

# Language policy

*Information on the International Baccalaureate's support for languages, language courses and languages of instruction*

**Updated February 2014**

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## 1. Purpose and general principles

**T**he International Baccalaureate is committed to supporting multilingualism as fundamental to increasing intercultural understanding and international-mindedness, and is equally committed to extending access to an IB education for students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

With these aims in mind, the IB has instituted its language policy to provide a framework that will ensure that the IB's values and aims in relation to multilingualism and access are reflected in the organization's activities.

This language policy defines the ways in which the IB provides support to schools and teachers for the implementation of its programmes in different languages. It also provides guidelines to Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP) schools that are implementing the programmes in languages not supported by the organization.

Support in the different languages will be reviewed on a regular basis. The level of support may be increased or decreased for any particular language if certain conditions are met. The organization aims to provide materials and services of comparable high quality in all the languages supported.

## 2. Definitions

The IB language policy defines three groups of languages and the five levels of support that can be granted in a given language, as well as the documents and services that will be provided for each in the relevant language.

**Working languages:** The languages in which the organization communicates with its stakeholders and in which it is committed to providing all services needed for the implementation of the programmes. Currently, the IB's three working languages are English, French and Spanish.

**Access languages:** Languages that the IB has identified as being of strategic importance to meet its access goals and objectives to develop a more inclusive and diverse IB community. The organization will provide selected services and documentation in those languages, mainly to support teachers, as specified in this policy.

**Internal working language:** English is the organization's internal working language, in which most operational and developmental activities take place. It is also the language of its governance, management and academic committees.

In addition, the IB's education programmes reference other groups and/or categories of languages that may or may not be supported by the IB depending on if they have been identified within the three language groups defined above.

**Language of instruction:** The language in which an IB World School delivers IB programmes and courses to its student population.

**Response language:** The language in which IB students engage in internal or external assessment.

**Language course:** In the MYP, DP and IBCC, an academic course in which IB students acquire a new language, or improve their knowledge of a language and its literature.

### 3. Levels of support for languages

#### a. Working languages

##### Level 1

Languages in which **all** services and materials needed for the delivery and implementation of the **four programmes** are offered (see *Annex 1*). In addition, the following is provided in those languages:

- public web site
- all promotional material
- official communication and documentation from the IB.

##### Level 2

Languages in which **all** services and materials needed for the delivery and implementation of **one or two programmes only** are offered (see *Annex 1*).

The specific conditions of support for the Diploma Programme in level 1 and 2 languages and the conditions of support for Diploma Programme language course examinations are detailed in *Annex 2*.

The specific conditions for a school to be authorized to offer the Primary Years Programme or Middle Years Programme in a language other than a working language are detailed in *Annex 3*.

#### b. Access languages

##### Level 3

Languages in which **selected** services and materials, as detailed in *Annex 4*, are offered in one or more of the programmes and in some subjects only.

##### Level 4

Languages in which a **limited range** of services and materials, as detailed in *Annex 4*, are offered in one or more programmes.

##### Level 5

Only **bilingual glossaries** of programme terminology for the PYP and MYP are offered at this level.

Schools and teachers whose working language falls into this category will receive limited support in terms of services and materials in that language. Schools working in levels 3 to 5 languages need to have someone who can work and communicate in one of the IB's working languages, as there is no support for coordinators or heads in access languages.

#### Materials produced by communications

Although all communications materials will be produced in level 1 languages, some specific documents (targeted at universities, parents or funding organizations, for example) could be produced in a larger number of languages, following regional input and budget agreement, and within a quality assurance process set by the language services department.

## 4. Decision making processes

### a. IB language policy committee

The IB's language policy committee (LPC) comprised of representatives from the IB's divisions, is responsible for maintaining this policy, monitoring its implementation and considering recommendations on proposals related to:

- support for the teaching and assessment of programmes, or parts of programmes, in additional languages
- approving changes to the level of support provided in the IB's working and access languages (See *Section 3a* and *3b* above)
- offering Diploma Programme language courses in additional languages.

The language policy committee meets as required (but no less than twice each year) to review language policy issues and make recommendations to the IB's senior leadership team (SLT). A report from the committee is given to the Access and Advancement Committee annually.

### b. Requests and proposals for additional languages, language courses and changes in the support level for a language

The need or demand for changes to the support level provided in the IB's working and access languages, for additional languages and/or for additional language courses will normally be identified by schools services staff in the Schools division. Such need or demand will generally be identified through school services' ongoing monitoring of school programmes, but may also result from a direct request from a school or group of schools who may contact their regional school services programme manager with specific language requests.

The regional school services programme manager, in consultation with the Regional Director and the Chief Schools Officer, will determine if there is sufficient need and demand to warrant the drafting of a formal proposal to the IB's language policy committee. If schools services staff believe that such need or demand exists, a formal, written proposal will be submitted by the Chief Schools Officer to the language policy committee. The Chief Schools Officer may delegate the development and authorship of the formal language proposal (*See Figure 1*).

In considering proposals to introduce additional languages and/or additional language courses, or to change the level of support in a particular language, the language policy committee considers a range of **criteria** that include:

- numbers of schools (authorized and candidate) already offering the programme in those languages
- strategic considerations about specific languages in areas targeted for growth and access
- considerations on the quality of teaching and learning and implementation of the programmes
- language diversity
- risks to the organization
- costs, available funding and sustainability.

The language policy committee will consider each case on its own merits and will make a recommendation to the IB's senior leadership team (SLT) for approval. Language policy committee review and SLT approval must precede review by the Access and Advancement Committee who will provide their recommendation to the IB Board for final approval.

**Figure 1**  
**Requests and proposals decision-making process**



### c. Language subjects in the Middle Years and Diploma Programmes

In order to support the teaching of mother tongue languages, the organization will translate subject guides, and in some cases teacher support materials, for languages identified by the MYP and Diploma global teams using criteria that will include:

- numbers of students
- numbers of schools
- perceived and understood linguistic proficiency of teachers.

Languages will be identified by the MYP languages curriculum manager or by the DP languages curriculum or assessment heads in cooperation with the regional programme managers. As with other requests and proposals, a formal, written proposal will be submitted to the language policy committee, which will consider each case on its own merits and will make a recommendation to the SLT. The final decision will be submitted to the programme committees for information.

## **5. Review of language status**

All additional languages and/or language courses will be monitored annually by the Schools division. The division will provide a report to the language policy committee on progress and the extent to which benefits have been achieved and risks mitigated. A full review will take place every three years; earlier if there are significant changes in the original assumptions or circumstances of the proposal submitted.

## **6. Funding**

Costs for the services provided in the organization's languages will be covered by the IB fees, but external funding will be actively sought to cover at least the costs of setting up additional languages and/or language courses and for changes to the level of support provided for an access language.

## **7. Quality assurance**

All materials needed for the provision of services in the languages of the organization (except English, for which different arrangements apply) will be produced following a quality assurance process set by the Language Services department.

# Annexes

## Annex 1

### A. Services provided in level 1 languages

All services and materials needed for the delivery and implementation of the **four programmes** are offered. They include the following:

#### 1. Programmes documents

- IB learner profile
- Guides to programme implementation, including cross-programme and continuum documentation
- Curriculum guides and teacher support material<sup>1</sup>
- Standards and practices
- Handbook of procedures for the DP

*All curriculum publications are available on the online curriculum centre (OCC) and for sale in the IB store.*

#### 2. Assessment

- DP: Internal and external assessment services, including exam<sup>1</sup> papers, mark schemes, all examination material, subject reports<sup>1</sup>
- MYP: moderation services, moderation reports
- Material for examiners<sup>1</sup>
- Specimen papers and mark schemes<sup>1</sup>

#### 3. Services for teachers and coordinators

- Coordinator's handbooks
- Coordinator's notes
- IB Answers
- IBIS
- OCC

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<sup>1</sup> See annex 2 for restrictions in the Diploma Programme

#### **4. Authorization and evaluation**

- Authorization and evaluation documentation
- Authorization and evaluation support from regional offices, including school visits

#### **5. Professional development**

- Workshops (either online or face-to-face)
- Training for workshop leaders
- Web services for workshop leaders

#### **6. Other**

- Rules for IB World schools
- Rules for candidate schools
- General regulations
- Representation of working languages on curriculum development meetings
- IB store

#### **7. Communications**

- Public web site
- All promotional material created by the communications team
- Official communication and documentation from the IB

### **B. Services provided in level 2 languages**

All services and materials needed for the delivery and implementation of **one or two programmes only** are offered. Services included are as for level 1 languages, with the exception of those under the heading “Communications”.

## Annex 2

### A. Restrictions on the support for the Diploma Programme in levels 1 and 2 languages

A Diploma Programme subject will only be **automatically** offered for assessment in a particular level 1 or Diploma level 2 language if there have been sufficient candidates per year, over a three-year period, entered for the subject in that language to make the assessment offer viable and sustainable. Where a Diploma Programme subject is not currently offered for assessment in a particular level 1 or Diploma level 2 language, no programme publications will be produced for the whole of that curriculum review cycle. However, should circumstances change significantly during a cycle, the IB will consider a review.

Note:

- This does not apply to completely new subjects, offered for the first time by the IB. Curriculum documents for new subjects will be published in level 1 and Diploma level 2 languages.
- This applies to all group 3–6 subjects as well as classical languages in group 2.
- There will always be one subject per group supported in each language; the subject with the highest number of candidates over a three-year period will be the one supported.
- Schools will be advised of any such decisions at least one year before teaching of any revised course begins; any schools that have entered candidates during the three-year period will be contacted directly; the information will also be included in Coordinator's Notes and the Handbook of Procedures, and on the online curriculum centre (OCC).
- At an appropriate point in the next curriculum review cycle schools will again be contacted and consulted, and the decision will be reviewed using feedback from schools.
- Where a subject is no longer being supported with curriculum documentation in a level 1 or Diploma level 2 language, schools may make a special request for students to be registered and assessed in that language. Such special requests should be made through the school's local schools services programme manager.

### B. Restrictions on the support for Diploma language subjects examinations

Examination for Group 2 language courses will not automatically be offered in a particular language unless there have been sufficient candidates per year, over a three-year period, entered for the subject in that language to make the assessment offer viable and sustainable. **Special requests** for examination for Group 2 language courses not automatically offered can be made as described in the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*.

## Annex 3

### Policy on languages of instruction for the PYP and the MYP

A school may be authorized to offer the PYP or MYP in a language of instruction other than a working language for the programme provided that:

- The coordinator is bilingual or has proven language support (to be able to communicate easily with the IB in one of the working languages).
- The head of school/pedagogical leader for the section(s) of the school involved in the programme has received at least introductory training (with interpretation if necessary).
- The application received from the school includes a statement explaining how the school proposes to deal with the language issues in terms of support from local authorities, allocated resources, training of teachers and induction of new staff.
- *For the MYP only:* At least one teacher in each of the eight MYP subject groups is proficient in a level 1 language or an MYP level 2 language.
- All training is conducted by IB-approved leaders/trainers.
- The school understands that the training and implementation process will likely take longer, and is closely monitored by the regional office.
- All documents submitted by the school to the IB in support of its application/programme evaluation, as well as all correspondence with the IB are written or translated in a working language for the programme.
- The verification and all visits (including evaluation) are conducted with an interpreter chosen/approved by the IB, at the expense of the school.
- The school is committed to actively supporting its teachers in becoming more proficient in one of the IB's working languages for the programme.

## Annex 4

### Levels of support for access languages

Access languages are languages in which the organization will provide selected services and documentation. The current list of access languages and their level of support is available on the IB public website at [www.ibo.org/mission/languagepolicy/](http://www.ibo.org/mission/languagepolicy/). The services offered in the access language levels include:

#### Level 3

##### PYP, MYP and Diploma

- IB learner profile
- Guides to programme implementation
- Cross-programme curriculum and continuum documents
- Programme standards and practices
- Workshops (depending on numbers)

##### PYP

- Full range of curriculum materials

##### MYP

- Full range of subject guides
- Some teacher support materials

*No assessment services are offered*

##### Diploma

For agreed subjects:

- Guides, teacher support materials: in most cases, only the general guidelines will be translated
- Relevant sections of Handbook of Procedures
- Exam material, subject reports
- Selected assessment services
- Specimen questions and mark schemes
- Information for examiners, but where possible examiners must be able to understand one of the level 1 or 2 languages

*Curriculum publications listed are available on the OCC and may be available for sale.*

## Level 4

### PYP, MYP and Diploma

- IB learner profile
- Guides to programme implementation (for the PYP and MYP) and selected subject guides/curriculum material

*Publications listed are available on the OCC, but there are no OCC pages in the language. Publications may be available for sale.*

## Level 5

- Bilingual glossaries of programme terminology for the MYP and PYP

*Glossaries are available in the relevant programme pages in the OCC.*