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#	Description of Changes	Rev. No	Date of Issue
1	First Issue	00	21 June 24

ICS Vision
The "School of Choice" inspiring, challenging and empowering a 21st century learning community through an ethical and innovative education system.

ICS Mission
Provide a safe, friendly learning environment where lifelong learners follow an international curriculum which promotes academic excellence and nurtures key values and competencies in our global minded, future leaders.

Introduction

At ICS, we are committed to fostering the academic and career success of our students by providing comprehensive guidance and support throughout their educational journey. This aligns with ICS's Vision of being the "School of Choice" that inspires, challenges, and empowers a 21st-century learning community through an ethical and innovative education system. The University and Career (UC) Guidance Policy reflects our dedication to nurturing future leaders by offering an educational environment where students can make informed decisions about their academic and career paths.

The International Community School (ICS) is dedicated to providing a comprehensive Career and University (CU) Guidance Program that supports students in making informed decisions about their future educational and career paths. This policy ensures that all students, regardless of their background

or learning needs, receive the guidance necessary to navigate the transition from secondary education to postsecondary opportunities. Aligned with the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) regulations, the ICS CU Guidance Policy is designed to prepare students for success in higher education and the global workforce.

Purpose

The ICS CU Guidance Policy serves to establish a structured, high-quality program that assists students in exploring career options, understanding postsecondary education pathways, and developing the skills needed to succeed in their chosen fields. The policy aims to:

- Provide a consistent framework for delivering CU guidance across all grade levels, with a focus on Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 students.
- Ensure that CU Guidance Counselors are qualified, trained, and equipped to offer expert advice and support to students and parents.
- Promote lifelong learning and career readiness, helping students develop the competencies required for success in higher education and the workplace.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the CU guidance program to ensure alignment with ADEK standards and continuous improvement.

Definitions

Career and University (CU) Guidance
A comprehensive process designed to assist students in exploring career possibilities, understanding educational pathways, and making informed decisions about their future. This includes guidance on selecting appropriate subjects, preparing for university admissions, and exploring vocational and technical education options.

CU Guidance Counselor
A professionally trained individual responsible for implementing the CU guidance program at ICS. This role includes providing personalized career advice, assisting with university applications, and supporting students through the decision-making process related to their postsecondary education.

Additional Learning Needs
Specific educational requirements for students with disabilities, learning difficulties, or other barriers to learning. These needs may require additional support, modifications, or accommodations to ensure equal access to education and career guidance.

Postsecondary Education
Any form of education or training that occurs after the completion of secondary school, including universities, colleges, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and other specialized programs aimed at preparing students for specific careers.

Program Philosophy and Approach

The ICS CU guidance program is rooted in the belief that every student has unique talents, aspirations, and potential that can be nurtured through effective guidance. The program adopts a student-centered

approach, focusing on empowering students to make informed decisions about their future based on a comprehensive understanding of their career options and educational pathways. Key principles of the program include:

- **Early Engagement**: Initiating career awareness and exploration activities in Cycle 2 to cultivate an early sense of aspiration and curiosity about the world of work.
- **Comprehensive Support**: Providing ongoing, tailored guidance throughout students' educational journey, ensuring they are well-prepared to transition to postsecondary education or the workforce.
- **Inclusivity**: Ensuring the program is accessible to all students, including those with additional learning needs, by offering appropriate accommodations and resources.
- **Lifelong Learning**: Encouraging students to view education and skill development as a continuous process, essential for adapting to changes in the global job market.

Early Career Exploration and Awareness

In Cycle 2, students begin their journey with the ICS CU guidance program by exploring a broad range of career options. This early exposure is essential in helping students understand the diverse opportunities available to them and how their interests and skills align with potential career paths. The program includes:

- **Career Awareness Activities**: Interactive sessions, including career days, industry visits, and guest speaker engagements, introduce students to various professions and the qualifications required for these roles. These activities help students connect academic subjects with real-world applications and future careers.
- **Self-Discovery Tools**: Students use assessments and tools designed to help them identify their strengths, interests, and values. These tools support students in understanding their personal attributes and how they can influence career choices.
- **Soft Skills Integration**: The development of essential soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, is integrated into the curriculum. These skills are critical for success in both academic and professional settings and are reinforced through classroom activities and collaborative projects.

Transition to Cycle 3 and Detailed Career Exploration

As students advance into Cycle 3, the CU guidance program shifts to a more detailed exploration of career options and postsecondary education pathways. This phase is characterized by personalized guidance and preparation for the next steps in students' academic and professional journeys. The program includes:

- **Personalized Career Planning**: Students engage in one-on-one sessions with the CU Guidance Counselor to explore specific career interests and develop an academic plan that aligns with their goals. This planning includes selecting subjects that meet the prerequisites for desired postsecondary programs and participating in extracurricular activities that build relevant skills.
- **Subject and Course Selection**: The counselor assists students in choosing courses that align with their career aspirations and the entry requirements of their preferred postsecondary

institutions. This guidance ensures that students are well-prepared to meet the demands of their chosen fields.

- **Career Exploration Workshops**: A series of workshops provide students with in-depth information about various career fields, including the skills required, potential job roles, and career progression. These workshops often feature industry professionals who share their experiences and offer practical advice.

Workplace-Relevant Skill Development

The ICS CU guidance program emphasizes the development of workplace-relevant skills that are essential for students' success in their future careers. These skills are cultivated through a combination of in-school activities, external enrichment programs, and practical experiences. The program includes:

- **Project-Based Learning**: Students engage in projects that simulate real-world challenges, requiring them to apply critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. These projects are designed to mirror the complexities of the workplace, preparing students for the demands of their future careers.
- **Internships and Job Shadowing**: ICS facilitates opportunities for students to gain firsthand experience in their fields of interest through internships and job shadowing programs. These experiences allow students to explore careers in depth, develop professional networks, and gain practical insights into the day-to-day realities of various professions.
- **Soft Skills Development Workshops**: The program includes workshops focused on developing essential soft skills, such as effective communication, time management, leadership, and adaptability. These workshops are tailored to the needs of students and are designed to enhance their readiness for the workforce.

Community and Alumni Engagement

Community and alumni engagement are integral components of the ICS CU guidance program. These connections provide students with valuable resources, mentorship opportunities, and real-world insights into various career paths. The program includes:

- **Alumni Mentorship Program**: ICS leverages its alumni network to connect current students with graduates who have pursued a variety of career paths. Alumni mentors provide guidance, share their experiences, and offer advice on navigating the transition from school to higher education or the workforce.
- **Partnerships with Local Businesses and Organizations**: ICS collaborates with local businesses, non-profits, and other organizations to offer students internships, job shadowing opportunities, and industry-specific experiences. These partnerships enhance the practical aspects of the CU guidance program and provide students with direct exposure to their fields of interest.
- **Career Networking Events**: The school organizes career fairs and networking events that bring together students, alumni, professionals, and community members. These events provide students with the opportunity to explore different career options, learn about current industry trends, and build connections that can support their career development.

Global and Local Postsecondary Options

ICS is committed to ensuring that students have access to comprehensive information about both local and international postsecondary options. The CU guidance program provides detailed support to students and their families in navigating the complexities of postsecondary education. The program includes:

- **Guidance on International Education Systems**: Students are guided through the various international education systems, including those in the UAE, UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and Europe. Understanding these systems is crucial for students as they make decisions about where to apply and what to expect in different academic environments.
- **Support for TVET Pathways**: For students interested in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the program provides information on the available programs, certifications, and career opportunities. The counselor assists with the application process and helps students understand the benefits of TVET pathways in achieving their career goals.
- **Exploration of Military and Direct Employment Options**: The program offers specialized guidance for students considering military service or direct entry into the workforce. This includes understanding the recruitment process, the skills and qualifications required, and the long-term career prospects associated with these options.
- **Assistance with Scholarships and Financial Aid**: The CU Guidance Counselor provides extensive support in identifying and applying for scholarships, grants, and other financial aid opportunities. This support includes helping students and families navigate complex application processes, ensuring that all necessary documentation is completed, and meeting deadlines to maximize financial resources.

CU Guidance Counselor Role and Responsibilities

The CU Guidance Counselor at ICS plays a central role in delivering the CU guidance program and ensuring its effectiveness. The counselor's responsibilities include:

- **Individualized Career and Academic Planning**: The counselor works closely with each student to develop a personalized plan that aligns their academic achievements with their career aspirations. This process involves regular check-ins, progress tracking, and adjustments to the plan as needed to reflect the student's evolving goals and interests.
- **Postsecondary Application Support**: The counselor provides comprehensive support throughout the postsecondary application process, including assistance with selecting institutions, preparing application materials, meeting deadlines, and navigating the complexities of international applications. The counselor also helps coordinate recommendation letters, transcripts, and other necessary documentation.
- **Parental Engagement and Communication**: The counselor maintains regular communication with parents to keep them informed about their child's progress and to involve them in the decision-making process. This includes providing updates on important deadlines, events, and opportunities, as well as offering workshops and resources to help parents support their child's career planning.
- **Community Outreach and Partnership Development**: The counselor is responsible for building and maintaining relationships with local and international postsecondary institutions, employers, and community organizations. These relationships are essential for providing

students with access to internships, job shadowing, admissions partnerships, and other valuable resources.

- **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**: The counselor is required to engage in ongoing professional development to stay current with trends in career counseling, university admissions, and student support services. This includes attending workshops, seminars, and conferences, as well as participating in relevant professional organizations.

- ICS AL FALAH has established partnerships with several universities in the UAE, including the American University of Sharjah, American University of Ras Al Khaimah, Rochester Institute of Technology, Abu Dhabi University, Canadian University, Ajman University & AURAK University.

Qualifications and Continuous Professional Development of CU Guidance Counselors

Ensuring that CU Guidance Counselors are highly qualified and continuously developing their skills is a priority at ICS. The policy includes:

- **Minimum Educational Requirements**: CU Guidance Counselors must possess at least a QFE 7 (Bachelor's Degree) in a relevant field such as education, psychology, or career counseling. Counselors with additional certifications in counseling or career guidance are preferred.
- **Experience and Expertise**: Counselors are expected to have prior experience in educational settings, ideally with a background in career counseling or university admissions. This experience equips them with the knowledge needed to provide high-quality guidance to students and parents.
- **Grandfathering Provision and CPD Compliance**: Current CU Guidance Counselors who do not meet the minimum qualifications have a two-year grace period to achieve compliance through additional training and CPD. During this period, schools may appoint existing staff members in acting capacities if they meet certain criteria and undergo ADEK-approved training.
- **Ongoing CPD Requirements**: All CU Guidance Counselors must complete at least 25 hours of professional development annually. This CPD must be directly related to their role and should include specific training on providing guidance for gifted students and those with additional learning needs. Membership in professional organizations and participation in peer learning groups are strongly encouraged to ensure counselors stay informed about the latest developments in their field.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

The effectiveness and quality of the CU guidance program at ICS are continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure alignment with ADEK standards and to drive continuous improvement. The process includes:

- **Internal Monitoring Systems**: ICS has established robust internal monitoring systems to track the effectiveness of the CU guidance program. This includes collecting and analyzing data on student participation, satisfaction, and outcomes related to career exploration and postsecondary success.
- **Feedback Mechanisms**: Students, parents, and teachers are regularly surveyed to gather feedback on the CU guidance services provided. This feedback is crucial for identifying strengths and areas for improvement within the program.

- **Annual Reporting to ADEK**: ICS submits an annual report to ADEK, detailing key performance indicators such as the student coverage rate, counselor-to-student ratio, graduate destinations, and the success rate of students gaining admission to their top-choice institutions. This reporting ensures transparency and accountability in the program's implementation.
- **Program Review and Updates**: Based on the data collected and feedback received, the CU guidance program undergoes regular review and updates. This process involves a thorough evaluation of the program's components, ensuring they remain relevant and effective in meeting the needs of students. The review process is collaborative, involving input from all stakeholders, including students, parents, counselors, teachers, and administrators.
- **Continuous Improvement Initiatives**: ICS is committed to the continuous improvement of the CU guidance program. This includes implementing new strategies, tools, and resources to enhance the program's effectiveness. The school also invests in the ongoing professional development of CU Guidance Counselors to ensure they are equipped to deliver the highest quality of guidance and support.

Compliance and Legal Accountability

ICS is fully committed to adhering to all ADEK regulations related to CU guidance. This policy is not only a guideline but also a mandatory framework that must be followed to ensure the legal and educational standards are met. The compliance measures include:

- **Full Compliance by AY 2025/26**: The policy is effective from the Academic Year 2024/25, with full compliance required by AY 2025/26. ICS has established a timeline and action plan to achieve compliance within this period, ensuring all necessary processes and structures are in place.
- **Legal Consequences of Non-Compliance**: Non-compliance with this policy will result in legal accountability and the enforcement of penalties as stipulated by ADEK. These penalties could include fines, sanctions, and other corrective actions as mandated by Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 and other relevant laws.
- **ADEK's Right to Intervene**: ADEK reserves the right to intervene in the operation of the CU guidance program if the school is found to be in violation of its obligations. This could involve direct oversight, the appointment of external consultants, or other measures to ensure compliance.

Linked Policies

The CU guidance policy is interconnected with several other ICS and ADEK policies, which collectively ensure a holistic approach to student support and school operations. These linked policies include:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Licensing Policy
- Employment Policy
- Records Policy
- Academic Support Policy
- Inclusion Policy