Khalifa International Award
for Early Learning Field

His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan

United Arab Emirates Vice President,
Deputy Prime Minister,
Chairman of the Presidential Court,
Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Khalifa Award for Education

The Khalifa International Award for Early Learning exemplifies the keenness of the late Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan (May God have mercy upon him), to encourage research and innovation in the early learning field and to ensure best practice implementation to guarantee the highest early childhood education quality.

Investing in early education is an intelligent future venture. The Intention is to create qualified generations of leaders who possess the necessary knowledge and skills to enhance their respective countries' achievements and enable their countries to realize their aims for development and wellbeing.

Early childhood is a crucial foundational stage in shaping human life. With this in mind, the launch of this vital award is a translation of the UAE leadership's commitment to education and early childhood programs, in particular. This initiative was brought to life by the generous support of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, and Ruler of Dubai . In addition to the invaluable encouragement from Their Highnesses, the Supreme Council Members and Rulers of the Emirates, all of whom envision early learning as a keystone for achieving the UAE Centennial 2071 objectives and those of the broader global community.

Creating this international award aims to consolidate the culture of excellence through enriching educational sectors with specialized studies and policies catered by applicants to achieve a qualitative shift in early learning and childhood care. It represents an inspiration for all the award participants and stakeholders who strive to introduce ambitious developmental visions, and such growth is anticipated to meet the highest international standards.

The launch of the Khalifa International Award for Early Learning is an essential step towards creating an educational system that aligns with leaders' aspirations, national educational agendas, and those involved in the care and education of children. The early learning field can contribute to supporting national identity and cultural belonging, alongside openness to positive global experiences, which translate the exceptional effort made by the UAE to ensure a promising future for generations to come, therefore, a bright tomorrow for the world.

His Excellency Humaid Al Houti

SECRETARY GENERAL

The United Arab Emirates has contributed a unique model for providing world-class early education and childhood care since the country's Founding Father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan, assumed office. Sheikh Zayed was a kind father who adored children and extended his full support towards excellence in every aspect of childhood care and early education.

Awarding Committee

Prof. W. Steven Barnett
CHAIRMAN

Board of Governors Professor of Education and Founding Co-Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University, United States.
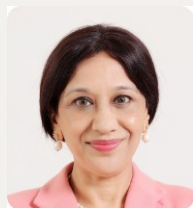
Prof. Iram Siraj
MEMBER

Professor of Child Development and Education, University of Oxford

Dr. Jana Fleming
MEMBER

Director of the Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Center of Excellence in Early Childhood

Prof. Nirmala Rao
MEMBER

Professor in Early Childhood Development and Education, Professor, Chair of Child Development and Education, The University of Hong Kong

Dr. Meera Alkaabi
MEMBER

Advisor for the Director General of the Early Childhood Authority (ECA) and the lead of the Academic Affairs at the (NACD)

Screening Committee

Dr. Philip Quirke | HEAD - Education Consultant

Dr. Sarah Rogers | MEMBER - Chief Executive Officer, QuEST Direct Professional Service

Dr. Bochra Kaddoura | MEMBER - Early Childhood Education and Care Advisor/Strategist at Sharjah Private Education Authority

Dr Rachel Takriti | MEMBER - Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education & Chair of Curriculum and Instruction Department, College of Education, UAEU

The Committees of the Khalifa International Award for Early Learning are independent experts who rigorously sort, screen, and evaluate nominations to select each year's laureates, upholding the highest standards of fairness and transparency.

Directory Index

Introduction

The **Khalifa Award for Education** was founded in 2007 in the United Arab Emirates under the directives of the late Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan; God rest his soul. The Award seeks to advance Emirati and Arab educational outputs and the standard of education at all levels by rewarding outstanding innovators in numerous academic and learning domains.

The **Khalifa International Award for Early Learning (KIAEL)** is a field of the Khalifa Award for Education, an International Education Award. The Award is intended to enhance the educational sector within the UAE, throughout the Arab world at large, and globally by honouring the distinguished efforts of researchers and educators whose contributions inform best practices and policies for early childhood education in all contexts. The field of Early Learning is organized into **two** main categories:

1. **Best Research and Studies**

2. **Best Programs, Curricula, and Teaching Methodologies and Practices**

The Khalifa Award for Education adopts the UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) definition of Early childhood, which includes ages from birth to eight. Any functional programs and practical research relevant to early childhood education are eligible to apply for the Khalifa International Award for Early Learning Field.

The Objectives of the Khalifa International Award for Early Learning Field

Promote various social, physical, mental, intellectual, creative, psychological, cognitive, and emotional capacities in early childhood learning.

Enrich early learning programs with research that informs practice and directly impacts improving early childhood care and education programs, curricula, and advanced teaching pedagogies

Motivate innovative teachers, who are the creators of change, through best practices and innovation in early learning.

Promote the role of institutions that specialize in the field of preschool education and early learning.

Recognize innovative, successful approaches for parents and other individual caregivers to support early education, learning, and development.

Benefit from the best research, especially rigorous studies of highly successful early childhood learning programs and approaches that could be applied to educational policies and early learning teaching practices in the UAE.

Defining the Categories Offered for the Khalifa International Award for Early Learning Field:

Best Research and Studies
Category

We seek to identify research on early childhood learning and care that supports development in practice. This includes studies that provide innovative solutions to problems and insights into education and teaching that enrich the evidence base for policies and practices and can lead to meaningful improvements in early learning.

Best Research and Studies
Criteria

Applications for the Best Research and Studies are judged on four measures: **innovativeness**, **importance**, **methodological rigor**, and **impact**. Each submission must demonstrate rigorous evaluation, and each criterion will be assigned equal value when judging the applications. To assist in preparing applications, we provide four main questions (with sub-questions under each) that should be addressed in each application. Research should have been previously published in some form (for example, a government or nongovernmental organization report, a book or book chapter, or a journal article). Still, such publications should be the basis for an application, not the application itself. Each application should include an **abstract** of **no more than 300 words**, a brief description of the research, and **an address to all four criteria**. Applications should be **no more than 10 pages**, **excluding** the **abstract**, references, and an **optional appendix** of **up to 3 pages** that may include links to publications and other materials online.

The extent of the innovativeness and originality of the research ?

- Does the research support the development of new policies or practices?
- Does the research provide new insights into early learning and early childhood education or alter how these are understood?

The significance (importance) of the research ?

- Does the research address one or more critical issues for early learning policy or practice?
- Does the research include populations or contexts of particular importance, for example, children who are highly disadvantaged or children or contexts that are understudied, excluded, or underserved?

Does the research employ appropriate, clearly defined, and ethical methods ?

- Are the research methods clearly described, explained, and replicable?
- Has the research been reported in a publication?
- Do the methods provide a strong basis for trust and confidence in the findings and conclusions?
- Does the methodology offer a model to inspire and/or be followed by future studies?

What are the potential and/or demonstrated impacts ?

- What are the implications of the research for practice? These may be for caregivers, teachers, parents, or others who influence young children's learning and development.
- Does the research have a potential or documented influence on policy or practice?
- Are findings and insights from the research applicable to similar populations and contexts elsewhere?

Defining the Categories Offered for the Khalifa International Award for Early Learning Field:

Best Programs, Curricula, Teaching Methodologies, and Practices **Category**

The Khalifa Award for Education seeks to identify initiatives aimed at improving early education of any type whether through formal organizations, e.g., childcare centers and schools, or informal organizations and activities, e.g., home learning and home-based childcare.

Best Programs, Curricula, and Teaching Methodologies and Practices **Criteria**

Applications for the Best Programs, Curricula, and Teaching Methodologies and Practices will be judged on four measures: **innovativeness**, **importance, impact**, and **feasibility/sustainability**. Each submission must demonstrate rigorous evaluation, and each criterion will be assigned equal value when judging the applications. To assist in preparing applications, we provide four main questions (with sub-questions under each) that should be addressed in each application. Each application should include an **abstract** of **no more than 300** words, briefly describing the program **and addressing each of the four criteria**. All programs submitted for consideration should have been subject to an evaluation of implementation or outcomes that provides evidence of program implementation and potential or documented impacts on practice in early learning and on early learning outcomes. Applications should be **no more than 10 pages**, excluding the abstract, references, and an **optional appendix** of up to **3 pages** that may include links to videos, publications, and other materials online.

How innovative, creative, and ground-breaking is the program ?

- Does the program inspire or offer a model for new, creative approaches to early learning activities in early learning settings, which may include the home (and other informal setting) or childcare centers/ schools (formal settings)?
- Could this approach cultivate dispositions, skills, knowledge, and self-awareness that will shape society for the better?

How important is the program ?

- Does the program address one or more critical issues or problems that families, communities, and broader societies encounter in supporting early learning?
- What are the program's goals for expanding access, improving the quality of early learning experiences, or producing better outcomes for young children's learning?
- How extensive are the intended changes in practice or outcomes of the program from what is typical?

What are the impacts of the program ?

- What impacts have been documented by the evaluation (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) on access, quality of practice, and/or learning outcomes?
- To what extent have persistent and sustained changes in practice and outcomes been demonstrated with rigorous evaluation methods?
- How substantive or transformative is the new program for practice for those who conduct the program (e.g., parents, caregivers, teachers) and for the young children who experience the program?

How feasible and sustainable is the program ?

- To what extent has the program or practice been scaled so far?
- What is the potential for it to be further scaled up or adapted to similar populations and contexts elsewhere?
- How well is the program documented, and is sufficient information provided to support its replication and implementation?
- How much does the program cost, and what resources are required to implement the program?

Award Components

Award Elements
- Trophy
- Certificate of Excellence
- Financial Prize

Eligibility & Recipients
- Individuals
- Group/Team
- Institutions

Award Recipients

2 winners per category

Prize

USD 50,000 per winner

General Instructions for Candidates for the Khalifa International Award for Early Learning

A. Terms of Candidature:

- For the application to be valid and complete, it must be submitted through the online application system http://el.khaward.ae before the deadline.

- The submission must comply with the General Instructions, include agreement to the undertaking, and contain all required documentation for nomination.

- The application must be submitted in English; applications in Arabic will NOT be considered.

- Each candidate may apply for only one category of the Award. Multiple applications in the same year are not permitted.

- Candidates applying for the Khalifa International Award for Early Learning must not apply for another award in the same field during the same year. Additionally, candidate must not have received another award in the same field for a similar work within two (2) years, including the year of nomination.

- The submitted work must not have been prepared as part of a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree requirement, or its equivalent.

- Winners of previous editions of the Khalifa Award may apply again after two (2) years, in any field except the one in which they previously won.

B. Applications Acceptance Terms & Conditions:

- Applications should be submitted in 12-point font, Times New Roman, on standard letter size/A4 pages, and limited to no more than 10 pages single-spaced, excluding the abstract, references, and an optional appendix of up to 3 pages. The abstract must not exceed 300 words. The optional appendix may include figures, tables, and links to videos, publications, and other supporting materials.

- Application and all supporting documents must be submitted electronically through the designated platform.

- Candidates may not use the Khalifa Award for Education's logo in any form of media, commercial promotions, or social media without prior written consent from the General Secretariat.

C. Award Procedures for Winners:

- If the candidate is a team, the monetary value of the Award amount will be distributed equally among the team members.

- If the candidate is an institution, the Award amount will be transferred directly to the institution's official bank account.

- Please nominate the individual authorized to represent the institution or the team, and clearly identify the award category to which the team is applying.

- In the unfortunate event of a candidate's death after nomination and winning, the right to the Award stands and shall be granted to the legal heirs.

D. Post-Winning Arrangements:

- The General Secretariat shall have the right to publish the winning research or program on the official website of the Khalifa International Award for Early Learning.

- In case the candidate publishes the winning work independently, they are required to clearly state that the work has won the Khalifa Award for Education, specifying the following:
    - Award field and category
    - Award Year and cycle
    - A copy of the published work must be submitted to the General Secretariat.

- The Award's General Secretariat shall have the right to circulate winning submissions to all relevant authorities in the name of the General Secretariat and the winner.

- According to the by-laws of the Award, following the announcement of the winners

- The General Secretariat shall bear the winner's expenses – including air ticket, hotel stay, and entry visa – solely for the winner to attend the Awarding Ceremony in Abu Dhabi.

- The General Secretariat will not cover expenses for accompanying individuals.

- Only individual winners shall appear on stage; nomination of a representative to receive the Award on their behalf will not be permitted.

- If **work teams or institutions** win the Award, the Award will only cater to the **head of the team** or **principal investigator**, or their **official representative** to collect the Award.

Timeline and Contact Information

29 July 2025
Application portal for 2026 opens

January 2026- March 2026
Screening and Review of Awards for 2026

May 2026
Award Ceremony for 2026

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

31 December 2025
Final date to submit applications for 2026

April 2026
Announcement of Winners for 2026

For any questions or inquiries related to the KIAEL field **el.info@khaward.ae**

For technical support or issues related to the online application system **el.support@khaward.ae**