



ST. MARY'S *Catholic High School, Dubai*

ACADEMIC & CAREER GUIDANCE POLICY

2026-2027



ST. MARY'S *Catholic High School, Dubai*

Academic and Career Guidance Policy

Our Aim

We aim to:

- ❖ Develop students' self-awareness of strengths, interests and aspirations.
- ❖ Provide exposure to diverse global and local pathways (UAE, UK, USA, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand).
- ❖ Equip students with informed decision-making skills.
- ❖ Build confidence, resilience and employability competencies.
- ❖ Engage parents as active partners in career planning.

Introduction

This policy sets out how St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai supports students from Year 1 to Year 13 with academic and career guidance. It helps students understand their strengths and interests, choose the right subjects, and make informed decisions about university and their future careers.

A career is no longer seen as a single choice made at school. It is built through a series of decisions about learning and work throughout life, so our programme starts early and builds each year. This policy covers how we guide students towards their future career paths at different stages of their school life, who is responsible for delivering it, and how the school works with parents, universities and external providers.

Objective

The choices students make at school shape more than their next qualification. They influence future study and work, and also finances, wellbeing and social life. Our role is to help students move confidently from school into higher education or employment. To do this, the programme builds their skills, supports their interests and ambitions, and guides them to choose subjects and pathways with the right information. It aims to prepare students for university and for working life. The programme includes the following, and is not limited to them:



INITIATIVES

- **Community Service and Volunteering:**

The school mandates a Community Service Programme for all Year 12 students. Structured volunteering opportunities are provided to Year 10 and Year 12 students during school events, enabling them to develop leadership, teamwork, responsibility and organisational skills. Volunteering activities are designed to enhance students' employability skills, social awareness and personal development.

- **Cognitive and Psychometric Assessments:**

- ❖ CAT4 assessments to show each student's aptitude and strengths as a learner.
- ❖ External psychometric aptitude assessments in Year 8 (before GCSE options) and Year 11 (before Year 12 subject selection).
- ❖ Assessments are delivered by external providers. Once the psychometric test is done, the provider schedules one-to-one counselling sessions with students and their parents to go through the results and guide subject choices.



- **Career Guidance & Personal Development:**

External training and networking such as university events, UCAS and Common App information forum.

- ❖ Students are introduced to UAE and global career trends and in-demand sectors through guest speakers and counselling sessions.
- ❖ Students are guided to use online platforms, digital tools and AI responsibly in research, applications and career planning.
- ❖ One-to-one counselling sessions are arranged for students and parents with the Career Guidance Counsellor and the Governor for Career Guidance Counselling.

- **Careers Day (Years 1–9):**

Students in Years 1 to 9 take part in a Careers Day, where they learn about different jobs and the skills they need, and begin to think about their own interests and strengths. This lays the groundwork for the guidance they receive in later years.

- **Co-Curricular Activities:**

Students take part in local events such as Model United Nations and Gavel Club sessions. From Year 8, they can also volunteer at school events. Events and programmes this year include:

- ❖ Saints MUN Conference.
- ❖ BCC Business Cup Challenge for Year 12 and 13 students.
- ❖ International dance competition.
- ❖ Global quantum mechanics challenge, organised by an external body, in which Year 13 students took part.
- ❖ Saints Art Jam, the school's art competition, held every year.



Financial literacy training is provided to different cohorts of students. It helps students to:

- ❖ Budget, save and manage money responsibly.
- ❖ Understand the cost of university and living abroad and plan for it.
- ❖ Make informed decisions about fees, scholarships, loans and debt.
- ❖ Build confidence and money skills for working life.



- **International University Fair & Local UAE University Fair**

Fairs are held in school, and Year 11, 12 and 13 students attend a compulsory session.

Students and parents can meet university representatives and ask about courses around the world, entry requirements, deadlines and admission processes.

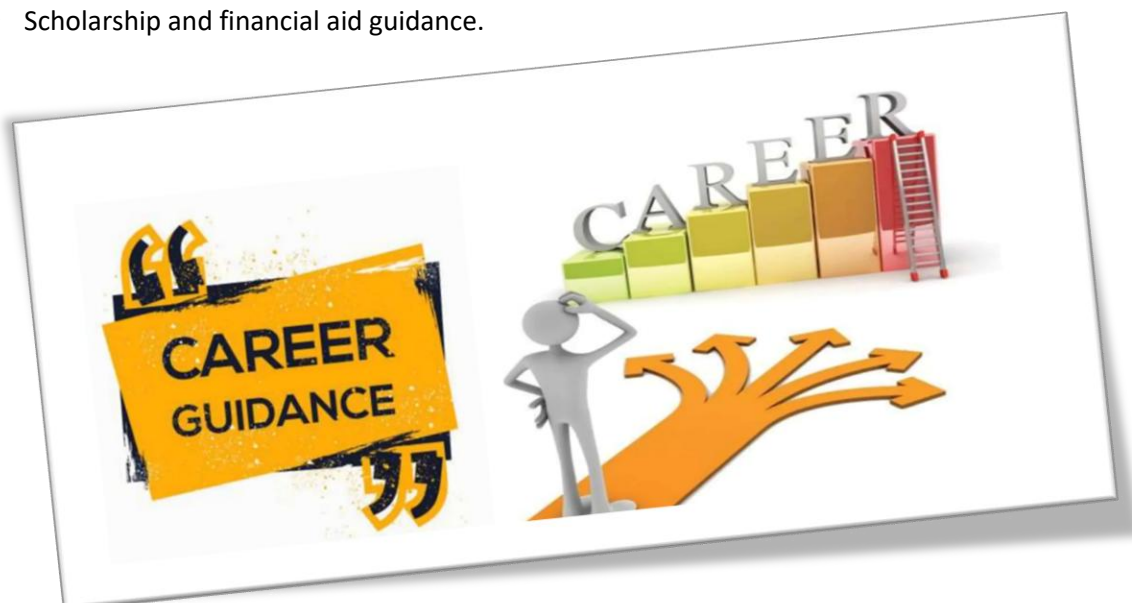
- **Workshops, Internships, Campus Visits and Alumni Engagement:**

Year 12 and 13 students attend workshops on university applications, personal statements and entry requirements. They take part in internships, which are approved by senior leadership and follow safeguarding protocols, with parental consent. Students also visit university campuses to explore programmes, facilities and student life. An alumni meet connects students with past students now at university. Students are encouraged to reflect on what they gain from internships and workshops and to use this in their CVs and personal statements. Feedback is collected from students after internships and used to improve the programme.

- **Application and Placement Support:**

Students receive structured guidance through:

- ❖ One-to-one and group counselling on subject and programme choices, entry requirements, country-specific deadlines and university shortlisting.
- ❖ Personal statement and CV guidance.
- ❖ UCAS and Common App support, including transcript uploads and application timelines.
- ❖ Recommendation letters reflecting academic and co-curricular achievements.
- ❖ Scholarship and financial aid guidance.



Career Guidance Through the School Years

The table below shows what students and parents can expect at each stage, from Year 1 to Year 13, and how it helps.

Stage	What the school provides	How it helps students
Years 1 – 6	Careers Day, where students learn about different jobs and the skills they need.	Builds early awareness of their own interests and strengths.
Year 7	Careers Day, where students explore different jobs and the skills they need.	Helps students link their interests and strengths to possible careers.
Year 8	Careers Day. Subject orientation day with subject specialists. A day for parents to meet subject specialists in school. External psychometric aptitude assessment arranged by the school.	Helps students and parents choose GCSE subjects with clear information.
Year 9	Careers Day. Follow-up support from the career counsellor on subject choices. Subject change policy allows changes to GCSE subject options.	Students can adjust their choices if their interests or strengths become clearer.
Year 10	Information on university fairs outside school and guest speaker sessions. Volunteering at school events.	Early exposure to universities and careers; builds teamwork and responsibility.
Year 11	University fairs on campus and guest speaker sessions. External psychometric aptitude assessment before Year 12 subject selection. Volunteering at school events.	Helps students choose Year 12 subjects and explore career options.
Years 12 – 13	One-to-one sessions with the career counsellor and the governor for university and career guidance. University fairs, guest speakers, workshops, internships, campus visits and the alumni meet. Mandatory community service programme (Year 12). Application and placement support.	Prepares students for university applications, university life and working life.

Inclusion and Equal Access

Every student has equal access to career guidance, whatever their background or ability. The Academic and Career Guidance team works with the Head of Inclusion to make sure students of determination receive reasonable adjustments and personalised support where required.

- ❖ Guidance on subjects, courses and universities is shaped around each student's strengths, interests and needs.
- ❖ Workshops, fairs, campus visits, internships and information sessions are planned so all students can take part, with adjustments made where needed.
- ❖ Students from different cultural, language and family backgrounds receive the same quality of guidance.
- ❖ Parents of students of determination are involved in planning their child's next steps.

Safeguarding and External Providers

- ❖ All external speakers, university representatives and providers are approved by senior leadership.
- ❖ Safeguarding protocols are followed during events and engagements.
- ❖ Parent consent is obtained where required.

Communication

- ❖ Weekly School Circulars
- ❖ Parent meetings, workshops and information sessions on pathways and applications
- ❖ Counselling appointments
- ❖ Official school communication channels



Roles and Responsibilities

Career Guidance Counsellor:

The Career Guidance Counsellor works closely with the Senior Leadership Team to:

- ❖ Develop and run the school's career programme.
- ❖ Be available every Friday in the school for one-to-one sessions with students (other days whenever requested).
- ❖ Provide one-to-one support on subject and programme choices, entry requirements and university shortlisting.
- ❖ Support students with UCAS and Common App applications, and maintain application tracking and documentation.
- ❖ Plan and manage career-related activities and events, including Year 12–13 workshops, internships, campus visits and alumni engagement.

- ❖ Establish and develop links with internship providers, educational institutions and relevant organisations.
- ❖ Work closely with relevant staff, including the Head of Inclusion, to identify the guidance needs of all students, including those with special educational needs, determination and/or disabilities.
- ❖ Gather student feedback and keep records of activities.

Governor for Career Guidance Counselling:

- ❖ Meet Year 12 and Year 13 students at the start of the year for orientation.
- ❖ Be available every Friday in the school for one-to-one session with students.
- ❖ Engage with parents whether on-site or online via zoom.
- ❖ Assist students in Year 12 and Year 13 with application and university placements.
- ❖ Help students find and arrange internships and volunteering opportunities with external providers.
- ❖ Assist students with IELTS exam registration.

Senior Leadership Team:

Our Senior Leadership Team will:

- ❖ Provide clear advice and guidance for the school and can base a strategic careers plan.
- ❖ Support the Career Guidance Counsellor in developing the career guidance framework.
- ❖ Ensure the career team is allocated sufficient time and has the appropriate training to perform their duties to a high standard.
- ❖ Allow relevant external providers access to engage with students in Years 8 to 13 about educational qualifications, industry insights and other relevant subject areas.

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team to ensure alignment with KHDA expectations and evolving higher education requirements.

Review Date :	September 2026
Next Review Date:	August 2027