

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Early Childhood Institutes Inversor's Guide

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Introduction

Early childhood care and education is considered one of the most important investments in developing human capital and represents a fundamental pillar of economic growth in the United Arab Emirates. The first years of a child's life form the foundation upon which learning and development are built across the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions.

Within the framework of the Ministry of Education's responsibility to ensure that all children in the United Arab Emirates receive high-quality care and education in early childhood, and in line with its commitment to achieving the objectives of the UAE Centennial 2071—where education is one of its main pillars—the Ministry works to strengthen the early childhood care and education system. This ensures that children are well prepared for a smooth transition to subsequent educational stages in both public and private schools and are equipped for a successful educational future.

From this perspective, investment in early childhood institutions is not limited to being an educational activity; rather, it represents a direct contribution to preparing generations capable of continuous learning, productivity, and active participation in the nation's development journey.

This guide outlines the approved procedures of the Ministry of Education for the licensing of early childhood institutions and answers the most frequently asked questions from investors.

Procedures for Obtaining a License for an Early Childhood Institution

Phase One

1. Submit a licensing application (complete the service request form and attach the introductory document).
2. Submit the academic plan in accordance with the approved elements .
3. Make the required amendments to the academic plan based on the feedback received (up to a maximum of three times).
4. Conduct a building inspection to obtain the initial technical approval and approval of the engineering layout by the specialized team at the Ministry (prior to leasing the building).

Issuance of Initial Approval

Phase Two

1. Submit the approvals of the relevant authorities (local municipalities and the Civil Defense Department).
2. Conduct a building inspection to obtain the final technical approval by the specialized team at the Ministry.
3. Submit a nomination request for the institution’s director.

Issuance of the Early Childhood Institution License

Phase Three

1. Submit the professional license of the Early Childhood Institution issued by the relevant Departments of Economic Development.
2. Request approval for issuing work permits and employee ID cards for staff working at the Early Childhood Institution.
3. Submit the medical supervision contract (visiting doctor).
4. Submit the lease agreement for the institution’s premises.

Issuance of the Activity Practice Permit

Academic Plan

All investors in early childhood institutions are required to prepare and submit an academic plan that outlines the aspects of care and education that will be provided in the early childhood institution. The investor is also required to implement all elements included in this plan after its approval.

Academic Plan Elements

The academic plan requirements should include a brief and accurate description of the investor's objectives in relation to the following aspects:

1. Executive Summary

- Applicant's profile.
- Reasons for investing in an early childhood institution.
- Proposed opening date of the institution (specified by month and year).
- Identification of the children age groups to be admitted, and the maximum number of enrolled children in the institution for each age group.
- The number of staff planned to be appointed, including both administrative and teaching staff.
- Tuition fee structure:
    - Annual, term, and monthly tuition fees charged per child according to the selected service options.
    - Additional fees related to optional services, such as extended care hours, non-curricular activities, meals, and transportation services.

2. Executive Summary

- Vision and mission: Clarification of the proposed vision and mission of the institution.
- Parents: A statement of the commitments undertaken by the institution toward parents, including the services provided and the related responsibilities.
- Admission Policy: A statement of the approved admission criteria and confirmation of adherence to the principle of non-discrimination.
- Self-Evaluation and Development Plans: A description of the self-evaluation mechanism, identification of participating stakeholders, and an explanation of how data will be analyzed and the results used to plan future improvement measures.
- Partnership with Parents and the Local Community: A statement of the proposed strategies to activate the role of parents and the community in supporting children's care and education, such as workshops, activities, and educational trips.

3. Curriculum

- Rationale: A statement of the educational philosophy and developmental theory adopted by the institution when selecting the curriculum, including the approved developmental domains.
- Age Group Classification: A description of how children are distributed into groups according to age categories.
- Enrichment Activities: A list of enrichment activities and specialized learning classes that may form part of the weekly activity plan.
- Learning Outcomes: A description of the targeted outcomes and the activities planned during extended care hours.
- Language Acquisition Model: A statement of the rationale for the adopted model in selecting the languages offered to children, including the identification of the primary language of instruction and the mechanism for supporting any additional languages.
- Arabic Language and the Culture of the United Arab Emirates: A description of the program components that promote the Arabic language and reinforce national identity, including the framework for building a strong linguistic foundation, promoting cultural identity through activities and events, allocating dedicated time for teaching Arabic, and ensuring comprehensive support for both Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic-speaking children.

4. Educational Practices and Care Principles

- Teaching Strategies: A description of strategies and methods that will be implemented, including the optimal use of space, time, and resources to support children in achieving maximum cognitive, emotional, and physical development by providing an appropriate environment for learning and play.
- Daily Program: A description of how the daily schedule will be organized for each age group, including the distribution of time across the core activities in which children participate, covering both individual and group activities.

- Child Assessment Based on Observation: A description of the practices that will be implemented to collect evidence and monitor the progress achieved by children, in comparison with developmental expectations appropriate to their age.
- Individual Needs of Children: A description of the mechanisms that will be adopted to meet the needs of all children, including children of determination and those with special educational needs and disabilities, including those with language support needs.

5. Facilities and Educational Resources

- Building Layout Plan: Submission of a detailed layout plan showing the internal and external spaces of the institution, including the locations of restrooms, diaper-changing areas, food preparation areas, and exits. The plan should also indicate the facilities allocated for each age group of children
- Approval of the Building Plan: Submission of the building layout plan along with proof of its review and approval by a certified health and safety specialist.
- Internal and External Space of the Institution: Specify the total indoor and outdoor space occupied by the institution in square meters, excluding corridors, storage areas, and shared facilities.
- Proposed Learning Room Layout: Submission of a detailed layout for the learning and care rooms for all age groups, indicating the distribution of learning corners, furniture, and available resources, in alignment with the philosophy of the proposed curriculum.

6. Health, Safety, and Hygiene Policies and Procedures

- Health and Safety Policies and Procedures: A brief description of how policies and procedures are developed and implemented, including the mechanisms for their periodic review and updating, and the methods for communicating them to all relevant staff within the institution and monitoring compliance with their implementation.
- List of Policies: Provide a list of policies related to children's safety and security, health procedures, hygiene, nutrition, childcare, and education A copy of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures should also be attached.

7. Facilities and Educational Resources

- Organizational Structure: A description of the organizational structure outlining responsibilities and a list of all job titles within the institution.
- Educational Staff–Child Ratio: Detailed information on the distribution of teaching staff across the different groups of children in accordance with the approved age categories.
- Qualifications and Experience: Identification of the academic qualifications and professional experience required for recruiting administrative and teaching staff.
- Recruitment and Performance Management Procedures: A description of the proposed recruitment procedures, the performance management mechanism, and orientation and training programs provided before and during employment, with the approved policy attached.
- Professional Development Programs and Workshops: Identification of the entities and individuals responsible for providing training programs and workshops, including implementation timelines.
- Complaints: A description of the mechanism and procedures for receiving and addressing complaints, ensuring prompt response and effective follow-up.
- Data Privacy and Confidentiality: A description of the approved procedures for protecting the confidentiality of parents' and children's data and information, and ensuring their use in accordance with the applicable legal frameworks and regulations.
- Fee Refund Policy: A statement of the proposed policy for the refund of fees and the mechanism for its implementation.

8. Marketing and Financial Plan (Financial Details)

- Conduct a market analysis study that includes both geographic and demographic aspects.

- The financial plan should include additional information and a detailed description of the following elements:
    - Expected number of children to be enrolled annually.
    - Expected number of teachers to be hired annually.
    - Expected number of assistant teachers to be hired annually.
    - Annual number of administrative staff, assistants, and employees in other fields, excluding teaching staff.
    - Detailed salary analysis for all employees, including administrative and teaching staff, as well as employees in other operational areas.

Note: The number of enrolled children in the institution may exceed the maximum approved capacity only if some children are enrolled on a part-time basis. In such cases, the institution must ensure that the approved building capacity is not exceeded at any time during daily operating hours.

9. Appendices

- Job descriptions for all positions, including roles and responsibilities related to extended care hours services.
- Documents and procedural guides related to the curriculum, including learning outcomes for each developmental domain.
- Documents related to the detailed engineering layout plan of the institution’s facilities.
- Documents related to classroom design, learning resource rooms, and learning environments appropriate for children’s developmental stages.
- A list of the institution’s policies and regulations.
- Curriculum vitae (CV) of the institution’s director (if available).
- Any additional relevant information related to other branches of the institution (if applicable).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the required documents to obtain a license for an Early Childhood Institution and to operate the activity?

The licensing procedures are completed through sequential phases, as outlined below:

Phase One

If the license applicant is a natural person, the following documents must be submitted:

1. A copy of the license owner's passport showing the unified number (for UAE nationals).
2. A copy of the Emirates ID.
3. Completion of the introductory information form.
4. Certificate of Good Conduct (Police Clearance Certificate).

If the license applicant is a legal entity (company or corporate personality), the following documents must be submitted:

1. A copy of the commercial license issued by the competent authorities in the UAE.
2. Copies of the passport, Emirates ID, and introductory form for the company owners.
3. A copy of the company's Memorandum of Association, including the following:
    - The company's objectives must include establishing, operating, and managing an educational institution or an early childhood institution.
    - An official letter from the Chairman of the Board of Directors nominating a company representative, with the following documents:
        - Copy of the representative's passport.
        - Copy of the Emirates ID.
        - Certificate of Good Conduct (Police Clearance Certificate).

Additional documents submitted with the application:

1. Academic plan.
2. Land location map.
3. Engineering drawings of the proposed building.
4. Layout plan showing the distribution of care and learning rooms and institutional facilities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Phase Two

1. Building completion certificate issued by the competent local municipality.
2. Certificate issued by the Civil Defense Department confirming the building's suitability and compliance with required safety standards.
3. Nomination request for the institution's director, accompanied by approved academic qualifications and professional experience documents.
4. Payment of the Early Childhood Institution licensing service fees.

Final Phase

1. Professional license for the Early Childhood Institution issued by the relevant Department of Economic Development.
2. Request approval to issue work permits for the early childhood staff.
3. Submit a medical contract for the doctor's visit.
4. Valid and attested lease agreement for the institution's building issued by the concerned authorities, or title deed.
5. Approved building evacuation plan.

2. What space requirements should be considered when determining staffing numbers and facilities for establishing a new Early Childhood Institution?

Many early childhood institutions adopt internationally recognized educational philosophies and curricula. Operators are required to apply the policies and standards of the curriculum's country of origin (such as British, American, etc.). The institution may refer to the ratios approved within its adopted curriculum, as long they do not conflict with the ratios outlined in the table below, which serve as guiding standards for expected requirements in early childhood institutions.

- **Teacher and Assistant–Child Ratios**

Age group	Staff-to-Child Ratio
0 - Less than 1year	1:4
1 - Less than 2years	1:5
2 - Less than 3years	1:8
3 - 4years	1:10

Frequently Asked Questions

- **The ratio of the indoor area occupied by the Early Childhood Institution building to the number of children.**

The space ratios listed below do not include corridors, restrooms, offices, staff break areas, kitchens, storage areas, and fixed equipment. The following ratios apply only to the areas allocated for children's sleeping and play activities.

Age group	Indoor area ratio per Child
0 - Less than 2years	3.5 square meters per child
2 - 4years	3 square meters per child

- **The ratio of outdoor or indoor spaces is allocated for developing children's physical skills.**

(The outdoor space ratio is determined as one-fifth (1/5) of the total number of children)

Age group	Outdoor area ratio per Child (for 1/5 of the Children)
0 - Less than 2years	3.5 square meters per child
2 - 4years	5 square meters per child

Example: if the full capacity of the building is 40 children, the area should be calculated for eight children.

- **The toilets and changing rooms requirements**

Age group	Requirements Set by the Ministry of Education
0 - Less than 2years	One changing table +sink per 10 children Disposable changing sheets
2 - 4years	1 toilet and 1 handbasin per 10 children

Frequently Asked Questions

3. Is it permitted to establish an Early Childhood Institution without an outdoor space?

Yes, this is permitted. In such cases, the institution must provide outdoor activities for children and use shared play areas that meet the required space standards. These areas should be located within a safe walking distance from the institution building (not exceeding 300 meters).

If an external public play area is not available, an equivalent indoor space must be provided to compensate for the required outdoor area. The safety of flooring and the suitability of the space must be ensured, along with providing resources and equipment that support the development of children's physical skills.

In addition, an indoor garden area containing natural plants should be provided and all plants used in outdoor spaces or enclosed indoor areas must be non-toxic and safe for children.

4. What qualifications, experience, and skills are required for staff working in an Early Childhood Institution?

- **Requirements for the Institution Director**
    - Academic Qualifications: A university degree in Early Childhood Education or Education, or another relevant specialization, provided that it is accompanied by a recognized professional certification in Early Childhood Institution Leadership.
    - Practical Experience: A minimum of two years of practical experience in the field of early childhood or education, with full knowledge of administrative aspects, the educational curriculum, and policies and procedures related to the care and education of children and their protection.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Requirements for the Primary Care Provider (Teacher)**
    - Academic Qualifications: A university degree in Early Childhood Education or Education, or another relevant specialization, provided that it is accompanied by a recognized professional certification in Early Childhood Care and Education. Alternatively, a high school diploma may be accepted if accompanied by a recognized professional certification in Early Childhood Care and Education.
    - Practical Experience: A minimum of two years of experience in the field of childcare and education.
- **Requirements for the Assistant Care Provider (Assistant Teacher, Supervisor Assistant, Nanny, etc.)**

Academic Qualifications: A recognized professional certification in Early Childhood Care and Education, or a high school diploma Certificate accompanied by a specialized training program in early childhood care with a duration of no less than 100 training hours.