



POL/COUNSELLING:

Policy Title:	Counselling Policy
Version:	1.0
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Approved By:	Sydney Atkins Principal

1. Introduction

At **Gems Modern Academy** we are committed to fostering a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment and ensure that all students in the school have access to counselling support when required and necessary. Students may require additional guidance beyond the pastoral care and support provided by teachers. We recognize that mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing are essential for academic success, personal growth, and a thriving school culture.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to inform the school community about the systems and processes aimed at promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing through a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all stakeholders.

The counselling services at GEMS Modern Academy aim to:

- 2.1. Provide a safe and caring environment where all students, feel protected and nurtured.
- 2.2. Provide a confidential environment to listen to students without judgement and help them gain better understanding of themselves and guide them to resolve the conflicts they may experience.
- 2.3. Promote behaviours that enhance learning and to help students achieve their full potential.
- 2.4. Assist students in establishing personal goals and developing actionable plans to achieve them.
- 2.5. To meet students' immediate needs through individual, group and crisis counselling
- 2.6. Guide students to explore appropriate approaches to resolve the difficulties they may encounter, e.g. anxiety, peer-difficulties, lack of motivation, bullying, bereavement, inadequate [AB1.1] study skills and parental issues.

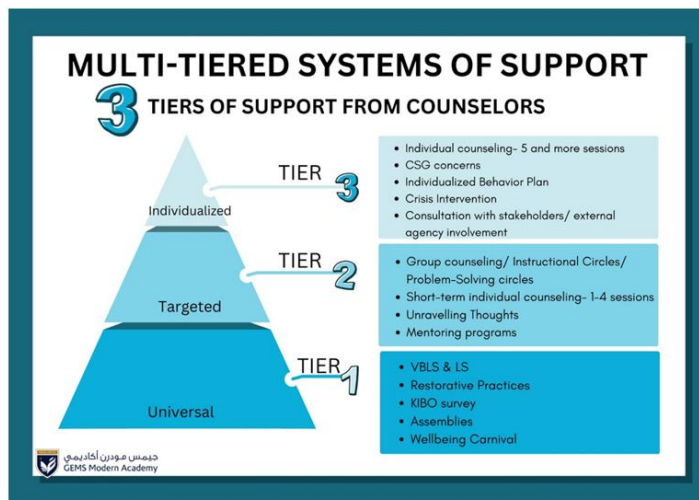




- 2.7. To help and [AB2.1] equip teachers and parents with adequate skills and strategies to support students with socio-emotional challenges, within the scope of their abilities and strengths.

3. Scope

The school follows the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support which outlines provisions to enhance and sustain structured and stratified wellbeing practices.



Counselling services in GMA include, but are not limited to:

- 3.1. Individual Counselling: One-on-one sessions for students to discuss personal, social, academic, or emotional concerns.
- 3.2. Group Counselling: Small group sessions focusing on shared challenges (e.g., social skills, stress management, peer relationships).
- 3.3. Crisis Intervention: Immediate support for students experiencing crises (e.g., trauma, grief, or sudden emotional distress).
- 3.4. Preventive Programmes: Proactive initiatives to promote mental health literacy, resilience, and emotional well-being (e.g., workshops, seminars).
- 3.5. Referral Services: Coordination with external mental health professionals and services when specialised support is required.

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4. Policy Statements / Procedure

- 4.1. **Referral:** Referrals can be made by the parents, teachers, SLT [AB4.1], peers and self, via email, telephone [AB5.1], and /or face-to-face. Initial contact with the student is made within the first 3 days of receiving the referral. In cases of serious emotional distress, contact may be made within the day.
- 4.2. **Intervention:** Parental consent for individual sessions may be sought before the commencement of sessions. However, for senior students (grades 6 and





above), this is NOT a mandatory requirement. This may depend upon the nature of the case.

- 4.2.1. Teachers may be appraised of these sessions to ensure classroom support, on a case-by-case basis, keeping with the nature of the case and issues therein.
- 4.2.2. Supervisors will be appraised of any individual concerns to ensure support through established systems. Any issues that may be of an urgent nature may also be brought to the notice of the supervisor.
- 4.2.3. Counselling intervention will follow an integrative approach that may comprise different aspects of therapies. Referrals to medical practitioners and external mental-health professionals may be made, if required. The counsellor will then liaise with the external agency when warranted.
- 4.2.4. The school counselors not only focus on direct counselling services but also impart specific skills in a proactive and preventative manner ensuring all students are benefitted by it. This may be in the form of talks[AB1.1], webinars, class-room interventions, workshops, circle time topics and special assemblies.
- 4.2.5. The team of Counselors along with the teachers use the Value-education classes to impart life skills that support the development of adaptive skills and healthy coping strategies. Where needed, the counselors may also conduct classes for specific topics like Puberty[AB2.1], Digital-Safety, Anti-bullying and other topics depending on the student needs and trends.
- 4.2.6. Group counselling sessions may be offered when the issue is one that pertains to a larger group of students with similar issues, who may benefit from a common discussion.
- 4.2.7. Counsellors may offer emotional support and guidance to staff members who may be referred for counselling or may opt for the same.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 5.1. **Confidentiality:** Student privacy is respected within the limits of safeguarding policies. Information shared in counselling sessions remains confidential unless disclosure is required to ensure the safety and well-being of the student or others, in accordance with child protection and safeguarding regulations.
- 5.2. **Consent:** Counsellors inform students about the limits of confidentiality at the start of counselling. For primary students (K-G5/FS-Y6), parental consent is required after the first session to continue counselling support. For secondary students (Grade 6-12/Year 7-13), informed consent from the student is required, with parental involvement as necessary, particularly in cases where significant concerns regarding the student's well-being arise. Counselling services adhere to the child protection and safeguarding regulations applicable in the UAE, ensuring a balance between student autonomy and parental engagement.

6. SAFEGUARDING AND RISK PROTOCOLS

Every counsellor must follow the GEMS Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Key non-negotiables:





- 6.1. Immediate reporting of risk to DSL.
- 6.2. Documentation of all risk assessments and safety plans.
- 6.3. Parental involvement unless doing so increases risk.
- 6.4. Incident debrief and supervision following serious disclosures.

7. RECORDING AND REPORTING

The Head of Department Counseling will maintain a record of referrals of counselling cases. Counsellors will feed in the cases with specific details only to ensure that there is a record of referrals as well as nature of concerns to the counselling department.

Session records will be maintained by the counsellor for personal recording and monitoring of progress. These are strictly confidential documents that may only be shared with the Principal or DSL, if required. Statistical data and records of any anecdotes will be shared, when relevant, without any disclosure of the students' names and other details.

All Counsellors will report directly to the Head of Counselling who, in discussion with the Line-Manager, will monitor processes and procedures relating to counselling.

The Principal and Assistant Principals will be updated on a regular basis by the Head of Counselling Department.

The entire team will meet with the Principal, Assistant Principals and Line manager at least once a month to share progress, discuss trends and suggest strategies for change based on analysis of existing cases.

In cases of an urgent nature, the counsellor may approach the Principal directly.

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8. Responsibilities

8.1. **School Counsellors Supporting Social, Emotional, Mental Health, and Well-Being:** School counsellors play a pivotal role in supporting students' social, emotional, and mental well-being. Their responsibilities differ based on the developmental needs of the students they serve. The expectations for Primary, Lower Secondary, and Upper Secondary School Counsellors (KG-K12) are outlined below to reflect these differences.

8.2. Primary School Counsellors (Grades K-5)

8.2.1. Focus Areas:

- a. Social and Emotional Development:
- b. Support young children in understanding and expressing their emotions, building friendships, and resolving conflicts.
- c. Emotional Regulation:
- d. Teach strategies for managing big emotions, such as anger, frustration, and anxiety.
- e. Early Mental Health Support:





- f. Identify and address early signs of anxiety, sadness, or behavioural challenges through early intervention.
- g. Transition Support:
- h. Assist students in adjusting to school routines and new environments (e.g., starting school, moving to a new grade).
- i. Parental Involvement:
- j. Work closely with parents to support consistent approaches to social and emotional development.

8.2.2. Responsibilities:

- a. Provide play-based and creative counselling to help young children express themselves in a developmentally appropriate way.
- b. Conduct one-on-one and group sessions on topics such as friendship skills, empathy, and emotional regulation.
- c. Implement preventive programmes to build resilience and promote positive mental health (e.g., mindfulness, social-emotional learning).
- d. Collaborate with teachers to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into classroom activities.
- e. Maintain open communication with parents, offering strategies and resources to support social and emotional development at home.
- f. Monitor students for early signs of mental health issues and refer to external services when necessary.

8.3. **Lower Secondary School Counsellors (Grades 6-8)**

8.3.1. Focus Areas:

- a. Identity and Self-Esteem:
- b. Help students navigate the challenges of early adolescence, including self-image, peer pressure, and identity development.
- c. Peer Relationships:
- d. Support students in managing friendships, peer conflicts, and bullying.
- e. Emotional and Mental Health Support:
- f. Provide early intervention for signs of anxiety, low mood, and behavioural changes.
- g. Stress Management:
- h. Teach coping strategies to manage school-related stress and personal challenges.

8.3.2. Responsibilities:

- a. Conduct individual and group counselling sessions to address emotional, social, and mental health challenges.
- b. Facilitate workshops on building self-esteem, managing peer pressure, and developing social skills.
- c. Implement anti-bullying initiatives and peer mediation programmes to support positive peer relationships.
- d. Collaborate with teachers to identify students who may benefit from counselling and develop intervention plans.
- e. Provide mental health literacy programmes to educate students on recognizing and managing emotions.
- f. Engage parents in supporting students' social and emotional well-being through workshops and resources.

8.4. **Upper Secondary School Counsellors (Grades 9-12)**





8.4.1. Focus Areas:

- a. Mental Health and Emotional Resilience:
- b. Support students in managing anxiety, depression, relationship challenges, and personal stressors.
- c. Stress and Exam Anxiety:
- d. Help students develop coping strategies for academic pressures, exams, and future planning.
- e. Emotional Well-being:
- f. Facilitate discussions around emotional awareness, self-regulation, and personal growth.
- g. Crisis Intervention:
- h. Provide immediate support for students experiencing emotional crises or significant mental health challenges.

8.4.2. Responsibilities:

- a. Offer one-on-one counselling focused on mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and stress management.
- b. Facilitate group sessions and workshops on emotional resilience, coping strategies, and self-awareness.
- c. Support students through crisis intervention, collaborating with external mental health services when necessary.
- d. Provide education on mental health literacy, reducing stigma around mental health concerns and promoting help-seeking behaviours.
- e. Work closely with teachers to identify and support students displaying signs of emotional distress.
- f. Engage with parents and guardians to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting students' mental health and well-being.

9. COUNSELLING SESSION:

- 9.1. Each Each counselling session will be conducted in the counselling room and will last 45 minutes.
- 9.2. Appointments will be arranged at times that minimise disruption to the student's learning.
- 9.3. The service aims to support all students; however, during periods of high demand, a waiting list may apply. Safeguarding concerns will always receive immediate attention.
- 9.4. Progress will be reviewed after six weeks. If there is limited improvement through school counselling, an external referral may be recommended for additional support.
- 9.5. If a student needs longer-term or more specialised support, the school counsellor will kindly guide parents toward suitable agencies or private mental-health professionals. A helpful list of trusted community resources will be shared with parents/caregivers.
- 9.6. When appropriate, the school counsellor will also stay in touch and work collaboratively with the external counsellor supporting the student, so the care remains consistent and well-coordinated.
- 9.7. Open-door access: students may also self-refer

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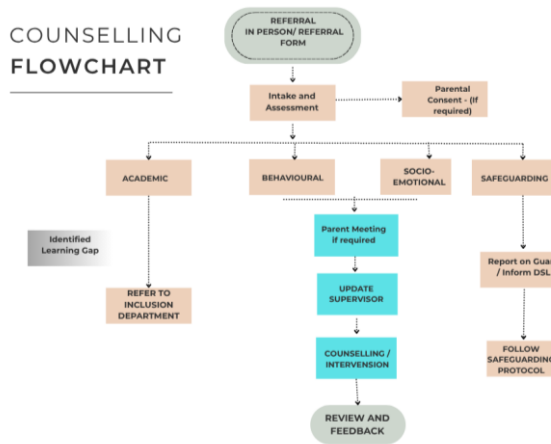
10. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

- 10.1. **Caseload:** There should be one counsellor assigned for approximately every 400 students, with adjustments made based on specific needs and contextual factors.
- 10.2. **Supervision:** Minimum 1.5 hours monthly from a qualified clinical supervisor.
- 10.3. **Recordkeeping:** Secure, confidential, and PDPL compliant. (UAE's Personal Data Protection Law – Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021).
- 10.4. **Professional Development:** Minimum of 20 hours of CPD per year.
- 10.5. **Environment:** Private soundproof, and trauma-sensitive space, with visible safeguarding information.

11. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The implementation of this policy will be regularly monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and the Counselling team. The policy will also be reviewed annually to reflect the changing needs of the school community.

The Counseling Process chart can be found at the end of this Policy.



12. Associated Policies

This policy works in conjunction with the:

- 12.1. GEMS Safeguarding Policy
- 12.2. Behaviour Policy
- 12.3. Inclusion Policy
- 12.4. Well-being Policy
- 12.5. Anti-bullying Policy

