



DUBAI INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

Emirates Hills

Counselling Policy

Reviewed by	Ms. Melita D'Souza & Ms. Saira Cherian	Reviewed Date	August, 2024.
Next Review	August, 2025.		

COUNSELLING POLICY

The aim for counselling service at Dubai International Academy- Emirates Hills (DIA-EH) is to provide a safe and nurturing environment in a private and confidential setting to address and explore the difficulties or distress experienced by a student, with the goal of enhancing their wellbeing. This service helps students develop strategies, skills and attitudes to address their social and emotional difficulties. The counsellors within the school provide an immediate on-site response to students that require additional support.

Objectives of School Counselling

- To promote and safeguard the welfare of the students at Dubai International Academy.
- To provide support to the students and their families.
- To work in consultation with parents, teachers and administrators.
- Establish a calm and comfortable environment where students can express themselves using a 'person centered' approach.
- Help to develop strategies for managing emotions

Student Support

The primary function of the school's counselling department is to assist students facing social or emotional challenges. This support may be delivered through individual sessions or support groups, tailored to the student's needs. In certain cases, the school counsellor may find it more suitable to provide intervention strategies to parents and teachers rather than conducting direct counselling.

Individual school counseling sessions provide personalized, one-on-one support for students to address their unique emotional or social challenges. These sessions create a confidential space where students can openly discuss concerns, develop coping strategies, and set personal goals with the guidance of the school counsellor. The focus is on the student's specific needs, offering tailored interventions that promote mental well-being and academic success. Regular sessions help track progress, adjust strategies as needed, and build a trusting relationship between the

student and counsellor. The school counsellor utilizes an eclectic approach which involves integrating techniques and theories from multiple counselling models to best meet the unique needs of each student. Careful consideration of the student's cultural background, personality, and preferences are made to ensure a more holistic and effective counselling experience. By combining the strengths of different therapeutic approaches, counsellors provide comprehensive support that addresses a wide range of social, emotional, and behavioral concerns.

Support group provides a structured, confidential environment where students in small, theme-specific groups can share experiences and receive emotional support from peers and counsellors. A support group can address various themes, such as friendships, exam anxiety, stress management, grief, or social skills, tailored to the needs of specific student populations. These groups allow for more focused discussions and personalized support, helping students navigate challenges in a safe and supportive setting. Additionally, school support groups encourage peer connections, reducing feelings of isolation among students by creating a sense of community. Counsellors facilitate these groups, ensuring that discussions remain constructive and that students feel heard and valued.

Role and Responsibility of a School Counsellor

- To support and help identify students with social, emotional and behavioural challenges.
- To be empathetic, patient and compassionate with excellent listening and problem-solving skills.
- Practices within the boundaries of individual professional competence.
- Adheres to ethical standards of the profession and relevant guidelines established by the UAE government regulatory organizations as well as all internal school policies.
- Informs students, teachers and parents of the purpose, process and the goal of counselling at or before the counselling relationship is entered.
- Always maintain confidentiality of all stake holders – including the protection of emotional information and record keeping.
- Establish consistent and clear lines of communication with the parents.

- To maintain record of sessions with students and meetings with parents and teachers about the students.
- To provide treatment and assessment of student's emotional problems.
- To work closely with teachers, parents and referral agencies supporting the students.
- Conduct observations of students identified by teachers and suggest appropriate interventions.
- Maintain and facilitate transition programs for new students.
- To provide feedback on class placement for students.
- To focus on early intervention and to use appropriate referral pathway available locally.

Parent/Guardian Support

Dubai International Academy recognizes the significance of supporting parents/guardians through its counselling policy. The school counsellor may offer intervention techniques to parents/guardians instead of conducting direct counselling. Upon referral of a Primary school student, parental consent will be sought. Subsequently, parents/guardians will be informed about the referral and the proposed intervention. To maximize the effectiveness of the intervention, the counsellor will encourage the implementation of new strategies at home.

Maintaining Confidentiality

All students are entitled to confidentiality. In Primary school, the counsellor will meet with parents on a case-by-case basis to update them about the counselling sessions. These meetings will typically involve the Head of Pastoral to ensure that the student's well-being is fully supported and coordinated within the school.

In Secondary school, the information that a student shares during the session will be held in confidence between themselves and the counsellor. Information will not be shared unless the student has agreed to it. The counsellor will however state that they may need to break confidentiality if the student is at risk to harm themselves or others and also if the student discloses that he or she has suffered harm, neglect or abuse. In case of threats of suicide, serious self-harm or abuse, there is a general acceptance of a need for intervention and breaching

confidentiality. At this point, the information may need to be shared with another party within the school, the Designated Safeguarding Officer. The Counsellor is aware of the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and always adhere to those at all times.

Parental Consent

The school's aim is to collaborate with parents or guardians whenever possible and to obtain their consent for students attending counselling. Parental consent will be sought for primary-aged students who are referred to counselling, offering parents the choice to opt out. Refer Appendix B for the parent consent form.

In the Secondary school, Dubai International Academy operates according to the Gillick Competence principle, allowing students to access counselling or therapeutic support without parental consent. Under this principle, 'it is legally acceptable for young people to seek confidential counselling without parental consent if they demonstrate adequate understanding and intelligence' (Gillick v West Norfolk AHA, House of Lords 1985). For Secondary school students, consent for counselling may be provided by the students themselves. If a student consents independently, parents will not be notified of any counselling-related matters without the student's consent, unless the counsellor deems further psychological intervention is necessary or if there are safeguarding concerns.

Referral Process

Referral to access counselling service can be done anytime by teachers, parents, outside agencies, peers or students who self-refer. Children have the right to refuse or discontinue at any point of time and it is the counsellor's responsibility to ensure that the student's right to autonomy is respected. It is important to recognize that students will benefit only if they are willing to undergo the counselling process.

In Primary School, teachers must complete the teacher referral form and discuss the matter with

the Deputy Principal (Pastoral) to ensure all interventions and support strategies have been implemented. The counselling referral form will provide adequate information to initiate the counselling process if required (see Appendix A).

Structure of a session

In primary, students will have sessions lasting up to 30-40 minutes. These sessions are usually scheduled weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, depending on the student's needs, with a maximum of 5 sessions. Extensions beyond this limit will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the school counsellor.

Appointments are based on need and made subject to availability and urgency in secondary. A session will be for a minimum 45-55 minutes for students in the Counsellor's room (SS210). Once the student arrives, the counsellor communicates with the teacher by email to inform the students' absence from the classroom. They are scheduled during class time using non-academic subjects to minimize disruptions to learning when possible. Students can book for an appointment with the counsellor using any of the following methods.

- By directly emailing the school counsellor.
- By shading the preferred timing on the timetable outside the counsellor's office.
- By scanning the QR code outside the counsellor's room.
- By using the link emailed by the counsellor.

Recommendations for external referrals will be considered if further assistance is deemed necessary. The school has a list of external mental health centers which the parents can choose from depending on the need and the associated costs.

Assessments

The school counsellor may find it appropriate to carry out an assessment after receiving the referral. This can be in the form of teacher/staff interview, student observation,

classroom/playground observation, psychometric or educational assessment. In the need to conduct a standardized psychological assessment, parental consent is obtained.

Counselling records

Written records of counselling sessions are kept to a minimum and all records are stored in a locked cabinet which is only accessible to the school counsellor. The counsellor maintains online detailed sessions notes for the purpose of monitoring the work. Notes may include a brief case history, presenting concern, an outline of what was discussed during each session, case conceptualization, goal setting and follow up. Notes from parents or teachers' meetings are also maintained separately.

Appendix A – Counsellor Referral Form

School Counsellor Referral Form		
<i>Please title the email subject and document with the student's initials only.</i>		
Student Name:	Year Group/Class Teacher:	Date of Birth:
Referred by:	Date:	Inclusion Reg – Yes/No
<p>Reason for referral. This could include but is not limited to; disclosure from the student that they are anxious, down or worried. Changes in the mood, manner or behaviour of the student that appear to be ongoing. Information passed on by family or peers. Recent bereavement or significant changes in the home life of the student.</p>		
<p>What support have you offered with outcomes? Please summarize what support you have personally provided so far.</p>		

Existing information Summarize all available and relevant information about the student. If known, please include what existing support the student receives within the school and externally.

Consent Information

Is the student aware that you are making this referral? Yes/No

Have concerns been discussed with parents/guardian? Yes/No.

Summarize any additional information from these discussions.

*Appendix B – Parent Consent Form***INFORMATION ABOUT COUNSELLING**

Dear Parent,

Counselling is a relationship built on confidentiality and trust. Adequate information is the foundation of trust. All parties involved must have information about the limits and processes of counselling. Students may be referred to the School Counsellor for individual and/or small group counselling by their parents or guardians, school staff, or they may refer themselves. Once a referral is made, the School Counsellor sets up a meeting with the referred student after obtaining parent consent. It is your choice to give consent for your child to receive counselling.

Through counselling, your child may be taught strategies to help him or her make more effective and healthier decisions, increase the ability to set and reach goals, build better relationships with others, and be more successful in school. We all must realize that changes take time; his or her problem did not develop overnight, nor will it disappear overnight. Counselling will be successful when students, school counsellors, teachers, and family members work together.

Thank you,

Counselling Department

Dubai International Academy- Emirates Hills

Informed Consent Form

As part of our whole school program for all students, is the availability of counselling. Your child has been referred to participate in individual counselling sessions. I have read and understood the information provided by the School Counsellor.

I consent for my child to participate in counselling.

I do not consent for my child to participate in counselling.

Student Full Name and Year/Section:

Parent/Guardian Name and Signature and Date

Parent/Guardian Phone Number:

E-mail: