

Client Alert

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New requirements for international schools to provide compulsory Vietnamese language and culture studies to enrolled Vietnamese students

Starting 5 May 2020 foreign-invested preschool and general education institutions are required to provide Vietnamese language and cultural education on a weekly basis to Vietnamese students who are enrolled into foreign curriculum. Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has introduced additional guidance on the approval process for joint education programs offered cooperatively by Vietnamese and foreign education providers.

Specifically, on 18 March 2020 the MOET issued Circular No. 04/2020/TT-BGDDT *Detailing a Number of Articles of the Government's Decree No. 86/2018/ND-CP dated June 06, 2018 on Foreign Cooperation and Investment in Education ("Circular No. 4")* expanding compulsory education requirements and introducing joint education program appraisal procedures.

Background

Effective 1 August 2018, Decree No. 86/2018/ND-CP on Foreign Investment and Cooperation in Education in Vietnam ("**Decree No. 86**") has expanded the scope and market for foreign investment in education in Vietnam. Specifically, Decree No. 86 raised the caps on enrollment of Vietnamese students in foreign education curriculum in foreign invested K-12 education institutions to 50% of the classroom size. Furthermore, Decree No. 86 expanded to allow foreign invested education institutions to offer the Vietnamese education curriculum, as an alternative to a foreign education curriculum. Additionally, Decree No. 86 expanded joint education program offerings to preschool, primary school, middle school and high school programs, permitting foreign and local education providers to cooperatively offer education at these levels. Previously, cooperative education programs were only permissible at the university or vocational level.

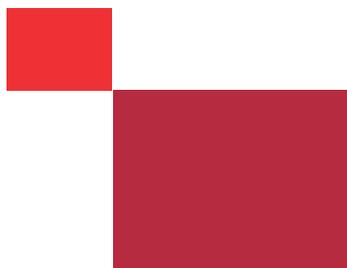
Circular No. 4 further clarifies the requirements for foreign education providers to invest in, and cooperate to offer, education programs in Vietnam.

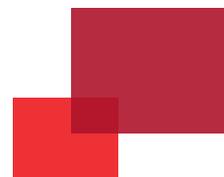
Vietnamese language education and Vietnamese cultural curriculum for Vietnamese citizens

Circular No. 4 requires that foreign-invested education organizations provide Vietnamese language and cultural studies to students who are Vietnamese citizens ("**Compulsory Program**").¹ The Compulsory Program must be delivered in Vietnamese language by qualified Vietnamese teachers.² Compulsory Programs should be evaluated according to the objectives summarized in the table below.

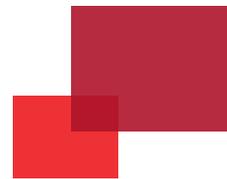
¹ Circular No. 4, Art. 6.

² *Ibid*, Art 7





Level	Objectives	Minimum time allotted
Pre-school	Language Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form vocabulary • Use age appropriate Vietnamese language; • Ability to listen, speak, and use Vietnamese in daily communication; and • Familiarity with reading and writing in Vietnamese. 	At least Two 25-35 minute sessions , each week
Primary education	Language Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form and develop vocabulary and Vietnamese language skills (listen, speak, read and write) • To study and communicate appropriately for their age; • Initial knowledge about Vietnamese language, culture and people. Vietnam Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic understanding of events, typical historical figures and good traditions, customs and practices of the country and people of Vietnam; • Simple understanding of Vietnam's geographical position, territory, territorial sea, islands, geography and natural environment and resources; • Form a love of their homeland, the country and national pride. 	At least 140 minutes per week At least 70 minutes per week, from the fourth grade to fifth grade.
Middle school and high school students	Vietnam Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of Vietnam's history, geography, culture, traditions, customs and practices; • Foster students' love of their homeland, the country, national pride, respect for the historical heritage of the nation and the heroic tradition in building and defending the country. • Good citizenship qualities including a positive attitude for society, community responsibility, a love for labor, being disciplined respectful and law abiding, conscious of national self-reliance, and readiness to build, protect and develop the country. 	At least 90 minutes per week
Foreign students	Providing a Vietnamese language program and Vietnam Studies in Vietnamese or foreign languages to foreign students is encouraged.	



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Appraisal of joint education programs

Circular No. 4 also expands on the requirements for implementing a joint education program in Vietnam. While Decree No. 86 permits the establishment of joint education programs where the program receives required approvals, teaching staff have adequate qualifications, the foreign education program is accredited in the source country; and other general delivery requirements. Circular No. 4 reaffirms these commitments and includes additional program requirements, including:

- implementation in compliance with Vietnam's education environment;
- content and duration should be tailored to students age and implemented without discrimination of gender, ethnicity, religion or social status;
- orientation should focus on student evaluation and contributes to the school's educational plan;
- program must recognize Vietnamese traditions and customs.

For all levels of joint education, documents and materials explaining the integration of the foreign and Vietnamese components of the education plan are required, including, an education plan identifying subjects or education activities, duration and language, and a comparison of the two programs to be integrated.

Prospective joint education programs shall be evaluated by an Appraisal Council specially convened by the Minister of Education and Training within 5 working days of receipt of an application to establish a joint education program.³ The Appraisal Council will include at least 7 members who are education sector stakeholders in the form of Presidents, Vice Presidents, Secretaries and Commissioners that are researchers, preschool or general education specialists, teachers, lecturers, and representatives of relevant organizations. The Appraisal Council will assess the application as either "Pass," "Pass but need modification," or "Fail".

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During the unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic, where all schools in the country must remain closed until further notice from the Government, the issuance of Circular No. 4 shows that MOET is still working on its agenda of law making, while monitoring the pandemic situation in order to provide much needed guidance and guidelines for the schools and other education institutions.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions related education investment into Vietnam.

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³ *Ibid*, Art. 5