دائرة الثقافة والسياحة
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE
AND TOURISM

ACCOLADES MANUAL

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1. Introduction to the Accolades Manual

This manual outlines the framework and criteria for hotel accolades, which recognize exceptional performance or distinction in specific operational, experiential, or sustainability areas. Accolades are not mandatory, but serve as an enhancement to the property's classification, acknowledging hotels that exceed the minimum standards set by the Abu Dhabi Hotel Classification System. Accolades are **valid for a period of three years**, after which properties must undergo reassessment to maintain their certification.

Why Pursue Accolades?

- **Market Differentiation:** Stand out in a competitive landscape by showcasing specialized excellence.
- **Brand Prestige:** Align with Abu Dhabi's vision of becoming a global leader in diverse tourism offerings.
- **Guest Trust:** Provide verified assurance to guests seeking specific experiences, from cultural immersion to sustainable stays.
- **Operational Excellence:** Use the criteria as a roadmap to elevate service standards and internal processes.

2. Scoring Framework & Calculation Methodology

The evaluation process is designed to be rigorous, transparent, and evidence based. Each accolade is assessed through a 100-point framework supported by clear eligibility criteria.

The 100-Point Framework

Each accolade is divided into several **Pillars**, which represent the core areas of focus. Within these pillars, specific **Indicators** or **Criteria** are defined, each carrying a specific point value.

Components	Description
Pillars	High-level categories (e.g., Architecture, Culinary Heritage, Technology).
Criteria	Specific requirements or features that must be demonstrated.
Mandatory Items	Essential criteria that **must** be met regardless of the total score.
Optional Items	Additional features that contribute to the total score.

Calculation Methodology

1. Each accolade is assessed across pillars, and each pillar contains multiple criteria which together sum to 100 points
2. Within these criteria, certain items are designated as mandatory and must be fully satisfied
3. A hotel will be **awarded** a specific Accolade, if the hotel:
   - **Fulfils all mandatory criteria** for the Accolade
   - Achieves an overall score of **70 points or more**

Example Calculation: An Accolade consisting of 50 mandatory points and 50 optional points requires:

- 100% compliance with 50 mandatory points criteria; and
- A minimum of 20 optional points, achieving a total score of at least 70 points.

3. Accolades

There are seven distinct types of accolades available for hotels to achieve, each focusing on a unique area of excellence:

1. **Hospitality Innovation:** Recognizes hotels integrating advanced technologies and innovative practices to elevate service delivery and guest experience.
2. **Sports Retreat:** Honors properties providing high-quality, athlete-focused environments with professional-grade sports facilities and recovery amenities.
3. **Family Friendly:** Recognizes hotels dedicated to creating a safe, engaging, and inclusive environment for families and children of all ages.
4. **Emirati Dhiyafa:** Recognizes hotels that authentically reflect and promotes the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the UAE through architecture, design, and service.
5. **Wellness:** Recognizes hotels delivering a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to guest wellbeing through high-quality facilities and specialized treatments.
6. **Accessible Hospitality:** Honors hotels championing accessibility and inclusivity for people of determination, ensuring every guest enjoys a seamless and dignified stay.
7. **Green Excellence:** Celebrates hotels with exceptional environmental responsibility, resource efficiency, and positive social impact.

3.1 Hospitality Innovation

The Hospitality Innovation accolade recognizes hotels that demonstrate outstanding commitment to adopting and integrating advanced technologies and innovative practices that elevate service delivery, operational efficiency, and overall guest experience.

This accolade highlights properties that go beyond conventional hospitality standards through the use of intelligent systems, automation, personalization tools, immersive experiences, and inclusive technologies that enhance comfort, accessibility, and engagement.

By achieving this accolade, a property showcases its forward-thinking approach, embracing innovation as a core driver of excellence, sustainability, and competitiveness within Abu Dhabi's hospitality landscape.

Mandatory Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Mandatory Points
3.1.1 Seamless Operations & Service Delivery (15 points)	3.1.1.1	Contactless and frictionless transactions are enabled across guest touchpoints, including mobile check-in/check-out, digital room keys, and secure e-payment systems.	15
3.1.2 Guest Experience & Personalization (15 points)	3.1.2.1	Smart in-room technology is available, incorporating voice-activated controls, integrated entertainment systems, and IoT-enabled comfort features.	15
3.1.4 Accessibility & Inclusive Innovation (15 points)	3.1.4.1	Accessibility technology is integrated to support guests with disabilities throughout their stay, including adaptive digital interfaces, voice-enabled controls, digital wayfinding, and accessibility-focused safety and evacuation systems tailored to guests with hearing, visual, or mobility impairments, such as visual alarm systems and vibrating alert devices.	15
Total Points			**45/100**

Optional Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Optional Points
3.1.1 Seamless Operations & Service Delivery (15 points)	3.1.1.2	At least one automation process is in place such as: • AI-powered chatbots. • AI-driven personalization. • Predictive maintenance systems. • Staff enablement tools that enhance service speed, accuracy, and consistency are implemented across core guest service functions. • Smart housekeeping platforms. • Other comparable intelligent automation solutions.	15
3.1.3 Immersive & Experiential Innovation (20 points)	3.1.3.1	AR/VR technology is utilized to enhance guest engagement through virtual tours, interactive storytelling, or cultural/heritage content.	10
	3.1.3.2	Experiential dining concepts are incorporated, such as projection mapping, interactive or multi-sensory dining environments.	10
3.1.4 Accessibility & Inclusive Innovation (10 points)	3.1.4.2	Personalized accessibility that allows guests to pre-set accessibility preferences, such as visual contrast, font size, and voice commands, and to control in-room features including lighting, temperature, curtains, and doors through voice or mobile applications.	10
3.1.5 Future-Readiness & Ecosystem Integration (10 points)	3.1.5.1	Data analytics systems are employed for continuous service monitoring, guest feedback analysis, and performance improvement.	5
	3.1.5.2	Hotels pilot emerging technologies such as AI, robotics, or smart assistants to enhance efficiency, personalization, and guest satisfaction.	5
Total Points			**55/100**

3.2Sports Retreat

The Sports Retreat accolade recognizes hotels that provide high-quality, athlete-focused environments supported by professional-grade sports facilities, certified fitness and recovery amenities, and comprehensive logistical services for teams and sport-oriented guests.

This accolade highlights properties that meet international standards for training spaces, offer licensed wellness and physiotherapy support, ensure safe and well-maintained equipment, and provide nutrition-aligned dining with flexible service hours.

By achieving this accolade, a hotel demonstrates its ability to host training camps, team retreats, and performance-driven stays to the standards expected within Abu Dhabi's sports hospitality landscape.

Mandatory Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Mandatory Points
3.2.1 Sports Facilities (22 points)	3.2.1.1	A full-size sports field, court, track or pool constructed to the standards of the relevant international governing body (e.g., FIFA, FINA, World Athletics) is either available on-site or through a formal agreement with a certified sports facility or stadium located within a 5 km radius of the hotel property.	12
	3.2.1.2	Fully equipped gym with cardio & strength machines meeting international fitness standards is available for guest use.	6
	3.2.1.3	All sports facilities have documented local or global maintenance and safety certifications renewed annually.	4
3.2.2 Wellness & Recovery (10 points)	3.2.2.1	A physiotherapy or sports medicine clinic is available on-site or on-call, with licensed practitioners.	6
	3.2.2.2	Certified fitness and wellness instructors are employed, and regular fitness or wellness classes to be offered as part of the facility program.	4
3.2.3 Accommodation & Logistics (10 points)	3.2.3.1	Secure storage areas and laundry services are available for sports kits and equipment.	6
	3.2.3.2	Group transportation or shuttle services are provided to sports venues or affiliated facilities as required.	4
3.2.4 Food & Nutrition (13 points)	3.2.4.1	The hotel demonstrates the ability to customize menus, or meal plans for teams and individual guests based on nutritional requirements.	5
	3.2.4.2	Menus include balanced options (carbohydrates, proteins, vegetables, low-fat, low-salt, and seasonal ingredients).	4
	3.2.4.3	Flexible dining hours are maintained to accommodate training and competition schedules.	4
Total Points			**55/100**

Optional Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Optional Points
3.2.1 Sports Facilities (11 points)	3.2.1.4	Multipurpose indoor and/or outdoor courts are available for both recreational and competitive use, maintained in good condition, and compliant with applicable safety standards.	6
	3.2.1.5	An on-site swimming pool that allows continuous lap swimming and structured training, rather than leisure-only use*.	5
3.2.2 Wellness & Recovery (12 points)	3.2.2.3	Spa, sauna, steam, or hydrotherapy facilities are available for guest recovery and wellness.	4
	3.2.2.4	Ice baths, cryotherapy units, or equivalent recovery equipment are available and maintained in accordance with manufacturer guidelines.	4
	3.2.2.5	Dedicated recovery rooms or lounges are available, designed for athlete or guest recovery.	2
	3.2.2.6	Guests may request à la carte fitness equipment to their rooms, such as yoga mats, resistance bands, free weights, or stationary bikes.	2
3.2.3 Accommodation & Logistics (6 points)	3.2.3.3	Facilitate block bookings to accommodate group stays efficiently.	2
	3.2.3.4	Meetings, strategy, or briefing rooms equipped with audiovisual facilities are available for team use.	2
	3.2.3.5	A strict non-smoking policy applies across all guest and F&B areas, with smoking permitted in a designated outdoor area.	2
3.2.4 Food & Nutrition (16 points)	3.2.4.4	Food and beverage outlets are equipped with accessibility technology, such as adaptive digital menus, voice-assisted ordering, visual notifications, and intuitive wayfinding to dining venues.	5
	3.2.4.5	Grab-and-go athlete meals are available to support tight training and competition schedules.	5
	3.2.4.6	A qualified dietician is available on-site or through collaboration with the guest's/team's chef.	4
	3.2.4.7	Recovery snacks and hydration stations are available throughout the day in training and recovery areas.	2
Total Points			**45/100**

* A pool suitable for athletic training typically allows continuous lap swimming and is of sufficient size, depth, and configuration to support structured training activities.

3.3 Family Friendly

The Family-Friendly accolade recognizes hotels that demonstrate exceptional dedication to creating a safe, engaging, and inclusive environment for families and children of all ages.

This accolade highlights properties that go beyond standard hospitality practices to deliver thoughtfully designed facilities, programs, and services that cater to the comfort, safety, and enjoyment of families.

Mandatory Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Mandatory Points
3.3.1 Safety & Accessibility (28 points)	3.3.1.1	All public areas include child-safety measures such as signage, locks, and safety film on glass surfaces.	8
	3.3.1.2	Stroller accessibility is ensured across all common areas through barrier-free routes and suitable ramp access.	6
	3.3.1.3	All pool and play areas supervised during operating hours by lifeguards holding a valid certification from the UAE General Authority of Sports or an equivalent internationally recognized body.	8
	3.3.1.4	The hotel maintains high levels of access security to ensure that children cannot exit the premises unsupervised, with staff monitoring all main exits.	6
3.3.2 Children's Services & Entertainment (12 points)	3.3.2.1	Hotels provide at least two of the following three options: • A dedicated outdoor play area • A dedicated indoor play area • A children's pool. All facilities must be designed and maintained in accordance with international safety standards.	8
	3.3.2.2	All staff that cares for or provides entertainment for children are First Aid trained specifically for children.	4
3.3.4 F&B (10 points)	3.3.4.1	Children's cutlery and child-sized dining furniture are available in all dining outlets.	5
	3.3.4.2	A dedicated children's menu is available, offering a minimum of ten options, including healthy and balanced meals.	5
Total Points			**50/100**

Optional Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Optional Points
3.3.2 Children's Services & Entertainment (20 points)	3.3.2.3	Daily supervised activity programs are provided, incorporating educational, cultural, and seasonal themes.	4
	3.3.2.4	Baby essentials such as formula, nappies, sunscreen, and child-friendly shampoo to be readily available upon request.	4
	3.3.2.5	Strollers and car seats for children are available upon request.	4
	3.3.2.6	A daytime Kids Club is provided, offering a full-day entertainment and edutainment program, operating for a minimum of eight hours daily, and supervised by female staff.	4
	3.3.2.7	A babysitting or children's drop-off service is available upon request and provided by qualified personnel	4
3.3.3 Family Accommodation (20 points)	3.3.3.1	Hotels provide cots, cribs, and safe bedding upon request.	8
	3.3.3.2	Hotels offer family in-room amenities, including toys, baby wash, and children's television channels, available upon request.	4
	3.3.3.3	Slow-closing doors and safety locks are installed as part of child-safety design features.	4
	3.3.3.4	A minimum of 30% of guest rooms to be suitable for families, accommodating three to four people through larger room sizes or interconnecting configurations.	4
3.3.4 F&B (10 points)	3.3.4.3	Flexible family dining hours are offered, including early and late seating options to accommodate family schedules.	6
	3.3.4.4	Staff support to be available during meal periods to assist or entertain children while dining.	4
Total Points			**50/100**

3.4Emirati Dhiyafa Standards

The Emirati Dhiyafa Standards accolade celebrates hotels and hotel apartments that authentically reflect and promote the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the United Arab Emirates through their architecture, design, service, and guest experience.

The programme encourages establishments to integrate Emirati cultural elements into their operations, offering visitors a genuine sense of place and a deeper connection to the nation's history, values, and way of life.

To achieve recognition, hotels are required to **implement 20 criteria** (10 mandatory and 10 self-selected), while hotel apartments are required to **implement 10 criteria** (5 mandatory and 5 self-selected), from a framework of 65 Emirati Dhiyafa Standards.

All references pertaining to the Emirati Dhiyafa Standards are included in the Annex for comprehensive reference and alignment.

Hotel Mandatory Criteria

Category	Criteria #	5 Stars	4 Stars	3 Stars	2 Stars	1 Star
1.3 Training						
2.1 Booking and Travel						
2.1.1 Hotel Advertising Materials	2.1.1.1	Hotel website includes a section on the history and culture of the UAE, or offers a link to the abudhabiculture.ae website or other DCT pre-approved external links.				
	2.1.1.3	Pre-arrival messages include Arabic words of an Emirati characteristic, based on DCT's most recent approved terminology for greetings				
2.1.2 Pre-trip suggestions	2.1.2.1	In a welcome email or other pre-trip communications, hotels share information on how to experience the unique culture, heritage, and natural setting of the UAE and/or offer to arrange visits to landmarks in the Emirate				
3.1 Guest Welcome Upon Arrival						
3.1.1 Guest Welcome	3.1.1.1	Guests receive a traditional warm welcome by a dedicated member of staff that includes traditional Emirati greetings (based on DCT's most recent approved terminology), with Emirati Gahwa (based on Bait Al Gahwa's guidelines), and locally-sourced dates of a traditional		Guests receive a traditional warm Emirati welcome by any member of staff that includes traditional Emirati greetings (based on DCT's most recent approved terminology), with Emirati Gahwa (based on Bait Al Gahwa's guidelines), and locally-sourced dates of a traditional Emirati variety available in the welcome area.		

		Emirati variety being offered.	
	3.1.1.2	At least one employee dressed in traditional Emirati attire is available at all times in the guest welcome or reception areas	
3.1.3 Check-in Experience	3.1.3.3	Staff use Arabic words of an Emirati characteristic, based on DCT's most recent approved terminology for greetings	
3.1.4 Welcome and Introduction	3.1.4.2	Guests are offered an introduction to the region's culture and history by a member of staff trained and/or certified on these topics by the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy - Les Roches or DCT Abu Dhabi's Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Program or the DCT VX Academy.	The welcome area offers booklets or panels introducing the region's culture and history based on a set of facts and talking points approved by the DCT or coming from a DCT-approved curriculum, or information on the same is easily available through the in-room entertainment systems.
4.2 Public Area Design			
	4.2.1.1	**At least one guest-facing public area, such as the lobby, reception area or welcome area, incorporates at least one Emirati heritage-inspired design elements from a DCT-approved reference list. Eligible elements may include, but are not limited to: Al Sadu patterns, Khoos or palm-frond craft, talli-inspired embroidery, Emirati artwork, local materials, traditional architectural references, or visual motifs associated with Abu Dhabi Culture heritage sources.**	
6.2 Dining Experiences			
6.2.1 Food Preparation	6.2.1.1	All chefs (where applicable) undergo training in methods of Emirati food preparation with approved partners, OR the position requires a background in Emirati food preparation. Training partners include Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy – Les Roches, ICCA Abu Dhabi, Ecole Ducasse, or other DCT-approved institutions or curriculum	
6.2.3 Cuisine Explanations	6.2.3.3	Waiting staff can explain traditional eating customs in the UAE based on a set of facts and talking points approved by the DCT or coming from a DCT-approved curriculum3.	

Hotel Apartment Mandatory Criteria

Category	Criteria #	Deluxe	Superior	Standard
2.1.1 Hotel Advertising Materials				
2.1.1 Hotel Advertising Materials	2.1.1.3	Pre-arrival messages include Arabic words of an Emirati characteristic, based on DCT's most recent approved terminology for greetings.		
2.1.2 Pre-trip suggestions	2.1.2.1	In a welcome email or other pre-trip communications, hotel apartments share information on how to experience the unique culture, heritage, and natural setting of the UAE and/or offer to arrange visits to landmarks in the Emirate.		
3.1 Guest Welcome Upon Arrival				
3.1.3 Check-in Experience	3.1.3.3	Staff use Arabic words of an Emirati characteristic, based on DCT's most recent approved terminology for greetings.		
3.1.4 Welcome and Introduction	3.1.4.2	Guests are offered an introduction to the region's culture and history by a member of staff trained and/or certified on these topics by the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy - Les Roches, DCT Abu Dhabi's Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Program, or the DCT VX Academy.	The welcome area offers booklets or panels introducing the region's culture and history based on a set of facts and talking points approved by the DCT or coming from a DCT-approved curriculum (such as the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy - Les Roches or DCT Abu Dhabi's Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Program, or the DCT VX Academy), or information on the same is easily available through the in-room entertainment systems.	
4.2 Public Area Design				
4.2.1 Cultural Area Design	4.2.1.1	At least one guest-facing public area, such as the lobby, reception area or welcome area, incorporates at least one Emirati heritage-inspired design elements from a DCT-approved reference list. Eligible elements may include, but are not limited to: Al Sadu patterns, Khoos or palm-frond craft, talli-inspired embroidery, Emirati artwork, local materials, traditional architectural references, or visual motifs associated with Abu Dhabi Culture heritage sources.		

Optional Criteria

For hotel establishments that wish to go beyond the minimum implementation requirements, the Emirati Dhiyafa Standards offer a structured three-tier recognition pathway leading to the achievement of the Emirati Dhiyafa Mark. This tiered framework encourages continuous enhancement and rewards establishments that progressively implement a greater number of the 65 standards, demonstrating a deeper commitment to showcasing authentic Emirati hospitality and cultural heritage.

Tier Level	# of Standards Achieved
3 Star Door 	**55+ standards** achieved, with at least 2 from each category
2 Star Door 	**40-54 standards** achieved, with at least 2 from each category
1 Star Door 	**21-39 standards** achieved, with at least 2 from each category

Similarly, for hotel apartment establishments, this tiered framework recognizes establishments for implementing a greater number of the 65 standards, beyond the 10 mandatory standards:

Tier Level	# of Standards Achieved
3 Star Door 	**45+ standards** achieved, with at least 2 from each category
2 Star Door 	**30-44 standards** achieved, with at **least 2** from **each category**
1 Star Door 	**11-29 standards** achieved, with at **least 2** from **each category**

3.5Wellness

Definition

The Wellness Accolade recognizes hotels that deliver a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to guest wellbeing through high-quality wellness facilities, specialized treatments, and health-focused amenities.

This accolade highlights properties that integrate dedicated spa and therapy areas, movement and fitness facilities, health and nutrition-supported dining, and programs that enable personalized wellness journeys. It also reflects a commitment to creating restorative guest environments through sleep-optimized rooms, hypoallergenic features, and in-room wellness amenities.

By achieving this accolade, a property demonstrates a holistic and disciplined commitment to physical, mental, and nutritional wellbeing, positioning itself as a leader in delivering transformative wellness experiences within Abu Dhabi's hospitality sector.

Mandatory Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Mandatory Points
3.5.1 Wellness & Facilities (28 points)	3.5.1.1	Dedicated spa and treatment areas (massage, hydrotherapy, aromatherapy).	10
	3.5.1.2	Fitness and movement facilities (yoga, meditation studios, gym with certified trainers).	10
	3.5.1.3	Separate wellness areas for men and women.	8
3.5.2 Food & Beverage (15 points)	3.5.2.1	Healthy cuisine offerings (organic, plant-based, balanced menus supporting wellness goals).	15
3.5.3 Wellness Treatments & Packages (5 points)	3.5.3.1	Range of therapeutic and wellness treatment such as physiotherapy, osteopathy, Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine.	5
Total Points			**48/100**

Optional Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Optional Points
3.5.1 Wellness & Facilities (10 points)	3.5.1.4	Minimum three wellness rooms or quiet lounges (e.g., relaxation, mindfulness areas).	10
3.5.2 Food & Beverage (10 points)	3.5.2.2	Nutritionist involvement in menu design and review.	10
3.5.3 Wellness Treatments & Packages (17 points)	3.5.3.2	Personalized wellness journeys based on guest health profiles or questionnaires.	10
	3.5.3.3	Basic health screenings and preventive healthcare services, including nutrition consultations, physical fitness assessments, and stress management counselling.	7

3.5.4 Guest Rooms (15 points)	3.5.4.1	Rooms designed for restful sleep (soundproofing, blackout curtains, circadian lighting).	7
	3.5.4.2	Availability of hypoallergenic rooms (HEPA air purifiers, low-VOC materials).	5
	3.5.4.3	Minibar or in-room amenities focused on health (herbal teas, organic snacks).	3
Total Points			**52/100**

3.6Accessible Hospitality

The accolade for Accessible Hospitality recognizes hotels that demonstrate exceptional commitment to universal accessibility and inclusivity ensuring guests of all abilities can enjoy a comfortable, safe and dignified stay.

This accolade celebrates properties that go beyond minimum compliance requirements by integrating barrier-free design, accessible facilities, and inclusive service practices throughout the guest journey.

To be eligible for nomination, the Accessible Hospitality Accolade requires that a minimum of 10% of the total rooms be fully accessible.

Mandatory Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Mandatory Points
3.6.1 Physical & Mobility Accessibility (25 points)	3.6.1.1	Step-free access across all primary guest areas (entrances, lobby, F&B, leisure).	5
	3.6.1.2	Accessible bathrooms are equipped with features such as roll-in showers, grab bars, and reachable fixtures, all compliant with the Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO) Building Requirements for Accessible Facilities.	10
	3.6.1.3	Accessible circulation is ensured throughout the property, including elevators with tactile and Braille buttons, wide corridors, ramps, and continuous handrails.	10
3.6.2 Visual Accessibility (5 points)	3.6.2.1	Braille and tactile signage shall be provided across all guest and public areas, including room numbers, amenities, and emergency exits.	5
3.6.3 Hearing Accessibility (10 points)	3.6.3.1	Hearing loops or assistive listening devices are installed in reception areas, conference rooms, and event spaces.	5
	3.6.3.2	Accessible guest rooms are equipped with visual alert systems for doorbells, alarms, and emergency notifications.	5
3.6.5 Inclusive Service & Community Engagement (10 points)	3.6.5.1	Comprehensive accessibility information shall be made available at the time of booking through the booking websites, mobile applications, and concierge services.	5
	3.6.5.2	Staff to receive training across all disability types, including mobility, visual, hearing, and neurodiverse needs, with regular refresher programs.	5
Total Points			**50/100**

Optional Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Optional Points
3.6.1 Physical & Mobility Accessibility (5 points)	3.6.1.4	Mobility aids are available for recreational activities, including wheelchairs designed for sand or beach access and portable hoists for pools or snorkeling excursions.	5
3.6.2 Visual Accessibility (10 points)	3.6.2.2	Accessible menus and guest information are available in Braille, large-print, and digital formats.	5
	3.6.2.3	Adequate lighting, non-glare surfaces, and high-contrast design is provided in key guest and public areas.	5
3.6.3 Hearing Accessibility (5 points)	3.6.3.3	Subtitled or closed-caption content is available on all in-room televisions and hotel digital media platforms.	5
3.6.4 Neurodiversity & Cognitive Inclusion (15 points)	3.6.4.1	Quiet zones and sensory-friendly spaces with controlled noise and lighting levels are provided to support guests with sensory sensitivities.	10
	3.6.4.2	Hotels provide clear, simple, and pictogram-based signage along with easy-to-understand guest information to support accessibility and comprehension for all guests.	5
3.6.5 Inclusive Service & Community Engagement (15 points)	3.6.5.3	Inclusive food and beverage services are provided, including adaptable dining options to accommodate dietary needs, flexible menus, and accessible seating areas.	10
	3.6.5.4	Hotels demonstrate social impact through partnerships with disability organizations, implementation of guest feedback mechanisms, and the employment of People of Determination.	5
Total Points			**50/100**

3.7Green Excellence

The Green Excellence Accolade recognizes hotels that demonstrate exemplary commitment to environmental stewardship, sustainable operations, and meaningful support of local ecosystems and communities.

This accolade highlights properties that exceed conventional sustainability standards through responsible resource management, waste reduction, biodiversity protection, ethical sourcing, and initiatives that promote local culture, products, and enterprises.

By achieving this accolade, a property affirms its dedication to sustainable growth and community empowerment, positioning itself as a leader in eco-conscious hospitality and contributing to the long-term resilience and environmental wellbeing of Abu Dhabi's tourism sector.

Mandatory Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Mandatory Points
3.7.1 Certifications (16 points)	3.7.1.1	Compliance with Estidama Pearl Rating of minimum of 1 Pearl.	8
	3.7.1.2	Achievement of at least one international sustainability certification (e.g., LEED Hospitality, EarthCheck, Green Globe, GSTC, Green Engage).	8
3.7.2 Energy & Carbon (5 points)	3.7.2.1	Implementation of smart building systems, including IoT sensors and AI-driven HVAC or lighting optimization.	5
3.7.3 Plastics & Food Waste (10 points)	3.7.3.1	Food waste monitoring and diversion programs are in place, such as donations, composting, or biogas conversion.	10
3.7.4 Guest Experience & Transparency (5 points)	3.7.4.1	Annual public sustainability report is published and displayed on the hotel's website.	5
3.7.5 Operations & Housekeeping (6 points)	3.7.5.1	Guest cards which indicate the frequency with which guests want their room and bath linen to be changed. Housekeeping policy and its environmental impacts clearly communicated to guests.	3
	3.7.5.2	Low-energy light bulbs are used across guest rooms and public areas.	3
3.7.6 Community & Local Economy (8 points)	3.7.6.1	Purchasing agreements are maintained with local suppliers of crafts, food, and materials.	5
	3.7.6.2	Use of locally produced ingredients. Menu should clearly indicate dishes that contain locally produced ingredients.	3
Total Points			**50/100**

Optional Criteria

Main Criteria	Criteria Number	Description	Optional Points
3.7.2 Energy & Carbon (16 points)	3.7.2.2	Hotels have on-site renewable energy generation through solar, wind, or geothermal systems.	10
	3.7.2.3	Annual carbon footprint measurement and disclosure conducted, with reduction targets calculated per guest-night.	6
3.7.3 Plastics & Food Waste (10 points)	3.7.3.2	Zero single-use plastics across all operations, including rooms, F&B outlets, and events.	10
3.7.4 Guest Experience & Transparency (6 points)	3.7.4.2	Guest-facing digital dashboard or app available to display energy, water, and waste savings per stay.	6
3.7.5 Operations & Housekeeping (10 points)	3.7.5.3	Unbleached and undyed fabrics are used in rooms, bathrooms, and public areas.	5
	3.7.5.4	Bathroom amenity packaging is made from non-disposable or reusable materials.	5
3.7.6 Community & Local Economy (8 points)	3.7.6.3	Bathroom amenities are made from natural ingredients and free from harsh chemical processing.	3
	3.7.6.4	Local artwork and crafts are featured in the hotel lobby, guest rooms, and F&B outlets.	3
	3.7.6.5	All eco-friendly policies of the establishment are available and communicated to guests.	2
Total Points			**50/100**

4. Annex

Emirati Dhiyafa Standards

Standards for Hotels

1.1 Employee Hiring	Criteria #	5 Stars	4 Stars	3 Stars	2 Stars	1 Star
1.1.1 Language Fluency	1.1.1.1	For major traveller languages—Arabic, Chinese, English, Hindi, and Russian, with the list revised annually based on DCT's data of top 5 tourist countries of origin—at least 2 staff members can hold a welcome conversation that includes a greeting and discussion of arrival details.				
	1.1.1.2	For major traveller languages—Arabic, Chinese, English, Hindi, and Russian, with the list revised annually based on DCT's data of top 5 tourist countries of origin – at least 1 staff member can give an introduction to key topics in Emirati history based on an approved historical curriculum, with small tablets as an optional visual aid. Trainings should be from the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy - Les Roches, or DCT Abu Dhabi's Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Program, or the DCT VX Academy, or other DCT pre-approved curricula.				
	1.1.1.3	Hotel offers a free and comprehensive language program (at least 60 hours overall) in one of the most common traveller languages for all concierge and reception staff, OR hotel contributes a significant amount (at least 60% of the total cost) to an equivalent-length program that concierge and reception staff can choose to take.				
	1.1.1.4	Hotel includes at least one language-learning objective such as taking a language course or passing a proficiency certification in an annual plan, with an ability to adjust based on peak seasons and available time.				
1.2 Performance Management						
1.2.1 Staff Performance Measurement and Metrics	1.2.1.1	"Guest satisfaction with cultural experience within the hotel and with the Emirati hospitality experience" [1] is one of the hotel's overall KPIs or OKRs, as measured through guest feedback or other relevant proxies.				
	1.2.1.2	For guest-facing staff or those impacting the Emirati hospitality experience within the hotel, at least 20% of the annual ratings of individual staff members and teams depends on success in fostering Emirati hospitality.				

	1.2.1.3	Guests have a feedback mechanism—whether a comments card, digital survey, or other—with specific prompts about the authenticity of their experience with Emirati culture and hospitality in the hotel.
1.3 Training		
1.3.1 Internal Culture	1.3.1.1	Staff receive regular trainings (at least 1 hour per month) centred on improving the quality of service.
1.3.2 Cultural Training	1.3.2.1	Hotel provides mandatory, regular training from DCT-approved curriculum such as DCT Hayyak training, etc. [2] (at least 2 times per year) on cultural understanding for concierge and reception staff.
1.3.3 Service Delivery	1.3.3.1	All concierge and reception staff can name 3 do's and 3 don'ts related to Emirati customs (e.g. etiquette, communication, religious behaviors, or topics of conversation).

[1] Defined as satisfaction with the perceived authenticity of the Emirati service, ability of the staff to appropriately guide guests on culturally and historically significant knowledge, landmarks, and activities. Further definition and measurement approach left up to hotels' discretion, and should be incorporated into their broader mechanisms for customer feedback collection. [2] For instance, the Cultural Intelligence and Diversity and Inclusive Service for All Types of Visitors modules of the DCT Hayyak training, or in partnership with the Sheikh Mohammed Centre of Cultural Understanding, or other similar trainings.

* Mandatory standard for hotels

1.3 Training (cont.)	**Criteria #**	**5 Stars**	**4 Stars**	**3 Stars**	**2 Stars**	**1 Star**
1.3.4 Emirati Cultural Identity Knowledge	1.3.4.1	Beyond the mandatory training on pre-UAE and UAE culture and history, hotel provides mandatory, in-house, regular training (at least 2 times per year) on Emirati culture and heritage, involving at least one Emirati trainer and a central focus on the concept of Emirati hospitality.				

1.3.5 Emirati Cultural Identity Training	1.3.4.1	Beyond the mandatory training on pre-UAE and UAE culture and history, hotel provides mandatory, in-house, regular training (at least 2 times per year) on Emirati culture and heritage, involving at least one Emirati trainer and a central focus on the concept of Emirati hospitality.		
1.3.6 Celebrating Service	1.3.5.1[3]	Hotel has formal programs that, at least 4 times per year, reward exceptional service in line with Emirati hospitality principles.	Hotel has formal programs that, at least 2 times per year, reward exceptional service in line with Emirati hospitality principles	Hotel has formal programs that, at least yearly, reward exceptional service in line with Emirati hospitality principles
2.1 Booking and Travel				
2.1.1 Hotel Advertising Materials				
	2.1.1.1*	Hotel website includes a section on the history and culture of the UAE, or offers a link to the abudhabiculture.ae website or other DCT pre-approved external links.		
	2.1.1.2	Hotel lobby includes digital or printed informational brochures or other materials that feature nearby cultural and modern heritage attractions from an attractions repository approved by DCT[4].		
	2.1.1.3*	Pre-arrival messages include Arabic words of an Emirati characteristic, based on DCT's most recent approved terminology for greetings		
	2.1.1.4	Pre-arrival messages suggest at least three ways to explore cultural and national sites during the trip, such as visiting the Qasr Al Hosn, the Al Ain Oasis, or the Founder's Memorial.		
2.1.2 Pre-trip Suggestions	2.1.2.1*	In a welcome email or other pre-trip communications, hotels share information on how to experience the unique culture, heritage, and natural setting of the UAE and/or offer to arrange visits to landmarks in the Emirate		
2.1.3 Airport Transfer Service	2.1.3.1	Personnel for hotel-owned or managed airport transport can name and briefly describe at least three key landmarks along the way to the hotel, based on talking points from DCT or DCT pre-approved curriculum.		

	2.1.3.2	Personnel for hotel-owned or managed airport transport can share two recommendations for ways to experience the unique culture, heritage, and natural setting of the UAE, based on a DCT-approved list of landmarks, activities, and nature reserves, or talking points from DCT or DCT pre-approved curriculum.
	2.1.3.3	Personnel for hotel-owned or managed airport transport can provide a brief introduction to Emirati customs and etiquette, based on talking points from DCT or DCT pre-approved curriculum.

[2] For instance, the Emirati Hospitality GRACE training module of ADHA LR or other similar; [3] These programs should be integrated into hotels' existing service recognition and award programs and processes where possible, bringing in elements of Emirati service into the brand-aligned criteria; [4] Including information on Abu Dhabi's modern and cultural heritage as per https://abudhabiculture.ae/en where relevant, potentially also incorporating the hotel's own and its neighbourhood's art scenes and history in particular.

* Mandatory standard for hotels

3.1 Guest Welcome Upon Arrival	Criteria #	5 Stars	4 Stars	3 Stars	2 Stars	1 Star
3.1.1 Guest Welcome	3.1.1.1*	Guests receive a traditional warm welcome by a dedicated member of staff that includes traditional Emirati greetings (based on DCT's most recent approved terminology), with Emirati Gahwa (based on Bait Al Gahwa's guidelines), and locally-sourced dates of a traditional Emirati variety being offered.		Guests receive a traditional warm Emirati welcome by any member of staff that includes traditional Emirati greetings (based on DCT's most recent approved terminology), with Emirati Gahwa (based on Bait Al Gahwa's guidelines), and locally-sourced dates of a traditional Emirati variety available in the welcome area.		
	3.1.1.2*	At least one employee dressed in traditional Emirati attire is available at all times in the guest welcome or reception areas				
3.1.2 Sensory Welcome	3.1.2.1	Staff incorporate the scent of oud or bakhoor into the welcome process.				

3.1.3 Check-in Experience			
	3.1.3.1	Staff seek a point of individual connection with each guest to foster a warm welcome.	
	3.1.3.2	Staff use appropriate titles for each guest and respect different social norms, adapting the check-in process as needed.	
	3.1.3.3*	Staff use Arabic words of an Emirati characteristic, based on DCT's most recent approved terminology for greetings	
3.1.4 Welcome and Introduction	3.1.4.1	Guests are offered a briefing on the hotel and amenities that features an introduction of heritage elements such as architecture, art, materials, olfactory design, etc.	The welcome area has a map or guide booklet for the hotel amenities that features an introduction of heritage elements such as architecture, art, materials, olfactory design, etc., or these are easily available through the in-room entertainment systems.
	3.1.4.2*	Guests are offered an introduction to the region's culture and history by a member of staff trained and/or certified on these topics by the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy - Les Roches or DCT Abu Dhabi's Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Program or the DCT VX academy	The welcome area offers booklets or panels introducing the region's culture and history based on a set of facts and talking points approved by the DCT or coming from a DCT-approved curriculum (such as the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy - Les Roches, DCT Abu Dhabi's Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Program, or the DCT VX Academy), or information on the same is easily available through the in-room entertainment systems.
	3.1.4.3	Guests receive instructions on Emirati customs and etiquette, whether spoken or in a written brochure, based on a set of facts and talking points approved by the DCT or coming from a DCT-approved curriculum.	
	3.1.4.4	Guest-facing staff (reception, concierge, and information desk)proactively offer guests opportunity to set up activities to experience Emirati culture, heritage, and nature.	

* Mandatory standard for hotels

3.2 Arrival Exteriors and Entryway	Criteria #	5 Stars	4 Stars	3 Stars	2 Stars	1 Star
3.2.1 Exterior and Entryway Décor	3.2.1.1	Hotel entryway incorporates details derived from traditional Emirati crafts, such as Sadu, Khoos, or others from the Abu Dhabi Culture heritage list[1].				
	3.2.1.2	Hotel entryway incorporates Emirati materials such as palm fronds or sandstone, or display arrangements or installations inspired by the nature of the UAE in season.				
	3.2.1.3	Hotel entryway has Emirati structural features, such as an open courtyard and traditional entryway.				
4.1 Public Area Décor and Furnishings						
4.1.1 Artist Collaborations	4.1.1.1	Hotel features at least one painting, sculpture, or other artwork from Emirati or UAE-based artists that is accessible to all guests (located in a public area or replicated across rooms), and accompanies these with interpretation materials or panels linking the works to Emirati culture and heritage.				
4.1.2 Plant Décor	4.1.2.1	Most plants used in the décor are local to the UAE, are sourced sustainably, and indicate cultural and natural significance.				
4.2 Public Area Design						
4.2.1 Cultural Area Design	4.2.1.1*	At least one guest-facing public area, such as the lobby, reception area or welcome area, incorporates at least one Emirati heritage-inspired design elements from a DCT-approved reference list. Eligible elements may include, but are not limited to: Al Sadu patterns, Khoos or palm-frond craft, talli-inspired embroidery, Emirati artwork, local materials, traditional architectural references, or visual motifs associated with Abu Dhabi Culture heritage sources[1].				
	4.2.1.2	Public areas have scents that are subtle but reminiscent of Emirati history, such as oud, bakhoor, or familiar oil-based and wax smells.				
	4.2.2.1	Hotel has at least one central public area inspired by the Majlis that encourages interaction between guests.				

4.2.2 Social Interaction Design	4.2.2.2	Communal activities such as guest fualas, gahwa and date breaks, arts & crafts workshops, etc. are organised in public areas at least 2 times per month to engage and prompt interaction between guests.	
5.1 Bedroom and Bathroom Décor and Furnishings			
5.1.1 Décor and Furnishings	5.1.1.1	Rooms bear small design flourishes, such as desktop ornaments or decorative pillows, that incorporate Sadu or other patterns specific to the UAE while respecting hotel brand guidelines.	
	5.1.1.2	At least two complimentary products provided in the room and bathroom (e.g. cosmetics, stationery, snacks) are made by an Emirati business and/or from local materials	At least one complimentary product provided in the room and bathroom is made by an Emirati business and / or from local materials
	5.1.1.3	At least two in-room products have story snippets explaining their heritage significance, such as handwritten cards.	
	5.1.1.4	Bathrooms contain some products that are locally and sustainably made, utilising local scents and ingredients while respecting hotel brand guidelines.	

[1] https://abudhabiculture.ae/en/cultural-heritage

* Mandatory standard for hotels

5.2 Bedroom and Bathroom Guest Services	Criteria #	5 Stars	4 Stars	3 Stars	2 Stars	1 Star
5.2.1 Guest Services	5.2.1.1	At least one local gift or complementary item reflecting Emirati culture and heritage, such as a small arrangement of dates and gahwa, or calligraphic stationery, is placed in the guest bedroom or bathroom.				
6.1 Food Offer						
6.1.1 Ingredient Provenance	6.1.1.1	Hotel locally sources at least 25% of ingredients.				
6.1.2 Local Cuisine Options	6.1.2.1	At least 1 catering location provides an Emirati dining concept, with different courses staged in traditional fashion.				
	6.1.2.2	The menu of at least 1 catering location makes reference to local ingredients.				
6.2 Dining Experiences						
6.2.1 Food Preparation	6.2.1.1*	All chefs (where applicable) undergo training in methods of Emirati food preparation with approved partners, OR the position requires a background in Emirati food preparation. Training partners include Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy – Les Roches, ICCA Abu Dhabi, Ecole Ducasse, or other DCT-approved institutions or curriculum				
6.2.2 Cultural Dining Experiences	6.2.2.1	Hotel offers an organized guest experience at least once per month, creating awareness of Emirati cuisine and allowing guests to learn traditional Emirati food preparation or taste local flavours.				
6.2.3 Cuisine Explanations	6.2.3.1	Waiting staff can share the cultural history of Emirati dishes on the menus of any of the hotel dining options, and the hotel provides explanatory materials / tags[2] for Emirati dishes on the menu, based on DCT pre-approved training curricula or talking points.[2]				
	6.2.3.2	Waiting staff can explain traditional eating customs in the UAE based on a set of facts and talking points approved by the DCT or coming from a DCT-approved curriculum[3].				

	6.2.3.3*	Concierge, reception, and food and beverage staff can name at least three traditional Emirati dishes (based on a DCT approved list) such as harees, chebab, or balaleet when asked, explaining the key ingredients and/or their flavour profile and role in Emirati dining tradition.
6.2.4 Restaurant Décor and Ambience	6.2.4.1	At least 1 dining area incorporates traditional Emirati visual, textural, or olfactory details
	6.2.4.2	At least 1 dining area incorporates Emirati materials such as palm fronds or sandstone, or displays arrangements or installations inspired by the nature of the UAE in season.
	6.2.4.3	At least 1 dining area has Emirati structural features, such as an open courtyard and traditional entryway.
	6.2.4.4	At least 1 dining area incorporates elements of traditional Emirati architecture.
6.2.5 Dining Space Design	6.2.5.1	At least 1 dining area positions chairs and tables so that strangers share a meal together.

[2] Such materials and tags could also include a QR code allowing guests to discover more about the history and heritage of the dish, e.g. by linking to the Abu Dhabi Culture pages on respective dishes within the Intangible Heritage registry

* Mandatory standard for hotels

7.1 Hotel Managed Experiences	Criteria #	5 Stars	4 Stars	3 Stars	2 Stars	1 Star
7.1.1 Souvenir Store	7.1.1.1	Hotel souvenir store offers local products from the Abu Dhabi emirate.				
7.1.2 Information Desk Recommendations	7.1.2.1	Staff can recommend museums, galleries, and cultural sites that are not the most popular option in their respective category.				
7.1.3 Guest Socialisation Experiences	7.1.3.1	Hotel offers entertainment or educational activities centred on Emirati culture, such as palm front weaving sessions, beginner calligraphy classes, gahwa tastings, or certified tour guide lectures at least 2 times per month.				
	7.1.3.2	Hotel offers cultural activities outside of the hotel at least 2 times per month, including visits to museums and workshops.				
7.1.4 Group Excursions to Emirati Communities	7.1.4.1	Hotel recommends restaurants, shopping destinations, and parks outside of familiar tourist neighbourhoods, such as Saadiyat, Qasr Al Hosn district, etc.				
	7.1.4.2	If asked during a guest's stay, staff speak about the local neighbourhood with respect and can offer recommendations on neighbourhood places to see, eat, and visit.				
8.1 Departure and Post Departure Guest Services						
8.1.1 Repeat Trip Resources	8.1.1.1	Upon check-out, guests receive a take-home item or amenity that references cultural heritage, such as a bookmark or an artisan soap bar.				
	8.1.1.3	Following guest departure, guests receive postcards (physical or digital) or other celebratory notices on Eid or other major holidays.				

* Mandatory standard for hotels

1.1 Employee Hiring	Criteria #	Deluxe	Superior	Standard
1.1.1 Language Fluency	1.1.1.1	For major traveller languages—Arabic, Chinese, English, Hindi, and Russian, with the list revised annually based on DCT's data of top 5 tourist countries of origin—at least 2 staff members can hold a welcome conversation that includes a greeting and discussion of arrival details.		
	1.1.1.2	For major traveller languages—Arabic, Chinese, English, Hindi, and Russian, with the list revised annually based on DCT's data of top 5 tourist countries of origin – at least 1 staff member can give an introduction to key topics in Emirati history based on an approved historical curriculum, with small tablets as an optional visual aid. Trainings should be from the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy - Les Roches, or DCT Abu Dhabi's Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Program, or the DCT VX Academy, or other DCT pre-approved curricula.		
	1.1.1.3	Hotel apartment offers a free and comprehensive language program (at least 60 hours overall) in one of the most common traveller languages for all concierge and reception staff, OR hotel contributes a significant amount (at least 60% of the total cost) to an equivalent-length program that concierge and reception staff can choose to take.		
	1.1.1.4	Hotel apartment includes at least one language-learning objective such as taking a language course or passing a proficiency certification in an annual plan, with an ability to adjust based on peak seasons and available time.		
1.2 Performance Management				
1.2.1 Staff Performance Measurement and Metrics	1.2.1.1	"Guest satisfaction with cultural experience within the hotel apartment and with the Emirati hospitality experience" is one of the hotel apartment's overall KPIs or OKRs, as measured through guest feedback or other relevant proxies.		
	1.2.1.2	For guest-facing staff or those impacting the Emirati hospitality experience within the hotel apartment, at least 20% of the annual ratings of individual staff members and teams depends on success in fostering Emirati hospitality.		

	1.2.1.3	Guests have a feedback mechanism—whether a comments card, digital survey, or other—specific prompts about the authenticity of their experience with Emirati culture and hospitality in the hotel apartment.
1.3 Training		
1.3.1 Internal Culture	1.3.1.1	Staff receive regular trainings (at least 1 hour per month) centred on improving the quality of service.
1.3.2 Cultural Training	1.3.2.1	Hotel apartment provides mandatory, regular training from DCT-approved curriculum such as DCT Hayyak training, etc. (at least 2 times per year) on cultural understanding for concierge and reception staff.
1.3.3 Service Delivery	1.3.3.1	All concierge and reception staff can name 3 do's and 3 don'ts related to Emirati customs (e.g. etiquette, communication, religious behaviors, or topics of conversation).

[1] Defined as satisfaction with the perceived authenticity of the Emirati service, ability of the staff to appropriately guide guests on culturally and historically significant knowledge, landmarks, and activities. Further definition and measurement approach left up to hotels' discretion, and should be incorporated into their broader mechanisms for customer feedback collection. [2] For instance, the Cultural Intelligence and Diversity and Inclusive Service for All Types of Visitors modules of the DCT Hayyak training, or in partnership with the Sheikh Mohammed Centre of Cultural Understanding, or other similar trainings.

* Mandatory standard for hotel apartments

1.3 Training (cont.)	**Criteria #**	**Deluxe**	**Superior**	**Standard**
1.3.4 Emirati Cultural Identity Knowledge	1.3.4.1	Beyond the mandatory training on pre-UAE and UAE culture and history, hotel apartment provides mandatory, in-house, regular training (at least 2 times per year) on Emirati culture and heritage, involving at least one Emirati trainer and a central		

		focus on the concept of Emirati hospitality.		
1.3.5 Emirati Cultural Identity Training	1.3.5.1	Beyond the mandatory training on pre-UAE and UAE culture and history, hotel apartment provides mandatory, in-house, regular training (at least 2 times per year) on Emirati culture and heritage, involving at least one Emirati trainer and a central focus on the concept of Emirati hospitality.		
1.3.6 Celebrating Service	1.3.6.1[3]	Hotel apartment has formal programs that, at least 4 times per year, reward exceptional service in line with Emirati hospitality principles.	Hotel apartment has formal programs that, at least 2 times per year, reward exceptional service in line with Emirati hospitality principles.	Hotel apartment has formal programs that, at least yearly, reward exceptional service in line with Emirati hospitality principles.
2.1 Booking and Travel				
2.1.1 Hotel Advertising Materials				
	2.1.1.1	Hotel apartment website includes a section on the history and culture of the UAE, or offers a link to the abudhabiculture.ae website or other DCT pre-approved external links.		
	2.1.1.2	Hotel apartment lobby includes digital or printed informational brochures or other materials that feature nearby cultural and modern heritage attractions from an attractions repository approved by DCT[4].		
	2.1.1.3*	Pre-arrival messages include Arabic words of an Emirati characteristic, based on DCT's most recent approved terminology for greetings		
	2.1.1.4	Pre-arrival messages suggest at least three ways to explore cultural and national sites during the trip, such as visiting the Qasr Al Hosn, the Al Ain Oasis, or the Founder's Memorial.		
2.1.2 Pre-trip Suggestions	2.1.2.1*	In a welcome email or other pre-trip communications, hotel apartments share information on how to experience the unique culture, heritage, and natural setting of the UAE and/or offer to arrange visits to landmarks in the Emirate		

2.1.3 Airport Transfer Service	2.1.3.1	Personnel for hotel-owned or managed airport transport can name and briefly describe at least three key landmarks along the way to the hotel, based on talking points from DCT or DCT pre-approved curriculum.
	2.1.3.2	Personnel for hotel-owned or managed airport transport can share two recommendations for ways to experience the unique culture, heritage, and natural setting of the UAE, based on a DCT-approved list of landmarks, activities, and nature reserves, or talking points from DCT or DCT pre-approved curriculum.
	2.1.3.3	Personnel for hotel-owned or managed airport transport can provide a brief introduction to Emirati customs and etiquette, based on talking points from DCT or DCT pre-approved curriculum.

[2] For instance, the Emirati Hospitality GRACE training module of ADHA LR or other similar;
[3] These programs should be integrated into hotels' existing service recognition and award programs and processes where possible, bringing in elements of Emirati service into the brand-aligned criteria;
[4] Including information on Abu Dhabi's modern and cultural heritage as per https://abudhabiculture.ae/en where relevant, potentially also incorporating the hotel's own and its neighbourhood's art scenes and history in particular

* Mandatory standard for hotel apartments

3.1 Guest Welcome Upon Arrival	**Criteria #**	**Deluxe**	**Superior**	**Standard**
3.1.1 Guest Welcome	3.1.1.1	Guests receive a traditional warm welcome by a dedicated member of staff that includes traditional Emirati greetings (based on DCT's most recent approved terminology), with Emirati Gahwa (based on Bait Al Gahwa's guidelines), and locally-sourced dates of a traditional Emirati variety being offered.	Guests receive a traditional warm Emirati welcome by any member of staff that includes traditional Emirati greetings (based on DCT's most recent approved terminology), with Emirati Gahwa (based on Bait Al Gahwa's guidelines), and locally-sourced dates of a traditional Emirati variety available in the welcome area.	
	3.1.1.2	At least one employee dressed in traditional Emirati attire is available at all times in the guest welcome or reception areas		
3.1.2 Sensory Welcome	3.1.2.1	Staff incorporate the scent of oud or bakhoor into the welcome process.		

3.1.3 Check-in Experience	3.1.3.1	Staff seek a point of individual connection with each guest to foster a warm welcome.	
	3.1.3.2	Staff use appropriate titles for each guest and respect different social norms, adapting the check-in process as needed.	
	3.1.3.3*	Staff use Arabic words of an Emirati characteristic, based on DCT's most recent approved terminology for greetings.	
3.1.4 Welcome and Introduction	3.1.4.1	Guests are offered a briefing on the hotel apartment and amenities that features an introduction of heritage elements such as architecture, art, materials, olfactory design, etc.	The welcome area has a map or guide booklet for the hotel amenities that features an introduction of heritage elements such as architecture, art, materials, olfactory design, etc., or these are easily available through the in-room entertainment systems.
	3.1.4.2*	Guests are offered an introduction to the region's culture and history by a member of staff trained and/or certified on these topics by the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy - Les Roches or DCT Abu Dhabi's Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Program or the DCT VX Academy.	The welcome area offers booklets or panels introducing the region's culture and history based on a set of facts and talking points approved by the DCT or coming from a DCT-approved curriculum (such as the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy - Les Roches, DCT Abu Dhabi's Tourist Guide Training and Licensing Program, or the DCT VX Academy), or information on the same is easily available through the in-room entertainment systems.
	3.1.4.3	Guests receive instructions on Emirati customs and etiquette, whether spoken or in a written brochure, based on a set of facts and talking points approved by the DCT or coming from a DCT-approved curriculum.	
	3.1.4.4	Guest-facing staff (reception, concierge, and information desk) proactively offer guests opportunity to set up activities to experience Emirati culture, heritage, and nature.	

* Mandatory standard for hotel apartments

3.2 Arrival Exteriors and Entryway	Criteria #	Deluxe	Superior	Standard
3.2.1 Exterior and Entryway Décor	3.2.1.1	Hotel apartment entryway incorporates details derived from traditional Emirati crafts, such as Sadu, Khoos, or others from the Abu Dhabi Culture heritage list[1].		
	3.2.1.2	Hotel apartment entryway incorporates Emirati materials such as palm fronds or sandstone, or display arrangements or installations inspired by the nature of the UAE in season.		
	3.2.1.3	Hotel apartment entryway has Emirati structural features, such as an open courtyard and traditional entryway.		
4.1 Public Area Décor and Furnishings				
4.1.1 Artist Collaborations	4.1.1.1	Hotel apartment features at least one painting, sculpture, or other artwork from Emirati or UAE-based artists that is accessible to all guests (located in a public area or replicated across rooms), and accompanies these with interpretation materials or panels linking the works to Emirati culture and heritage.		
4.1.2 Plant Décor	4.1.2.1	Most plants used in the décor are local to the UAE, are sourced sustainably, and indicate cultural and natural significance.		
4.2 Public Area Design				
4.2.1 Cultural Area Design	4.2.1.1*	At least one guest-facing public area, such as the lobby, reception area or welcome area, incorporates at least one Emirati heritage-inspired design elements from a DCT-approved reference list. Eligible elements may include, but are not limited to: Al Sadu patterns, Khoos or palm-frond craft, talli-inspired embroidery, Emirati artwork, local materials, traditional architectural references, or visual motifs associated with Abu Dhabi Culture heritage sources.		
	4.2.1.2	Public areas have scents that are subtle but reminiscent of Emirati history, such as oud, bakhoor, or familiar oil-based and wax smells.		
	4.2.2.1	Hotel apartment has at least one central public area inspired by the Majlis that encourages interaction between guests.		

4.2.2 Social Interaction Design	4.2.2.2	Communal activities such as guest fualas, gahwa and date breaks, arts & crafts workshops, etc. are organised in public areas at least 2 times per month to engage and prompt interaction between guests.	
5.1 Bedroom and Bathroom Décor and Furnishings			
5.1.1 Décor and Furnishings	5.1.1.1	Rooms bear small design flourishes, such as desktop ornaments or decorative pillows, that incorporate Sadu or other patterns specific to the UAE while respecting hotel brand guidelines.	
	5.1.1.2	At least two complimentary products provided in the room and bathroom (e.g. cosmetics, stationery, snacks) are made by an Emirati business and/or from local materials	At least one complimentary product provided in the room and bathroom is made by an Emirati business and / or from local materials
	5.1.1.3	At least two in-room products have story snippets explaining their heritage significance, such as handwritten cards.	
	5.1.1.4	Bathrooms contain some products that are locally and sustainably made, utilising local scents and ingredients while respecting hotel brand guidelines.	

[1] https://abudhabiculture.ae/en/cultural-heritage

* Mandatory standard for hotel apartments

5.2 Bedroom and Bathroom Guest Services	Criteria #	Deluxe	Superior	Standard
5.2.1 Guest Services	5.2.1.1	At least one local gift or complementary item reflecting Emirati culture and heritage, such as a small arrangement of dates and gahwa, or calligraphic stationery, is placed in the guest bedroom or bathroom.		
6.1 Food Offer				
6.1.1 Ingredient Provenance	6.1.1.1	Hotel apartment locally sources at least 25% of ingredients.		
6.1.2 Local Cuisine Options	6.1.2.1	At least 1 catering location provides an Emirati dining concept, with different courses staged in traditional fashion.		
	6.1.2.2	The menu of at least 1 catering location makes reference to local ingredients.		
6.2 Dining Experiences				
6.2.1 Food Preparation	6.2.1.1	All chefs (where applicable) undergo training in methods of Emirati food preparation with approved partners, OR the position requires a background in Emirati food preparation. Training partners include Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy – Les Roches, ICCA Abu Dhabi, Ecole Ducasse, or other DCT-approved institutions or curriculum		
6.2.2 Cultural Dining Experiences	6.2.2.1	Hotel apartment offers an organized guest experience at least once per month, creating awareness of Emirati cuisine and allowing guests to learn traditional Emirati food preparation or taste local flavours.		
6.2.3 Cuisine Explanations	6.2.3.1	Waiting staff can share the cultural history of Emirati dishes on the menus of any of the hotel apartment dining options, and the hotel apartment provides explanatory materials / tags[2] for Emirati dishes on the menu, based on DCT pre-approved training curricula or talking points.		
	6.2.3.2	Waiting staff can explain traditional eating customs in the UAE based on a set of facts and talking points approved by the DCT or coming from a DCT-approved curriculum (e.g., the Abu Dhabi Hospitality Academy Les Roches historical curriculum, or other similar curricula).		

	6.2.3.3	Concierge, reception, and food and beverage staff can name at least three traditional Emirati dishes (based on a DCT approved list) such as harees, chebab, or balaleet when asked, explaining the key ingredients and/or their flavour profile and role in Emirati dining tradition.
6.2.4 Restaurant Décor and Ambience	6.2.4.1	At least 1 dining area incorporates traditional Emirati visual, textural, or olfactory details
	6.2.4.2	At least 1 dining area incorporates Emirati materials such as palm fronds or sandstone or displays arrangements or installations inspired by the nature of the UAE in season.
	6.2.4.3	At least 1 dining area has Emirati structural features, such as an open courtyard and traditional entryway.
	6.2.4.4	At least 1 dining area incorporates elements of traditional Emirati architecture.
6.2.5 Dining Space Design	6.2.5.1	At least 1 dining area positions chairs and tables so that strangers share a meal together.

[2] Such materials and tags could also include a QR code allowing guests to discover more about the history and heritage of the dish, e.g. by linking to the Abu Dhabi Culture pages on respective dishes within the Intangible Heritage registry; [3] For instance

* Mandatory standard for hotel apartments

7.1 Hotel Managed Experiences	**Criteria #**	**Deluxe**	**Superior**	**Standard**
7.1.1 Souvenir Store	7.1.1.1	Hotel apartment souvenir store offers local products from the Abu Dhabi emirate.		
7.1.2 Information Desk Recommendations	7.1.2.1	Staff can recommend museums, galleries, and cultural sites that are not the most popular option in their respective category.		
7.1.3 Guest Socialisation Experiences	7.1.3.1	Hotel apartment offers entertainment or educational activities centred on Emirati culture, such as palm front weaving sessions, beginner calligraphy classes, gahwa tastings, or certified tour guide lectures at least 2 times per month.		

	7.1.3.2	Hotel apartment offers cultural activities outside of the hotel at least 2 times per month, including visits to museums and workshops.
7.1.4 Group Excursions to Emirati Communities	7.1.4.1	Hotel apartment recommends restaurants, shopping destinations, and parks outside of familiar tourist neighbourhoods, such as Saadiyat, Qasr Al Hosn district, etc.
	7.1.4.2	If asked during a guest's stay, staff speak about the local neighbourhood with respect and can offer recommendations on neighbourhood places to see, eat, and visit.
8.1 Departure and Post Departure Guest Services		
8.1.1 Repeat Trip Resources	8.1.1.1	Upon check-out, guests receive a take-home item or amenity that references cultural heritage, such as a bookmark or an artisan soap bar.
	8.1.1.2	Following guest departure, guests receive postcards (physical or digital) or other celebratory notices on Eid or other major holidays.

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دائرة الثقافة والسياحة

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