

GEMS Academic & Careers Guidance Policy

This policy has been approved for operation within:	ALL GEMS Schools		
Status	Required		
Owner	GEMS Education		
Date effective from	February 2, 2026	Date of next review	August 2026
Review period	Yearly	Version	1.0

1. Policy Statement and Purpose

This policy outlines GEMS Education's commitment to providing a high-quality, comprehensive, and impartial careers and university guidance programme that supports all students in making informed, realistic, and ambitious decisions about their future pathways.

GEMS Education recognises that career development is a lifelong process and that effective guidance plays a critical role in students' academic motivation, well-being, employability, and successful transition beyond school. Careers and university guidance is therefore embedded within the GEMS Education wider educational mission and is designed to support students to understand themselves, explore opportunities, and develop the skills and confidence required to manage future transitions.

This policy aligns with the expectations of the various jurisdictions within the United Arab Emirates and Qatar that GEMS Education operates in and reflects international best practice in careers education and guidance.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All students from primary through to graduation (e.g. FS1 – Y13 or KG – G12)
- All staff involved in careers education, guidance, and pastoral support
- 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 in primary to secondary
- 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 school students with exposure to the World of Work via in-curriculum learning activities that directly link learning experiences to careers & 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
- We seek to ensure that all programme meet the requirements of international frameworks such as the UK 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, and experiences link to future career opportunities
- Are informed about local (UAE) and global education and employment pathways
- 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 Education Programme Overview

GEMS Education provides a structured, coherent, and progressive careers and university guidance programme that supports students at each stage of their educational journey.

The programme is designed to develop career awareness in lower secondary, deepen exploration and decision-making in upper secondary, and provide focused preparation for post-16 and post-18 pathways.

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 the use of online platforms such as Unifrog, which enables students to research careers, university and apprenticeship pathways, reflect on their skills and interests, 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 GEMS Education operates in within the UAE (ADEK, KHDA, SPEA, MOE) and reflects international best practice in careers education and guidance. GEMS Education recognises the importance of providing structured, impartial, and high-quality careers and university guidance that supports students' wellbeing, achievement, and successful transition beyond school.

Where appropriate, the programme is informed by recognised international frameworks and benchmarks, such as the Gatsby Benchmarks and the Career Development Institute (CDI) framework, while remaining responsive to the local context of the UAE, the diverse nature of the GEMS Education student body and the global nature of students' post-school destinations. GEMS Education is committed to ensuring that all guidance provided is ethical, unbiased, and focused on students' long-term development, enabling them to make informed decisions in a rapidly evolving global education and employment landscape.

6. GEMS For Life Programme

GEMS For Life is our commitment to every learner and every family that the GEMS journey continues long after school and is a lifelong commitment to be the learning partner for our community and families.

GEMS For Life is an all-encompassing initiative to enrich GEMS Education's best-in-class school services. The programme's mission is to support students and alumni in achieving major higher education and career milestones.

The programme offers enduring support through its three core pillars: Higher Education Collaborations, Career Counselling & Work Experience, and the GEMS Alumni Network.

GEMS For Life has strategic oversight of the GEMS Education Careers & University Guidance provision across our network, and delivers a range of oversight, partnership opportunities, scholarships, and strategic leadership for the school Career & University Guidance programmes.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

School Leadership

- Ensure careers and university guidance is appropriately resourced and prioritised
- 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 aids schools, students, alumni and families with opportunities for world-class Careers & University Guidance
- Provides resources, vetted external partners, and university collaborations
- Supports Alumni with Lifelong Learning Opportunities

School Careers & University Guidance Professional

- Lead the strategic development and delivery of the careers programme
- 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:

- Deliver cluster support in implementing a world class Careers & University Guidance programme
- Deliver templates, resources & guides to CUG Counsellors
- Lead their cluster's Careers & 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

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.

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 (CUG) programme to ensure it meets the needs of students and supports positive post-school outcomes. A structured and systematic approach is used to review provision, measure impact, and inform continuous improvement.

- The CU 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.

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, participation and engagement data, destination outcomes, and application trends. By maintaining clear records of guidance meetings, action plans, and key decisions, our 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 employ at least one full-time Careers and University Guidance Professional, who has the appropriate qualifications and experience.

GEMS Education is committed to ensuring that all staff involved in the Careers and University Guidance (CUG) programme have the knowledge, skills, and expertise required to provide high-quality, effective, and impartial guidance. Staff training and professional development are designed to keep staff up to date with current developments in global and UAE higher education, labour market trends, emerging career pathways, and international admissions requirements.

Training includes participation in relevant professional networks, conferences, and accredited courses, as well as internal professional development workshops. Staff are supported to develop competencies in digital career management platforms, such as Unifrog, ensuring they can guide students in research, reflection, and application processes.

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.