



Qabas Oman School Teaching and Learning Policy

This document provides information on the teaching and learning policy that is implemented at Qabas Oman School, as well as a discussion of the various teaching methodologies that should be employed at Qabas Oman School. This document is relevant for all of the teachers at the school, and for interested parents. It also serves as an explicit statement of the teaching and learning policy at Qabas Oman School which is available to any educational authority who may wish to know which teaching and learning policy has been implemented at the school.

The school's approach to teaching and learning begins with the commitments that are referred to in the school's Mission statement and which are reflected in the development plans that are outlined in any of the School's Improvement Plans. This approach has a commitment to high quality teaching and learning through the implementation of a range of different elements including:

- a broad, balanced, differentiated, and relevant curriculum
- the employment of modern teaching methods and practices
- the provision of adequate learning resources and an environment that is conducive to learning
- the development of a range of teaching and learning styles
- thorough assessment, recording, and reporting systems
- a student care system
- established home/school liaison procedures
- learning and language support
- non-teaching support
- effective staff development
- quality assurance systems

Taken together, these elements will help to provide students with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and experiences which encourage the development of literate, numerate, ICT-capable, and socially-aware students.

Purpose

The purpose of this teaching and learning policy is:

- to ensure that Qabas Oman School's values remain at the heart of all teaching and learning activities that take place in the school.
- to raise the quality of learning and, as a result, improve standards of achievement for students of all abilities.
- to provide clear guidance for teaching and learning, setting expectations of best practices and ensuring consistency across the school.
- to enable the teaching team to identify aspects of teaching practice as part of their commitment to continual improvement of teaching and learning.
- to provide a tool for monitoring, evaluation, school improvement, and accountability.

Definitions

Instructional methods are the ways and the settings within which teaching and learning programmes and activities are delivered to students.

Inclusiveness refers to recognising and responding to the diverse needs of students, providing different learning environments and rates of learning to all students through the delivery of an appropriate curriculum, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use, and partnerships with the local community.

Values Which Underpin Teaching and Learning

The educational values that inform the teaching and learning at Qabas Oman School include:

- a commitment by the teachers to both challenge and support our young learners.
- a commitment to do as much as we can for each student to enable the student's success.
- a belief that everyone can be effective.
- the notions of trust, integrity, and fairness.
- that every student and their educational success is important.

Principles of Teaching and Learning

The following remarks illustrate the notions of *teaching* and *learning* that Qabas Oman School subscribes to:

All of the teachers at Qabas Oman School are considered to be leaders of learning, and demonstrate through their own conduct and enquiries that they are lifelong learners. Professional development is therefore essential for supporting our teachers as they develop their own learning. Consequently, teachers are expected to take an active interest in and responsibility for developing their teaching practice.

The provision of a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum which is relevant to the needs of the students and supports their academic, social, moral, cultural, and physical development is an important goal for Qabas Oman School.

The development of values and attitudes, which will allow students to flourish, achieve, and feel valued should be a priority for all of the teachers at Qabas Oman School.

It is important that teachers use an effective range of teaching and learning strategies, including the use of new technologies in the classroom.

Teachers should involve students in their own learning, including the development of student awareness of the cognitive processes involved in learning.

Qabas Oman School provides a system of assessment, recording, and reporting, which informs and assists the teaching and learning in the school.

High quality learning resources are used at Qabas Oman School.

A caring, positive, and well-disciplined environment where effective learning can take place is to be found at Qabas Oman School.

An effective and well-organised system of student care supports the teaching and learning at Qabas Oman School.

Systems of learning and language support are provided for at the school, so that students can develop their full potential.

High quality and relevant staff development activities are available to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

A strong partnership between home and school that can support, reinforce, and enhance student learning is particularly encouraged at Qabas Oman School. The link between the school and the parents is very important to the success of each child.

At Qabas Oman School, the quality of teaching and learning is monitored and evaluated at regular intervals, as part of the school quality assurance processes.

Inclusive Practices

Inclusive practices refers to the systems that are designed to address every student's learning needs, so that no student at Qabas Oman School is placed at a disadvantage with respect to their academic performance. This entails that:

- the curriculum is accessible to all students.
- students will be taught in academically mixed-ability classes where lessons are differentiated.
- students will be provided with multilingual and academic support programmes.

Teaching and Learning Approaches and Activities

Everyone at Qabas Oman School understands and appreciates the fact that children learn best when they:

- are happy 😊
- are interested and motivated
- achieve success and gain approval
- are given tasks which match and extend their ability
- clearly understand the task
- are confident, feel secure, and are aware of boundaries
- are challenged and stimulated, and
- have some ownership over what they learn

A number of different teaching approaches are employed at Qabas Oman School, in an effort to present a variety of challenges to our young learners. This includes differentiating teaching and assessment strategies (including cross-curricular approaches where applicable), accommodating different learning styles, providing curricular opportunities outside the classroom, and offering learning and multi-lingual support.

The learning experiences at Qabas Oman School are organised to ensure that students have the opportunity to:

- work individually, in groups, and as a class
- develop research and project skills
- do practical work
- take part in competitions, games, and play activities
- give seminars and presentations
- use a range of technologies
- make decisions
- work co-operatively
- solve problems
- be creative
- discuss and debate their ideas
- develop social skills
- develop independence
- use their initiative
- receive support from teachers and peers
- participate in field trips, inter-school exchanges, and community service activities
- achieve academically
- find satisfaction and modest pride in their scholarly career

In order to build on the diverse talents and skills of the teaching staff and to keep them motivated, the school will support and encourage their creatively as they devise methods that engage their students in learning.

Inappropriate teaching and learning approaches include:

- dictating notes to students
- copying large amounts from the board or a book

- asking students to underline passages in textbooks for the purpose of asking them to ‘learn’ it (i.e. memorization)
- giving students ‘busy’ work that has no learning value
- using activities that harm or endanger the student’s health or safety
- using inappropriate resources
- lecturing without interacting with students

These teaching practices are avoided at Qabas Oman School.

Responsibilities for Teaching and Learning

A number of different parties are responsible for the delivery of effective teaching and learning practices at Qabas Oman School. These parties are mentioned below with a brief description of their responsibilities.

Senior Leadership

The School Leadership/Principal, in collaboration with the School Governing Board, sets priorities and targets for improvement at the whole school level based on evidence gained from monitoring systems. The School Leadership/Principal tracks progress made with respect to the School Improvement Plan. Monitoring and evaluation principally takes place through department reviews and classroom observations of teaching and learning.

Department Review Meetings

Every year the Principal will meet with each teacher and:

- monitor the effectiveness of leadership and management of their curriculum area
- analyse performance data and set targets for improvement
- give support and arrange training for professional development
- ensure the quality of teaching and learning is at the standard expected at Qabas Oman School
- maintain an overview of the experience of students in their grades levels by, for example, monitoring behaviour records and co-curricular activities
- monitor the work of teachers and support staff, e.g. by checking weekly planners
- monitor attitudes towards learning by examining attendance and homework records
- meet with parents/guardians regarding their child’s performance

Heads of Department

Curriculum leaders are responsible for the effective teaching of their subject(s), evaluating the quality of teaching and standards of student achievement, and setting targets for improvement. This is achieved by:

- evaluating the teaching of their subject and the planning of lessons, and using this analysis to identify and share effective practices and to lead action for improvement in teaching practices
- ensuring curriculum coverage, continuity, and progress for all students
- implementing school policies and practices for assessing, recording, and reporting on student progress and setting targets for further improvement in line with whole school policies

- analysing and interpreting data on student performance against school expectations and other comparative data
- setting expectations and targets and implementing actions for the achievement of individual students
- monitoring student work through the regular sampling of homework, class work, student responses and attitudes, in order to make a comparative evaluation of work against other classes and grades to ensure quality and consistency, and to implement strategies for improvement
- regularly observing teachers and giving constructive feedback. This includes the performance management of teachers.
- evaluating progress of teaching and learning targets in departmental development plans, in line with the School Improvement Plan

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for the progress of students in their classes. They should plan lessons:

- which allow students to progress in their learning
- where the learning that is required to take place in each part of the lesson is made clear to the learners
- which allow students to develop and practice higher-order thinking skills such as creativity, analysis, problem solving, decision making, and the application of concepts and knowledge
- which are differentiated for varying needs in terms of task, resources, outcomes, and/or method
- which use stimulating resources, including the use of ICT and e-learning, which are differentiated for the students, as appropriate
- which provide pace and challenge for all students
- which use effective questioning and formative assessment to direct and challenge pupils
- which meet external requirements
- which are informed by prior learning
- which are enjoyable and interesting

Teachers develop lesson plan templates and may choose to use more detailed templates to develop good practice.

Teaching styles

Teachers should use teaching strategies which:

- allow students to learn in different styles of learning, i.e. visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic styles of learning
- allow students to work both independently and collaboratively, and which contribute to each other's learning
- use positive behaviour management and encouragement so that students will be successful, including praise and rewards
- use topics which are relevant to the students' life experience

- use other people to deliver some lessons (e.g. other pupils, auxiliaries, outside agencies, guest speakers)

Students

Students, of course, are also involved in the teaching and learning process. To support Qabas Oman School's teaching and learning policy, students should:

- be punctual and prepared for lessons, with the correct equipment
- be willing to try and not be afraid of making mistakes
- complete homework to enhance their learning
- take pride in their work through meeting expectations across the curriculum for neat and accurate presentation of their work
- make positive contributions to class discussions
- follow the Qabas Oman School Behaviour Management Programme
- take responsibility for improving their own learning
- be supportive of the other students who they are learning with
- ask for help if it is required
- be willing to share their learning with others

Parents

Parents are essential in helping to support their children's learning. The parents of children enrolled at Qabas Oman School will be asked to enter into a Parent-School Partnership Agreement which outlines how parents can lend their support to the teaching and learning that takes place at the school and at home. In addition to this agreement, Qabas Oman School encourages parents to:

- attend parent information/workshop/open day sessions
- have an open dialogue with the school personnel
- support school policies
- provide opportunities for children to practise and extend their learning at home
- encourage and support children in bringing learning from home back into the classroom
- support the school and work in partnership with additional support for learning

Main Instructional Strategies

The following three approaches to curriculum delivery are relevant to the teaching strategies employed at Qabas Oman School:

- (i) a programmed approach where the teacher tightly directs the learning
- (ii) an open framework approach where the teacher provides various learning environments and the children are allowed to make choices, and
- (iii) the child-centred approach where the teacher responds to an individual child's interests.

Teaching practices for young learners should involve a combination of all three environments mentioned above. Consequently, the instructional strategies for early years at Qabas Oman School consists of:

- child-initiated and adult-guided play/learning experiences where adults join in appropriately to extend communication, cognitive, motor- and social-skills development, and recognise ‘teachable moments’
- adult-initiated small group activities where children are taught new skills and concepts across the curriculum, through focused discussion and subsequent activity
- whole-class activities, including dialogic reading, storytelling, inquiry, and creative expression activities
- circle time, in large or small groups, where new ideas are promoted and discussed
- extended periods of physical activity indoors and outdoors, in addition to break time

As our children develop in their school career, for example from Grade 3 to 12, **direct instruction** and **indirect instruction** methods become relevant. Any particular instructional method that a teacher may use has both advantages and disadvantages, and requires preliminary preparation. Often, one particular teaching method will naturally flow into another, all within the same lesson, and excellent teachers will have developed the skills to make the process seem seamless to the students.

Deciding on which particular instructional method is ‘right’ for a particular lesson depends on several factors, including the age and developmental level of the students, what the students already know, and what they need to know to succeed with the lesson, the subject-matter content, the objectives of the lesson, the available people, time, space, and material resources, and the physical setting. There is no one ‘right’ method for teaching a particular lesson, but the factors that pertain to each learning task can help a teacher make the best decision possible.

Direct instruction and indirect instruction are further elaborated upon below.

“**Direct Instruction** (DI) is a model for teaching that emphasizes well-developed and carefully planned lessons designed around small learning increments and clearly defined and prescribed teaching tasks. It is based on the theory that clear instruction, eliminating misinterpretations, can greatly improve and accelerate learning.”¹

Examples of direct instruction include:

- explicit teaching
- drill and practice sessions
- compare and contrast
- didactic questions
- demonstrations
- guided reading
- lecturing, with student interaction

¹ <http://www.nifdi.org/15/about-di>

“**Indirect Instruction** a highly learner-centred strategy, takes advantage of students’ interests and curiosity, students are involved in observing, investigating, drawing conclusions from information, the role of the instructor is to facilitate, mentor, and be a resource”.²

Examples of indirect instruction include:

- problem solving activities
- case studies
- reading for meaning
- inquiry
- reflective discussion
- writing to inform
- concept formation, mapping, and attainment
- cloze procedures

Although these two approaches to teaching and learning appear to be at odds with each other, they can be used in a complementary manner to provide enriching learning experiences for students. For example, teachers will use the approach that is best suited to the learning task on hand. This brings us to a description of **differentiated instruction**.

Differentiated instruction

As part of its teaching and learning philosophy, Qabas Oman School also supports the implementation of a teaching methodology called *differentiated instruction*. Differentiated instruction is a teaching methodology which provides students with different ways of acquiring and learning subject content. Thus, the way each student experiences a subject or a course is differentiated. This experience is informed by:

- different ways of acquiring content (e.g. by listening, reading, physical interaction, discovery)
- different ways of constructing knowledge and making sense of ideas and concepts
- different ways of developing appropriate teaching materials
- knowledge that each child possesses a range of different abilities
- knowledge that each child has the right to be taught at school according to their individual learning needs

Differentiated instruction may include a mix of whole-class instruction, group instruction, and individual instruction, i.e. either direct instruction or indirect instruction. Different methods are used to provide information to the child, to monitor what the child has learnt, and to allow the child expression of what has been learnt. To perform this properly, the teacher needs to adapt to the child’s needs. This adaptation by the teacher is informed by regular assessment of each child.

² <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/curriculum/glossary.shtml>

Differentiated instruction demands that teachers plan a variety of ways of providing information in each class so as to engage each and every student. This information is tailored to fit to whole-class-, group-, and individual instruction situations. Focus is placed on the quality of the student's accurate responses to learning, not merely on the quantity of the work covered. Teachers at Qabas Oman School are supported by school educational leadership team in their efforts to provide differentiated instruction.

In differentiated instruction, the student is the focus and centre of the learning experience, not some abstract performance standard or some future exam score. To make the student the focus of the classroom situation, the teacher should provide lessons that:

- engage the interests of the students
- are relevant to the student's lives
- are active and dynamic in that the teacher can modify the lesson's pace and/or manner of delivery according the student's needs
- include inquiry based-, problem based-, and project-based instruction

Some examples of differentiation strategies are:

- tiered assignments and products
- independent study
- interest centres
- flexible grouping
- multiple levels of questions
- learning contracts
- choice boards

Incorporating integration

Further to the teaching and learning philosophy described above, Qabas Oman School also supports the implementation of *integrated instruction*. This is an approach to education that allows students to make relevant connections across an academic curriculum. Academic subjects are not taught in isolation from each other; connections significant to learning and mastery of skills are made across a curriculum.

Connections between different school subjects can be made, for example between Mathematics and Science. It is quite clear that certain knowledge and skills acquired in Mathematics will assist the student in performing calculations in the field of Science. Another example is how terminology specific to Biology can be used in expanding the student's English vocabulary. This is a 'Subject-to-Subject' connection across the curriculum.

This approach to teaching draws on three major features³ of curriculum integration:

³ Beane, J. (1997). *Curriculum Integration*. Teachers College Press: New York.

- the integration of experiences
- social integration
- the integration of knowledge

The student's personal life-experience is allowed to inform the student's learning. This includes practical every-day experiences and experiences that are enjoyed within the school. The social dimension of the child, including the student's identity as an Omani child or expat child, the child's sense of family, and community are also allowed expression and are a source of information that can be used in the child's learning at Qabas Oman School. Finally, (i) the knowledge that the child possesses (and which is continually being added to) and (ii) the way this knowledge is structured also inform the child's learning in an environment where integrated instruction is used.

Integrated instruction allows the student to connect skills and knowledge from multiple sources (to repeat: the child's experiences, social life, and knowledge base). The child is tasked to apply these skills and practices in various settings. Furthermore, the child should have the ability to employ different perspectives to understand different issues for different purposes (in different contexts). For example, different perspectives can be taken on a new piece of technology. One perspective may examine the technology from a purely 'scientific' point of view, another perspective may raise aesthetic questions, and yet another perspective may place the technology in a socio-economic or historical context.

Crucially, integrative instruction establishes that all-important link between the student's academic knowledge and 'real-world' practices.⁴ Academic knowledge is not considered in isolation from the real-world (every-day life), just as every-day life cannot be successfully experienced or understood without a solid base of knowledge, be it academic knowledge or knowledge of one's self. Integrative instruction thus creates an environment where students can synthesize these different areas (the experiential, the social, and (self-)knowledge) into a robust unified whole, thereby supporting the vision and mission of Qabas Oman School.

Qabas Oman School ensures that its teachers have opportunities to discuss, practice, and observe direct instruction, indirect instruction, integration and differentiation as part of each teacher's professional development program. Such professional development will improve their understanding and skills in all of the teaching methodologies. Whatever the methodology used by a teacher at any particular time, it is essential that the teacher remains focused on student learning which is in accordance with the curriculum plan and/or subject pacing chart.

⁴ Huber, M. T., Hutchings, P., & Gale, R. (2005). *Integrative Learning for Liberal Education*. peerReview, Summer/Fall.

Teaching and Learning Resources

To support the success of the teaching and learning activities that take place in the classroom, a range of teaching resources will be used in curriculum delivery. However, with respect to teaching resources, Qabas Oman School encourages an approach that does not *solely* rely on textbooks, but rather, promotes the use of additional reference books and support books, appropriate ICT resources, teacher-produced resources, flash cards, learning games, subject-specific equipment, and manipulatives.

Teachers are encouraged to access a variety of resources and even create their own resources. This work is particularly valued at Qabas Oman School. These resources should be checked by the curriculum leader for relevance and accuracy, and they may then be shared among teachers of the same subject and grade, in the spirit of teamwork and cooperation, which is also valued at Qabas Oman School.