



## TECHNICAL GUIDE FOR APPOINTING TEACHING STAFF IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN DUBAI

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## FOREWORD

To promote the highest standards of teaching and equitable provision across private schools in Dubai, these policy guidelines outline KHDA's requirements for recruiting teaching staff.

This document outlines the requirements for teaching staff qualifications, prior experience, and a code of conduct. It also establishes the recruitment processes to be adopted by the schools and summarises KHDA's approval process for teaching staff appointments, in accordance with prevailing legislation.

The guidelines emphasise that the school owner<sup>1</sup> must conduct thorough background checks on candidates, verifying their qualifications and classroom experience, while also implementing a rigorous interview process. These measures help ensure that potential hires meet professional standards and uphold the required code of conduct.

KHDA's requirements for the owner to conduct rigorous due diligence processes are clearly outlined in this document. These processes emphasise the importance of thorough and continuous checks to ensure candidates align with the setting's culture, as well as UAE norms and values. This includes evaluating their professional and public conduct, as well as the appropriate use of social and other communication media, alongside the safe and ethical use of artificial intelligence.

To address the longstanding challenge of high in-year teaching staff turnover in a highly competitive sector, this technical guide introduces a significant new requirement linked to the issuance of the Appointment Notice for all teachers. This Appointment Notice formalises a teacher's commitment to a single school, and a teacher may only hold one at a time, thereby enhancing stability within the private school sector in Dubai. It also aims to minimise disruptions to students' learning by ensuring that teachers only change schools at the end of an academic term or semester. The Appointment Notice will also apply to appointments of school principals.

<sup>1</sup> In this document, 'owner' refers to the setting's licensed owner, who may delegate the responsibility for recruitment, to a board of governors, and/or directly to the principal or headteacher. In parts of this document the responsible body is also referred to as 'the school'.

Additionally, as a condition for receiving their Appointment Notice, departing teachers and leaders<sup>2</sup> are required to complete and submit a standardised exit survey to KHDA. These surveys will provide valuable insights into the primary factors driving teaching staff turnover. By building this knowledge base, KHDA and the broader sector can better address the historically high rates of staff turnover and implement more effective, data-driven solutions.

Finally, we are introducing a new, separate, but aligned policy on education staff (including teachers) deregistration. This policy aims to protect children, guard against malpractice, promote organisational integrity, and maintain the quality and reputation of our teaching staff and the sector.

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<sup>2</sup> Leaders refers to principals and any other school leaders with teaching responsibilities.

## | RECRUITMENT

### | APPOINTMENT NOTICE ISSUANCE

To take up a position as an approved teacher<sup>3</sup> in a private school, a candidate must be issued an Appointment Notice<sup>4</sup> by KHDA. This notice applies to a single school and is not transferable. There are stringent requirements that must be met by both the candidate and the school prior to such a Notice being issued.

Regardless of the type or level of the school, from early years to the end of secondary education, and from the most affordable to the most premium, ensuring consistently high-quality teaching and learning hinges on teachers who are appropriately qualified and have proven experience. Verifying these credentials must be the school's first priority when evaluating prospective teaching candidates.

In addition to assessing qualifications and experience, the school must conduct comprehensive checks on any candidate. These checks must adhere to internationally well-established safer recruitment and due diligence practices. They include obtaining satisfactory professional references from at least two previous employers, conducting background checks, and implementing a rigorous interview process.

By following these procedures, the school ensures that only candidates who meet the highest standards of professionalism and competency are considered for teaching roles, supporting the delivery of high-quality education across all levels.

The Appointment Notice is only valid for work at the private school that submitted the request, and the teacher must hold a copy. The teacher cannot use it to work at any other private school in Dubai.

When a teacher moves schools, their existing Appointment Notice becomes invalid, and they must receive a new one from the new school before taking up a position. In addition to a teacher's contractual obligations to their existing employer, there are stringent KHDA requirements that must also be met.

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<sup>3</sup> Teacher or teaching staff includes the principal and other senior and middle leaders with teaching responsibilities for schools throughout this document

<sup>4</sup> The Approval Notice is essentially a no objection certificate (NOC) from KHDA

## | THE 90-DAY RULE

The 90-Day rule following resignation<sup>5</sup>

To leave their current school and take up a new position at another school, a teacher or leader must:

1. Resign and serve the full notice period as specified in their employment contract
2. Leave their current school on the last day of an academic term (or semester, for U.S. curriculum schools) and at no other time; and
3. Complete and submit the KHDA Exit Survey<sup>6</sup>

Failure to meet any of these conditions will result in KHDA imposing a 90-day waiting period before an Appointment Notice can be issued to this teacher for a new school.

Where applicable, the 90-day period will begin on the date the teacher either submits their resignation or leaves the school without serving the required notice.

<sup>5</sup> Note that in the event of a 'dismissal' be that for conduct or capability, or a resignation tendered pending a likely dismissal, the school MUST notify KHDA of such an event. In such circumstances, KHDA will investigate further to consider placing the teacher on a 'Deregistration List' in line with the aforementioned 'Deregistration Policy'.

<sup>6</sup> If a teacher completes and submits the Exit Survey after a 90-day notice has been enforced, and the survey submission is the sole condition for enforcing that notice, KHDA may revoke the notice period with immediate effect.

## | QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND DUE DILIGENCE REQUIREMENTS

### | QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

For an Appointment Notice to be issued, a teacher must meet the regulatory requirements set out for a Dubai teacher in respect of their minimum qualifications and experience.

**For these requirements, the following qualifications are accepted:**

- Qualifications awarded by foreign university branches operating in free zones in the Emirate and those educational institutions under the supervision of KHDA who are authorised to award them [Higher Education Institutes (HEI) and Technical, Vocational Education Centres (TVET)].
- Qualifications from UAE-based government and private universities that are accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR).
- Qualifications from international universities and educational institutions that are accredited by the relevant authorities in their home country and recognised internationally, as well as by KHDA and MoHESR.

The following qualifications are the minimum requirements for schools<sup>7</sup>:

**NURSERY TEACHER<sup>8</sup>: 45 DAYS TO 35 MONTHS**

**Minimum Qualification**

Level 3 QF Emirates in Early Childhood Education

**Minimum Experience**

No minimum experience. However, if a candidate has no prior experience, they must be directly supervised by a qualified and experienced teacher for at least six months in this age range.

**PRE-KINDERGARTEN (PRE KG)/FOUNDATION STAGE (FS) TEACHER: 36 MONTHS TO 6<sup>9</sup> YEARS**

**Minimum Qualification**

Level 6 QF Emirates [Bachelor] in Education or Early Childhood Education

**OR**

Level 6 QF Emirates [Bachelor] in any discipline, plus at least a Level 3 QF Emirates in early childhood education

**Minimum Experience**

At least one year of recent experience as a teacher or leader in an early childhood setting

**OR**

for a teacher new to the profession, at least six months of teaching practice, supervised by a qualified, experienced early childhood teacher.

<sup>7</sup> For qualifications requirements in Early Childhood Centres please refer to the relevant guidance

<sup>8</sup> Where a school has a permit to include provision for children under the age of 36 months

<sup>9</sup> Age 5 in National Curriculum for England [EYFS]

## PRIMARY/ELEMENTARY TEACHER: 6 YEARS<sup>10</sup> - 11 YEARS

### Minimum Qualification



Level 6 QF Emirates [Bachelor] in Education [E.g., B.Ed/M.Ed.]

**OR**

Level 6 QF Emirates [Bachelor] in any subject and at least six months of close school supervision under a qualified, experienced teacher.

### Minimum Experience



At least one year of recent experience as a teacher or leader in this phase

**OR**

for a teacher new to the profession, at least six months of teaching practice supervised by a qualified, experienced primary phase teacher.

<sup>10</sup> From 5 years in schools offering the National Curriculum for England [NCFE]

## SPECIALIST TEACHER: 6 YEARS - 18 YEARS

### Minimum Qualification

A subject specialist teacher (primary or post-primary) must possess:

- A recognised QF Emirates Level 6 [Bachelor] degree relevant to the subject(s) taught. [E.g., BSc (physics); BA (English)]<sup>11</sup>

### Multiple subjects:

If a teacher holds a degree and/or teaching qualifications recognised by a federal authority or Ministry in their home country, allowing them to teach multiple subjects or phases, the school must seek KHDA's approval before issuing a contract or deploying the teacher.

In this scenario, KHDA will provide guidance and issue the necessary approval(s) according to approved procedures.

### Minimum Experience

At least one year of recent experience as a specialist teacher or leader in the subject

### OR

for a **specialist** teacher new to the profession, at least six months of teaching practice supervised by a qualified, experienced teacher of the same subject specialism.

For a **school principal**, please refer to the requirements for the appointment and approval of such leaders in the associated guide "Leading the Way: A Technical Guide for School Owners When Recruiting a New Principal".

<sup>11</sup> Applied degrees may qualify e.g., engineering to teach physics or mathematics - in such cases, KHDA will advise and where necessary apply restrictions

## | TRANSITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENTS FOR CURRENTLY EMPLOYED TEACHERS

These qualification requirements take immediate effect for any teacher starting their first teaching role in a Dubai private school and for those already employed in the sector who are taking up a new position in another school.

Teachers currently employed in Dubai private schools, who do not intend to leave their existing schools, must meet the qualification thresholds set out in these guidelines no later than **September 1, 2028 (or April 1, 2029 for schools whose academic year begins in April)**, if their existing credentials do not meet the required standards.

## | DUE DILIGENCE AND INTERVIEWING

Before interviewing a candidate, the school must conduct robust due diligence, which should include, at a minimum:

- Checking the Deregistration List held by KHDA to check whether a candidate is prohibited from working in a private school in Dubai.
- Being satisfied with the contents of at least two written, professional<sup>12</sup> references, one of which must be the candidate's most recent employer.
- Safeguarding and criminal checks – as indicated below - across multiple jurisdictions if employed there within the previous five years, and their home country if having resided there in the last ten years.
- Review of the candidate's reputational risk, for example, through a check of their online and media presence.<sup>13</sup>
- Accuracy check of the candidate's curriculum vitae/application form, including explaining any gaps.
- Attestation of the candidate's qualifications.

Once the principal is satisfied that these checks have been satisfactorily completed, the school must conduct a formal panel interview, which should include the principal.<sup>14</sup> All panel members for interviews must be trained in safeguarding and safer recruitment practices.

Where the teacher is a specialist (subject, early years, inclusion, etc.), the school must also ensure that there is at least one educational expert in a relevant field on the panel.

<sup>12</sup> For a candidate new to the profession, in their first job, the minimum requirement would be two references from their higher education institution

<sup>13</sup> There exist companies that specialise in online/social media digital screening who could be deployed – it is recommended to use one of these

<sup>14</sup> In many cases, the owner/governing body may entirely delegate the recruitment (and interview) of prospective teachers to the principal. In some cases, the principal may in turn delegate the interview to another senior leader.

KHDA reserves the right to audit all due diligence documentation and interview evidence at any time; the school must securely file these materials for as long as the teacher is in post.

To ensure safer recruitment practices, interviews should only be conducted once all due diligence has been completed, including receipt of the satisfactory references mentioned above. Candidates should also have submitted a full curriculum vitae or application form, and ideally, a letter or presentation in support of their application.

The following additional requirements must also be met.

### **| LEGAL STATUS AND GOOD STANDING**

[See also Section 2 Code of Conduct and the separate Deregistration Policy]

**To be able to teach, a teacher must possess:**

- a valid UAE residence visa
- fully attested and accredited qualifications that fully meet UAE equivalency requirements
- and a school contract or employment agreement

**Before they take up the post, a teacher must have:**

- a UAE police clearance certificate
- a police clearance certificate from each country where they have resided during the previous five years
- a police clearance certificate from their home country if they have lived there at any time in the previous ten years.
- a letter from the school confirming that due diligence has been completed to confirm that the teacher is of good standing
- Signed and returned the approved Code of Conduct

## | MANDATORY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Before assuming their role and commencing teaching duties, all teachers are required to complete a set of mandatory professional development courses as part of their initial induction. The school should organise these courses. If external providers are engaged, schools must refer to the list of KHDA-approved providers, which is available on the KHDA website. This training is subject to audit and evaluation during KHDA visits and inspections.

### **The mandatory professional development courses are:**

- Code of conduct for teachers
- Basic security, health, wellbeing, safety and risk management
- Child protection, safeguarding and the promotion of student wellbeing
- Working with Students of Determination

## | CODE OF CONDUCT, DISCIPLINARY POLICIES AND DEREGISTRATION

### | CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES<sup>15</sup>

The following Code of Conduct for teachers must be circulated and signed by all school staff members as part of the selection and recruitment process and should be reinforced during staff induction.

Category	Description
<b>Values</b>	→ Encourage positive values in students, safeguarding against unacceptable ideas, promoting tolerance and acceptance of others.
<b>Due Regard</b>	→ Respect the UAE's development, Emirati culture, and traditions; participate in national activities; and uphold Islamic values.
<b>Protection</b>	→ Commit to protecting children from neglect, exploitation, bullying, and abuse.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	→ Avoid disclosing confidential information about students and families outside of safeguarding policy contexts; refrain from spreading false news or rumours.
<b>Demeanour</b>	→ Demonstrate exemplary behaviour when dealing with parents and the community.
<b>Diversity</b>	→ Respect cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity; avoid offensive behaviour or remarks against colleagues and the institution.
<b>Sobriety</b>	→ Refrain from using, possessing, or being under the influence of unauthorised substances, including smoking, in the workplace.
<b>Decorum</b>	→ Avoid discussing or promoting socially unacceptable behaviours in the UAE, such as gender identity, inebriation, and premarital or same-sex relationships.
<b>Integrity</b>	→ Maintain appropriate conduct in real life and on social media, ensure political neutrality, and uphold the expected behaviour of an education setting employee in the UAE.  Follow any institutional dress code that meets UAE/Dubai standards.  Use technology (including AI) legally, ethically and transparently in the workplace, respecting privacy and rights, and notably, not using AI to replace human judgment in student-related matters.

<sup>15</sup> Based around the UAE published Code of Conduct for School Employees (September 2022) with added element of 'integrity'

## | DISCIPLINARY POLICIES AND DEREGISTRATION

Owners and their governing bodies must maintain a staff disciplinary policy, reviewed and updated annually, along with clear, accompanying procedures. They must invoke these measures as needed.

**Examples of situations that may trigger this process include<sup>16</sup>:**

→ **Breaches of Professional Conduct**

Serious violations of the above Code of Conduct, including instances of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct, both within and beyond the workplace.

→ **Safeguarding Concerns**

Any evidence that arises that the member of staff has acted or neglected to act in a way that compromises the safety or well-being of students or colleagues, including breaches of child protection policies.

→ **Performance Issues**

Following any failure of the invocation of a 'capability policy' or its equivalent, persistent underperformance or failure to meet the professional standards and expectations, after extensive, supportive interventions have been attempted.

→ **Misuse of Authority**

Abuse of power or role, including favouritism, discrimination, or bullying.

→ **Legal or Criminal Allegations**

Instances where staff are implicated in illegal activities, either inside or outside the workplace, that could affect their professional responsibilities or reputation.

<sup>16</sup> More details will be found in the KHDA Deregistration Policy.

- **Conflict of Interest or Ethical Concerns**  
Unreported conflicts of interest or unethical practices, such as dishonesty, alleged fraud, or corruption.
- **Repeated Disregard for Procedures**  
A school's—staff disciplinary policy should allow for minor consequences as appropriate, following evidence marshalled during a formal investigation (e.g., verbal warning), moderate consequences (e.g., first or final written warning) and serious consequences (i.e. dismissal).
- Appeal processes must be in place in the policy.

In any instance where a teaching staff has been issued a warning (verbal or written) or has been dismissed, **KHDA must be notified within 24 hours of the warning being issued.**

Upon notification, KHDA may invoke the Deregistration Policy to assess whether the sanctioned (former) staff member should be added to the Deregistration List.

Placement on this list will prohibit the individual from holding any position in a school. Employers are advised to consult the Deregistration Policy for further guidance.

## | EXIT SURVEY

### | EXIT SURVEYS BY DEPARTING TEACHING STAFF

Ensuring the ability of employers and senior leaders to attract and retain effective teachers is critical for the success and stability of schools. This is especially important in the affordable sector, where high turnover remains a persistent challenge.

To address this issue and encourage better sector-wide practices, all departing teachers, including those in leadership positions, are now required to complete a mandatory KHDA Exit Survey.

This survey will provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to teaching staff turnover, highlight areas for improvement, and support efforts to create a more positive work environment that encourages educators to remain in their roles.

Schools must notify KHDA in advance of a teacher's departure by entering the teacher's notice period, contact details, and Emirates ID into the KHDA system before their final working day. This information is essential for compliance, and failure to provide it may result in delays or additional regulatory consequences.

Once the school updates the notice period in the KHDA system, the Exit Survey is automatically generated and sent directly to the teacher. The school must instruct the teacher to complete the survey independently before or immediately after leaving the school.

As noted earlier, a KHDA Appointment Notice will not be issued until an exit survey from leaving a previous private school in Dubai has been submitted. For teachers new to teaching in Dubai, this requirement will not apply.

KHDA may follow up with additional queries.

### | REPORTING DEPARTURES RELATED TO DISMISSALS OR MISCONDUCT

Furthermore, it is vital that schools record and report to KHDA any instances of dismissals or situations where resignation is used to avoid dismissal due to alleged misconduct. Such reports must be submitted within 24 hours to ensure full transparency and accountability throughout the recruitment and retention process.

## | APPENDIX

### | GLOSSARY OF KEY DEFINITIONS

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#### **Appointment Notice**

An official document issued by KHDA that authorises a teacher or school principal to take up a position at a specific private school in Dubai. It is non-transferable and exclusive to the school that submitted the request. A teacher can only hold one Appointment Notice at a time.

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#### **Code of Conduct**

A mandatory set of behavioural and professional expectations that all school staff, including teachers, must read, sign, and adhere to. It includes guidelines on values, protection of children, confidentiality, conduct on social media, use of AI, and respect for UAE norms and laws.

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#### **Disciplinary Policy**

A school-owned and annually reviewed policy outlining clear procedures for handling breaches of conduct, safeguarding concerns, performance issues, and other professional infractions. It includes graduated responses (e.g., verbal warnings to dismissal) and must include an appeals process.

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#### **Due Diligence**

A comprehensive vetting process that schools must conduct before hiring a teacher. It includes background checks, references, criminal record clearance, social media reviews, attestation of qualifications, and structured panel interviews.

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#### **Exit Survey**

A mandatory KHDA survey that all departing teachers and leaders must complete as a condition of receiving a new Appointment Notice. It gathers insights into reasons for turnover and school-level improvement needs.

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#### **Good Standing**

A teacher is considered to be in good standing when they have:

- a valid UAE residence visa
- attested and recognised qualifications
- necessary police clearance certificates from the UAE and relevant countries
- no misconduct or safeguarding concerns

### Notice Period

The contractual period a teacher must serve after submitting a resignation, before officially leaving their current school. Teachers must serve their full notice period and may only transfer schools at the end of a term (or semester for schools following the US curriculum). Additionally, they must complete the KHDA Exit Survey.

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### Qualification (Teaching)

A recognised academic credential that meets the KHDA minimum threshold for teachers. Qualifications must be attested, meet UAE equivalency standards, and vary by teaching role (e.g., Level 3 for nursery teachers, Level 6 for primary and specialist teachers).

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### Teaching Staff

All individuals appointed in a formal teaching role at a private school in Dubai, including early childhood, primary, specialist, and secondary teachers. This term also includes those in leadership positions who perform teaching responsibilities.

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### The 90-Day Rule

A restriction imposed by KHDA on any teacher who resigns but does not meet the required conditions (serving full notice, completing the Exit Survey, and leaving at the end of the term). In such cases, KHDA will not issue a new Appointment Notice for 90 calendar days.