

GEMS Academic & Careers Guidance Policy

This policy has been approved for operation within:	ALL GEMS Schools		
Status	Required		
Owner	GEMS Education		
Date effective from	September 2026	Date of next review	August 2027
Review period	Yearly	Version	2.0

1. Policy Statement and Purpose

This policy outlines GEMS Education's commitment to providing a high-quality, comprehensive and impartial academic, careers and university guidance programme for the 2026-27 academic year. It supports all students in making informed, realistic and ambitious decisions about future pathways, and is aligned with the KHDA FutuReady Framework, the GEMS For Life Careers and University Guidance Framework and the GEMS Futures Playbook.

GEMS Education recognises that career development is a lifelong process and that effective guidance plays a critical role in students' academic motivation, wellbeing, employability and successful transition beyond school. Careers and university guidance is therefore embedded within the wider GEMS Education mission and delivered through GEMS For Life, with schools using the Careers and University Guidance Framework and Futures Playbook to support students to understand themselves, explore opportunities, evidence growth and develop the skills and confidence required to manage future transitions.

This policy aligns with the expectations of the jurisdictions in which GEMS Education operates across the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. For Dubai schools, it specifically supports alignment with the KHDA FutuReady Framework for Academic Guidance and Career Readiness. For schools operating under the ADEK jurisdiction, schools are required to comply with the ADEK School Career and University Guidance Policy and any associated ADEK guidance or reporting requirements. The policy also reflects recognised international best practice in careers education and guidance.

2. Scope of the Policy

The GEMS For Life Careers and University Guidance Framework sets the strategic standards, shared language and quality expectations for careers and university guidance across the GEMS network. The GEMS Futures Playbook translates these expectations into age-appropriate learning, future-skills development, pathway exploration, encounters, reflection and evidence capture. Together, these documents provide the implementation structure through which schools meet this policy and strengthen alignment with the KHDA FutuReady Framework and ADEK School Career and University Guidance Policy.

This policy applies to all GEMS Education schools and should be read alongside the GEMS For Life Careers and University Guidance Framework, the GEMS Futures Playbook, and any relevant jurisdiction-specific requirements. The policy applies to:

- All students from Early Years / Foundation Stage through to graduation, recognising that academic guidance, future skills and career readiness should be developed progressively across the whole school journey.
- All staff involved in careers education, academic guidance, future-skills development, pastoral support, curriculum delivery and student reflection, including those contributing to GEMS Futures Playbook activities.
- School leadership and governance
- External partners contributing to careers and university guidance
- The GEMS For Life programme

The policy applies to all students regardless of background, academic ability, nationality, or intended post-school destination.

3. Aims and Objectives

The aims of the Careers and University Guidance programme are to:

- Support students to make well-informed, realistic, and aspirational decisions about their future pathways
- Develop students' self-awareness, confidence, decision-making, and career management skills
- Build future-ready skills and competencies, including adaptability, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking and resilience across all year groups from Early Years / Foundation Stage through to graduation.
- Ensure students develop digital literacy and future-ready skills required for success in a rapidly changing global labour market

- Provide access to up-to-date information about both the UAE and international labour markets, helping students understand emerging industries, skills demands, and global opportunities
- Ensure students are aware of a broad range of post-school pathways, including higher education, vocational routes, apprenticeships, employment, entrepreneurship, and gap years
- Provide primary & lower secondary school students with exposure to the world of work through in-curriculum learning activities that directly link learning experiences to careers and the world of work.
- Provide real-world learning experiences that enable students to understand workplace expectations, professional behaviour, and the realities of different career pathways
- Deliver impartial, student-centred guidance that prioritises individual needs, strengths, and aspirations
- Ensure the programme is inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with SEND and additional learning needs
- Actively engage families by providing information, guidance, and opportunities to support their child's career development and decision-making
- Support successful transitions to post-16 and post-18 destinations
- Ensure that the programme is aligned with the KHDA FutuReady Framework, the ADEK School Career and University Guidance Policy where applicable, the GEMS For Life Careers and University Guidance Framework, the GEMS Futures Playbook and recognised international benchmarks such as the Gatsby Benchmarks.

The programme seeks to ensure that all students:

- Develop the skills, knowledge and attributes required to thrive in future education, training and employment.
- Understand how their subjects, skills, values, experiences and GEMS For Life pathway exploration link to future study, work, community contribution and career opportunities.
- Use Unifrog and approved GEMS For Life evidence tools to record participation, reflections, guidance actions, pathway exploration, work experience, university applications, destinations and next steps, so that student growth and programme impact can be reviewed consistently.
- Have opportunities to engage with employers, universities and professionals through real-world experiences.
- Are well-prepared for international university admissions processes where relevant.
- Leave school with a clear, flexible plan and the confidence to adapt as their goals and circumstances evolve.

4. Careers and University Guidance Programme Overview

GEMS Education provides a structured, coherent and progressive academic, careers and university guidance programme that supports students at each stage of their educational journey, from early exposure to the world of work through to post-16, post-18 and alumni transition. Schools use the GEMS For Life Careers and University Guidance Framework and the GEMS Futures Playbook to plan age-appropriate learning, future-skills development, pathway exploration, meaningful encounters, reflection and evidence capture.

The programme is designed to build curiosity, self-awareness and future-skills vocabulary in the younger years; deepen exploration, subject-choice understanding and pathway awareness in the middle years; and provide focused preparation for post-16, post-18, university, TVET, employment, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning pathways in the senior years.

Careers education is delivered through a combination of curriculum-based learning, workshops, events, individual guidance, and enrichment opportunities, and is embedded within the wider curriculum and pastoral provision where appropriate.

Digital literacy and independent career management skills are developed through approved platforms such as Unifrog and wider GEMS For Life evidence tools. These enable students to research careers, universities, TVET and apprenticeship pathways, reflect on skills and experiences, record evidence, track guidance actions and manage applications in an organised and informed way. Through this blended and progressive approach, students are

supported to understand the changing nature of work, develop future-ready skills and make informed decisions within a global and UAE-specific context.

5. Statutory and Regulatory Context

This policy is aligned with the requirements and expectations of the regulatory authorities in the jurisdictions where GEMS Education operates, including ADEK, KHDA, SPEA and MOE. For Dubai schools, the policy specifically supports the KHDA FutuReady Framework, which sets standards for formal academic guidance and career readiness programmes, future skills, leadership and skilled professionals, university, TVET and career pathways, experiential learning, labour-market insight, family and community collaboration, digital and future-ready guidance, and youth-centred inclusive provision. For schools operating under ADEK jurisdiction, schools are required to comply with the ADEK School Career and University Guidance Policy and any associated guidance, reporting or inspection requirements.

Where appropriate, the programme is informed by recognised international frameworks and benchmarks, including the Gatsby Benchmarks and the Career Development Institute framework, while remaining responsive to the UAE context, Dubai's future-readiness priorities, ADEK expectations, the diverse nature of the GEMS Education student body and the global nature of students' post-school destinations. GEMS Education is committed to ethical, unbiased and student-centred guidance that helps students make informed decisions in a rapidly evolving education and employment landscape.

6. GEMS For Life Programme

GEMS For Life is GEMS Education's commitment to supporting students, alumni and families beyond school by providing structured guidance, partnerships and opportunities that help learners make confident decisions about higher education, careers and future pathways.

The programme enriches GEMS Education's school services by connecting students and alumni with university partnerships, pathway exploration, future-skills development, work experience, employer engagement and alumni support. Its core pillars are Higher Education Collaborations, Careers and University Guidance, Work Experience and Future Pathways, and the GEMS Alumni Network.

GEMS For Life provides strategic oversight for Careers and University Guidance across the GEMS network. It supports schools through shared frameworks, implementation tools, quality assurance expectations, partnerships, scholarships and strategic guidance so that provision is consistent, future-focused and responsive to local regulatory requirements.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

School Leadership

- Ensure academic, careers and university guidance is appropriately resourced, strategically prioritised and aligned with the KHDA FutuReady Framework, the ADEK School Career and University Guidance Policy where applicable, the GEMS For Life Careers and University Guidance Framework and the GEMS Futures Playbook.
- Support a whole-school approach to careers education
- Monitor the quality and impact of provision

GEMS Education School Support Centre & the GEMS For Life Team

- Deliver a structured, group-wide function that supports schools, students, alumni and families with opportunities for world-class Careers and University Guidance.
- Provide frameworks, implementation guidance, quality assurance tools, vetted external partners, university collaborations, central resources, evidence expectations and strategic support for schools.
- Support alumni with lifelong learning opportunities.

School Careers and University Guidance Professional

- Lead the strategic development, coordination and evaluation of the school's academic, careers and university guidance programme, ensuring that provision is planned, inclusive, evidence-informed and aligned with the GEMS For Life Framework and Futures Playbook.
- Provide individual guidance to students
- Coordinate university applications and post-school pathways support
- Liaise with parents, staff, and external partners
- Ensure guidance is impartial, inclusive, and up to date

GEMS For Life Excellence Fellows:

- Support schools and clusters in implementing world-class careers and university guidance by sharing effective practice, developing practical tools, strengthening evidence expectations and contributing to network-wide quality improvement.
- Deliver templates, resources and guides to Careers and University Guidance counsellors.
- Lead their cluster's Careers and University Guidance programme.

Teaching and Pastoral Staff

- Support students to understand links between curriculum learning and future pathways
- Reinforce careers learning through subject teaching and mentoring
- Identify students who may require additional guidance

External Providers

(Universities, Further Education providers, Enrichment Providers, Employers etc.)

- Contribute to careers education through talks, workshops, and experiences
- Comply with the school's safeguarding and quality assurance requirements

Students

- Engage actively with careers education and guidance opportunities
- Take increasing responsibility for decision-making as they progress through the school

8. Delivery of Careers and University Guidance

Careers and university guidance is delivered through a planned and varied range of activities designed to meet the needs of different age groups, abilities, and intended pathways. Provision includes careers education lessons and structured workshops, individual guidance interviews at key transition points, and targeted support for post-16 and post-18 planning. Students have opportunities to engage with universities, employers, and industry professionals through careers and university fairs, guest speakers, employer talks, workplace visits, work experience, and internships, where appropriate.

The programme also provides dedicated support with applications and progression processes, including subject and pathway choices, university and college applications, personal statements, interviews, and admissions testing. Digital platforms, including Unifrog, are used to support research, reflection, and independent career planning, enabling students to explore pathways, track engagement, and develop digital career management skills

Each school should maintain an annual Careers and University Guidance implementation plan, aligned to the GEMS For Life Careers and University Guidance Framework, the GEMS Futures Playbook and relevant jurisdiction requirements. The plan should identify priority year groups, key activities, responsible staff, evidence expectations, family engagement, external encounters, use of Unifrog and annual review actions. It should be reviewed annually by school leadership and shared with GEMS For Life and the School Support Centre where required, so that implementation, accountability and improvement planning remain visible and consistent.

9. Student Entitlement, Inclusion, Safeguarding and Ethical Practice

GEMS Education is committed to ensuring that all students are entitled to high-quality, impartial, and inclusive careers and university guidance. Every student has access to a broad range of information, experiences, and individual guidance that supports informed decision-making at key transition points. Guidance is student-centred, equitable, and transparent, enabling students to explore a wide range of post-school pathways, including higher education, vocational routes, apprenticeships, employment, entrepreneurship, and gap years.

Careers guidance is inclusive and designed to meet the needs of all learners.

As a minimum entitlement, students should receive age-appropriate opportunities to develop self-awareness, explore subject and pathway choices, engage with universities, employers, alumni and community partners, access personal guidance at key transition points, reflect on experiences, record evidence and receive support with applications, work experience and transition planning.

Students with SEND, additional learning needs, or those requiring targeted support receive tailored guidance through close collaboration between the careers team, pastoral staff, and learning support teams.

Emirati Students are provided with a personalized guidance plan that considers elements such as Higher Education Sponsorship and National Service obligations.

Safeguarding and ethical practice underpin all careers and university guidance activities. All staff and external providers involved in delivery adhere to the GEMS Education safeguarding and child protection policies. Guidance is provided in the best interests of the student and is free from bias or conflicts of interest. Confidentiality and data protection are maintained in line with school policies and relevant legislation, and no pathway, institution, or provider is promoted for commercial or personal gain.

10. Parental Engagement, Partnerships and External Providers

GEMS Education recognises the important role that parents and carers play in supporting students' career development and post-school decision-making. A collaborative partnership between our schools and families is encouraged to ensure students receive consistent, informed, and supportive guidance throughout their educational journey. Parents are provided with access to information, guidance, and opportunities to engage with the careers and university guidance programme through information sessions, workshops, individual meetings, and regular communication.

The school also works in partnership with a range of external providers, including universities, employers, training organisations, and professional bodies, to enhance careers education and provide students with exposure to real-world pathways and opportunities.

All external partners and providers are carefully selected and quality assured via the GEMS For Life programme to ensure alignment with the GEMS Education's values, educational objectives, and safeguarding requirements. External contributions are intended to complement the school's guidance provision and support informed, student-centred decision-making.

All external visits, speakers, and partnerships are subject to the school's internal approval processes and the relevant ADEK/KHDA/SPEA approval requirements, ensuring compliance, safeguarding, and quality assurance at all times.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Outcome Tracking

- GEMS Education monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the Careers and University Guidance programme to ensure it meets the needs of students, supports positive post-school outcomes and aligns with the KHDA FutuReady Framework, the ADEK School Career and University Guidance Policy where applicable, the GEMS For Life Careers and

University Guidance Framework and the GEMS Futures Playbook. A structured and systematic approach is used to review provision, measure impact, identify variation across schools and inform continuous improvement.

The Careers and University Guidance counsellor maintains clear and accurate records of guidance activities, including notes from individual meetings held with students and, where appropriate, parents. In addition, a comprehensive record of each Year 13 student's university and post-school applications is maintained, including application outcomes and conditional or unconditional offers. This information is used to support students throughout the application process and to ensure continuity of guidance.

Schools should retain appropriate evidence of programme delivery and impact, including annual plans, calendars of activity, attendance and participation records, student reflections, Unifrog records, guidance notes, parent and student voice, employer and university encounter records, work experience documentation, destination data and annual review actions.

Destination and application data are tracked and analysed annually, including:

- Post-school destination data
- Application and offer outcomes
- Number of students progressing to their first-choice university or preferred destination
- Trends in subjects chosen, destinations, and geographical locations

The careers programme is evaluated on an annual basis using a range of evidence, including student feedback, parent feedback, participation and engagement data, destination outcomes, application trends, Unifrog engagement, evidence quality and school implementation review. By maintaining clear records of guidance meetings, action plans and key decisions, schools can identify patterns, respond to emerging needs and refine provision accordingly. This structured approach enhances accountability, supports effective communication with families and enables data-informed improvements to the overall Careers and University Guidance programme.

12. Staff Resourcing, Staff Training and Professional Development

Each GEMS Education school should ensure that Careers and University Guidance is led by an appropriately qualified or experienced professional, with suitable access to trained staff, leadership support, protected time and central GEMS For Life guidance. Staffing arrangements should reflect school context, student need, regulatory expectations and the phased implementation approach agreed for the 2026-27 academic year.

GEMS Education is committed to ensuring that all staff involved in the Careers and University Guidance programme have the knowledge, skills and expertise required to provide high-quality, effective and impartial guidance. Staff training and professional development should support alignment with the KHDA FutuReady Framework, the ADEK School Career and University Guidance Policy where applicable, the GEMS For Life Careers and University Guidance Framework and the GEMS Futures Playbook, including global and UAE higher education, TVET and employment pathways, labour-market trends, emerging careers, future skills, inclusive guidance and international admissions requirements.

Training includes participation in relevant professional networks, conferences, accredited courses and internal GEMS For Life professional development workshops. Staff are supported to develop competencies in digital career management platforms, including Unifrog, and to use the Futures Playbook, Toolkit resources, evidence expectations and quality assurance processes confidently in school-level delivery.

GEMS Education encourages continuous professional reflection and peer collaboration, enabling staff to share best practices, review the effectiveness of guidance strategies, and respond proactively to emerging student needs. By investing in staff development, the school ensures that guidance provision is evidence-based, up to date, inclusive, and aligned with both UAE and international standards, enhancing student outcomes and future-readiness.