects, schools must ensure these students do not miss any 'new learning' in other subjects while attending these lessons.

- ▶ While schools may modify the length of lessons to be longer or shorter than 40 minutes, it is expected that the minimum length of any lesson for mandatory subjects is 20 minutes. In all cases, the total amount of time required by KHDA must be met in full.
- ▶ Schools are responsible for timetabling separate classes for Arabic, Islamic Education, and Social Studies for Arab students, as well as Moral, Social, and Cultural Studies (MSC) for non-Arab students. Classes that combine both nationality groups in these subjects are not permitted due to the significant difference in curriculum expectations and the languages of instruction.
- ▶ From the 2026-27 academic year, timetables for UAE mandatory subjects must be designed to ensure that Arab and/or Muslim students, particularly in the upper grades, have equitable access to elective or optional subjects within their school's licenced curriculum. Where necessary, schools may make suitable modifications to individual timetables for specific students in those upper year groups to meet their needs, after obtaining parental consent. Such cases must be reported to KHDA and updated annually.

Teaching Staff

This section outlines the main requirements for teaching staff employed by private schools to deliver the UAE national mandatory subjects. These requirements apply from Grade 1/Year 2 up to and including Grade 12/Year 13 only. Different expectations apply to the early years phase. Schools must also note that teachers new to the profession must have at least six months of teaching practice supervised by a qualified and experienced teacher of the same subject specialism.

- ▶ Schools are required to ensure that teachers of Islamic Education and Arabic as a first/additional language have the relevant KHDA approval to teach these subjects.
- ▶ Teachers approved to teach Arabic as a first language are automatically approved to teach Arabic as an additional language.
- ▶ Teachers of Social Studies for Arab students must be native Arabic speakers and have a valid KHDA approval letter. This may include approved homeroom teachers.
- ▶ Moral Education for Arab students, whether taught as a standalone subject or embedded across the curriculum, must be taught by KHDA-approved teachers, including homeroom teachers.
- ▶ Moral, Social and Cultural Studies must be taught by KHDA-approved teachers, including homeroom teachers.

Set-Up and Structure

This section outlines KHDA's expectations for the organisation of classes and placement of students in appropriate groups. Failure to adhere to these guidelines is considered a non-compliance issue.

- ▶ For Arabic as a first language, Islamic Education for Arabs/non-Arabs and Social Studies for Arab students or MSC for non-Arab students, schools must organise separate classes for Arab and non-Arab students. Combined classes are strictly prohibited due to the different curriculum expectations and languages of instruction.
- ▶ Schools may group students by ability or targets for Arabic as an additional language. In doing so, schools must maintain an appropriate class size, in line with their licence, and ensure there is only one grade/year difference between students. However, student attainment should be assessed based on the number of years of study of the language, regardless of the ability group/class they are placed in. Students' progress should still be measured against their starting point within their school phase.
- ▶ Schools may place non-Arab students in Arabic as a first language classes, upon parents' request, provided they can cope with the demands of the curriculum, as demonstrated through appropriate assessments. Schools are encouraged to support this practice, as it can measure the achievement of such students in relation to their status as additional language learners.
- ▶ Arab and Emirati students must not be placed in MSC classes for non-Arab students. Where an Arab student requires some support to access the Social Studies curriculum due to underdeveloped Arabic linguistic skills, it is expected that the school will, in the 2025-26 academic year, modify their provision for such a student to support a smooth transition to learning the subject in Arabic as soon as possible.

Specific Guidance on Islamic Education for Arab and non-Arab Muslim students

- ▶ This subject is mandatory for all Arab and non-Arab students, including Emirati students, who are registered with KHDA and in the school records as Muslims. This applies to all relevant Muslim students from Grade 1/Year 2 up to and including Grade 12/Year 13.
- ▶ The UAE National Curriculum, published by the UAE Ministry of Education, and the prescribed textbooks are the sole sources for curriculum expectations, which can be accessed via the MoE's official website. The teaching of any other foreign syllabus for Islamic Education, whether as an alternative or supplementary to the UAE Islamic Education curriculum, is not permitted. Any breach of this regulation is considered a non-compliance issue.

- ▶ Private schools are not permitted to run any foreign religious education or Islamic Studies in any school phase.
- ▶ Schools must ensure that any enrichment materials, including electronic platforms, are in line with the UAE curriculum for Islamic Education, and reflect the UAE's culture, values and laws.
- ▶ The curriculum for Islamic Education for Arab Muslim students has different standards and expectations from those for non-Arab Muslim students. Therefore, combining students from both groups in a single class is not permitted.
- ▶ Schools are allowed to decide how the additional time allocated to Islamic Education for non-Arab students from the next academic year onwards will be used. For example, schools may use the additional time to focus on skill areas that require improvement across the school. Alternatively, schools may choose to offer personalised learning opportunities for students within well-constructed IEPs (individual educational plans) that are tailored to individual students' needs and reviewed regularly.
- ▶ Schools must aim to cover the full MoE curriculum for this subject for both Arab and non-Arab students, making appropriate modifications for students with specific learning needs.
- ▶ All schools must maintain records of data and evidence of student achievement for this subject and report them to KHDA in line with KHDA's reporting protocols and guidelines.

Specific Guidance on Arabic as a First Language for Arab Students

- ▶ This subject is mandatory for all students who are registered with KHDA as Arab nationals, according to their Emirates ID, including Emirati students. This applies to all relevant students from Grade 1/Year 2 up to and including Grade 12/Year 13.
- ▶ The UAE National Curriculum, published by the UAE Ministry of Education, is the official source of curriculum expectations, which can be accessed via the MoE website. Other first-language syllabi from any foreign curricula (e.g., UK, US, or IB) are not accepted as alternatives to the mandatory UAE national curriculum for Arabic as a first language.
- ▶ Schools may offer separate, additional courses in Arabic, based on the school's licensed curriculum at any level, provided they obtain the approval of the relevant parents and that appropriate instructional time is allocated for this purpose. The content must also align with the UAE's values, culture and laws.

It is the school's responsibility to ensure that all parents are fully informed of and understand the UAE's equivalency requirements for graduation, which do not recognise such syllabi as alternatives to the MoE's mandatory Arabic curriculum.

- ▶ From the 2026-27 academic year, particularly in higher grades/years where different learning pathways/options /elective subjects may apply, schools must ensure that scheduling for mandatory UAE subjects, including Arabic, does not restrict Arab students' access to other curricular options. Schools may make appropriate modifications to the timetables of specific Arab students in certain upper-year groups to ensure equitable access to all subjects offered in the school, after obtaining parental consent. All such cases must be reported to KHDA and updated every year.
- ▶ Schools may enrol non-Arab students in Arabic as a first language, upon parents' request, provided they can cope with the demands of the curriculum, as demonstrated through appropriate assessments.
- ▶ The curriculum for this subject must be delivered in standalone lessons during official school hours.
- ▶ All schools must maintain records of data and evidence of student achievement for this subject and report them to KHDA in line with KHDA's reporting protocols and guidelines.
- ▶ Schools must not combine classes for two grades/years in Arabic as a first language. Each grade/year group must be taught separately.
- ▶ Schools must ensure that any supplementary or enrichment material, including electronic platforms used by the school, aligns with the content of the UAE curriculum for the subject and the UAE's culture, values and laws.
- ▶ To address significant linguistic deficiencies for certain first language students, other than students of determination, schools may modify the curriculum through a formal individual educational plan (IEP). The IEP must align with the appropriate MoE expectations, tailored to each student's ability, needs, and learning targets. However, these students must not be placed in an Arabic as an additional language class. Schools are required to share with KHDA complete evidence of IEPs and achievement data for such students, when requested. Schools must note that this does not include students of determination, who should follow the exemption processes specified by KHDA.

Specific Guidance on Arabic as an Additional Language for Non-Arab Students

- ▶ This subject is mandatory for all students who are registered as non-Arab nationals. This applies to all relevant students from Grade 1/Year 2 up to and including Grade 9/Year 10.
- ▶ The UAE National Curriculum, published by the UAE Ministry of Education, is the main source of curriculum expectations, which can be accessed via the MoE's website. Schools may integrate other foreign language syllabi from their licensed curriculum into Arabic lessons, provided they serve only as enhancement or supplementary material, and not as replacements for the UAE curriculum.
- ▶ Schools may offer any separate, additional courses in Arabic in individual lessons, based on the school's licensed curriculum at any level, provided they obtain parental approval, and appropriate instructional time is allocated. The content must also be aligned with the UAE's values, culture and laws. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that all parents are fully aware of and understand the UAE equivalency requirements for graduation related to Arabic, which do not consider such syllabi an alternative to the MoE mandatory Arabic curriculum.
- ▶ Schools may enrol non-Arab students in Arabic as a first language, upon parents' request, provided they can cope with the demands of the curriculum, as demonstrated through appropriate assessments.
- ▶ The curriculum must be delivered in standalone lessons during official school hours.
- ▶ All schools must maintain records of data and evidence of student achievement for this subject and report them to KHDA in line with KHDA's reporting protocols and guidelines.
- ▶ Schools may combine classes for students from two adjacent grades/year groups for Arabic as an additional language if grouping by ability level. However, schools must measure attainment based on the number of years each student has studied the language, regardless of the class or ability group/class they are placed in.
- ▶ Schools must ensure that any supplementary or enrichment material, including electronic platforms used by the school, aligns with the content of the UAE curriculum for the subject, and the UAE's culture, values and laws.

Specific Guidance on Social Studies for Arab Students

- ▶ This subject is mandatory for all Arab and Emirati students who are registered with KHDA as Arab nationals, according to their Emirates ID, including Emirati students. This applies to all relevant students from Grade1/Year 2 up to and including Grade 9/Year 10.
- ▶ The UAE National Curriculum, published by the MoE, is the main source of curriculum expectations, which can be accessed via the MoE's official website. Any other Humanities/Social Studies syllabi from other curricula (e.g. UK, US or IB) are not accepted as an alternative to the UAE mandatory curriculum for this subject.
- ▶ From the 2025-26 academic year, this subject must be delivered in standalone lessons during official school hours. The curriculum for this subject can no longer be embedded into other subjects or mapped across the school curriculum.
- ▶ The language of instruction for the subject must be Arabic. Only where necessary, temporary and short-term modifications, such as limited use of supplementary language, may be introduced for individual students. These modifications must be recorded and tracked in students' formal individual educational plans, with the goal of enabling full access to the curriculum in Arabic as soon as possible.
- ▶ All schools must maintain records of student data and evidence of achievement in this subject and report them to KHDA in line with KHDA's guidelines and protocols.
- ▶ Schools must not combine classes for two different grades/years. Schools must organise separate classes for each grade/year.
- ▶ Schools must ensure that any supplementary or enrichment material, including electronic platforms used by the school, aligns with the content of the UAE curriculum for the subject, and the UAE's culture, values and laws.
- ▶ Schools may offer other Humanities/Social Studies subjects based on the school's licensed curriculum at any level, provided an appropriate amount of instructional time is allocated.

Specific Guidance on Moral, Social and Cultural Studies for Non-Arab Students

- ▶ This subject is mandatory for all non-Arab students who are registered with KHDA as non-Arab nationals, according to their Emirates ID. This applies to all relevant students from Grade 1/Year 2 up to and including Grade 9/Year 10.
- ▶ The UAE National Curriculum, published by the UAE Ministry of Education, is the official source of curriculum expectations, which can be accessed via the MoE's official website. Any other Humanities syllabus from other curricula (e.g. UK, US or IB) is not accepted as an alternative to the UAE mandatory curriculum for this subject.
- ▶ From the 2025-26 academic year, this subject must be delivered in standalone lessons during official school hours.
- ▶ The language of instruction should be English but may be supplemented by the school's licensed language of instruction where needed.
- ▶ All schools must maintain records of student data and evidence of achievement in this subject and report them to KHDA in line with KHDA's guidelines and protocols.
- ▶ Schools must not combine classes for two different grades/years. Schools must organise separate classes for each grade/year.
- ▶ Schools must ensure that any supplementary or enrichment material, including electronic platforms, aligns with the content of the UAE curriculum for Arabic as an additional language, and the UAE's culture, values and laws.

Specific Guidance on Moral Education for Arab Students

- ▶ This subject is mandatory for all Arab students who are registered with KHDA as Arab nationals, according to their Emirates ID, including Emiratis. This applies to all relevant students from Grade 1/Year 2 up to and including Grade 9/Year 10.
- ▶ The UAE National Curriculum, published by the UAE Ministry of Education, is the official source of curriculum expectations, which can be accessed via the MoE's official website. Any other syllabus from any foreign curriculum (e.g. UK, US or IB) is not accepted as an alternative to the UAE curriculum for this subject.

- ▶ KHDA allows schools to choose whether to deliver this subject through standalone lessons, or by embedding it with other subjects, or mapping it across the school curriculum.
- ▶ All schools must maintain records of student data and evidence of achievement in this subject and report them to KHDA in line with KHDA's guidelines and protocols.
- ▶ Schools must ensure that any supplementary or enrichment material, including electronic platforms, aligns with the content of the UAE curriculum for the subject and the UAE's culture, values and laws.
- ▶ Where the subject is embedded, the language of instruction should match the language used to deliver the subject in which it is embedded.

Mandatory Requirements for All Private Schools Offering the MoE Curriculum

All private schools in Dubai that offer the UAE Ministry of Education curriculum must adhere to the requirements of the MoE curriculum, as specified in [Ministerial Resolution 194, issued in 2023](#), and its subsequent updates by the UAE Ministry of Education and KHDA.

Mandatory requirements for all private schools offering a curriculum other than that of the MoE curriculum from the 2025-26 academic year

	G1/Y2	G2/Y3	G3/Y4	G4/Y5	G5/Y6	G6/Y7	G7/Y8	G8/Y9	G9/Y10	G10/Y11	G11/Y12	G12/Y13
Arabic as a First Language	6	6	6	6 New	6 New	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Arabic as an Additional Language	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	Optional	Optional	Optional
Islamic Education for Arab Muslim Students	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Islamic Education for Non-Arab Muslim Students	3 New	3 New	3 New	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Social Studies for Arab Students (standalone lesson) New	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Optional	Optional	Optional
UAE Social, Moral and Cultural Studies for Non-Arab Students (standalone lesson) New	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Optional	Optional	Optional
Moral Education for Arab Students (standalone or Integrated)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1