Diploma Programme

Language ab initio guide

Updated for first exams 2015

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Published March 2011
Updated August 2013
Updated August 2014

Published on behalf of the International Baccalaureate Organization, a not-for-profit educational foundation of 15 Route des Morillons, 1218 Le Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland by the

International Baccalaureate Organization (UK) Ltd
Peterson House, Malthouse Avenue, Cardiff Gate
Cardiff, Wales CF23 8GL
United Kingdom
Website: www.ibo.org

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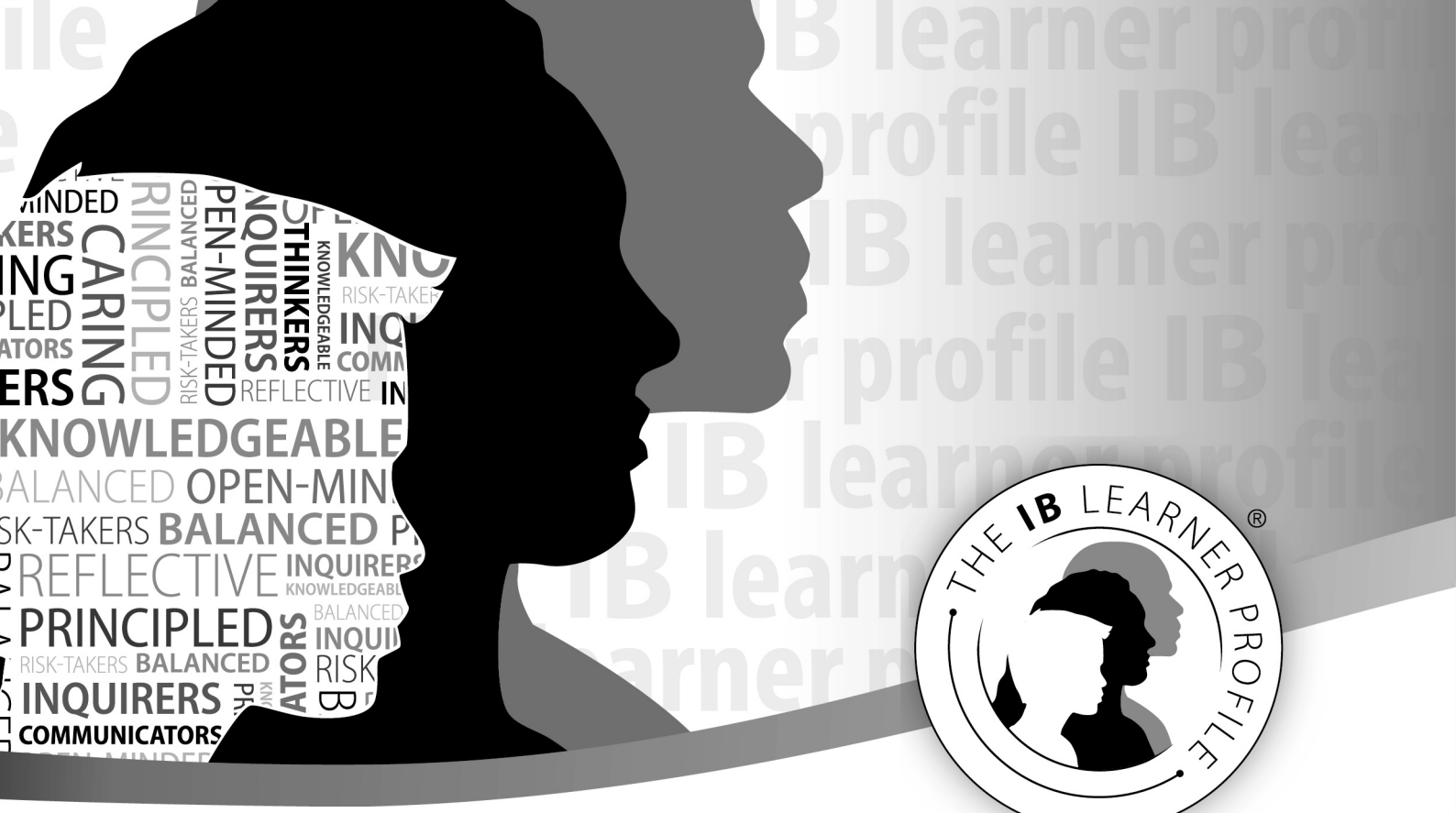
IB mission statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.



IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

INQUIRERS
We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

KNOWLEDGEABLE
We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

THINKERS
We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

COMMUNICATORS
We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

PRINCIPLED
We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

OPEN-MINDED
We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

CARING
We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

RISK-TAKERS
We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

BALANCED
We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE
We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.

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Purpose of this document

This publication is intended to guide the planning, teaching and assessment of the subject in schools. Subject teachers are the primary audience, although it is expected that teachers will use the guide to inform students and parents about the subject.

This guide can be found on the subject page of the online curriculum centre (OCC) at http://occ.ibo.org, a password-protected IB website designed to support IB teachers. It can also be purchased from the IB store at http://store.ibo.org.

Additional resources

Additional publications such as teacher support materials, subject reports, internal assessment guidance and grade descriptors can also be found on the OCC. Specimen and past examination papers as well as markschemes can be purchased from the IB store.

Teachers are encouraged to check the OCC for additional resources created or used by other teachers. Teachers can provide details of useful resources, for example: websites, books, videos, journals or teaching ideas.

First examinations 2015

The Diploma Programme

The Diploma Programme is a rigorous pre-university course of study designed for students in the 16 to 19 age range. It is a broad-based two-year course that aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable and inquiring, but also caring and compassionate. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging students to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness, and the attitudes necessary for them to respect and evaluate a range of points of view.

The Diploma Programme hexagon

The course is presented as six academic areas enclosing a central core (see figure 1). It encourages the concurrent study of a broad range of academic areas. Students study: two modern languages (or a modern language and a classical language); a humanities or social science subject; an experimental science; mathematics; one of the creative arts. It is this comprehensive range of subjects that makes the Diploma Programme a demanding course of study designed to prepare students effectively for university entrance. In each of the academic areas students have flexibility in making their choices, which means they can choose subjects that particularly interest them and that they may wish to study further at university.

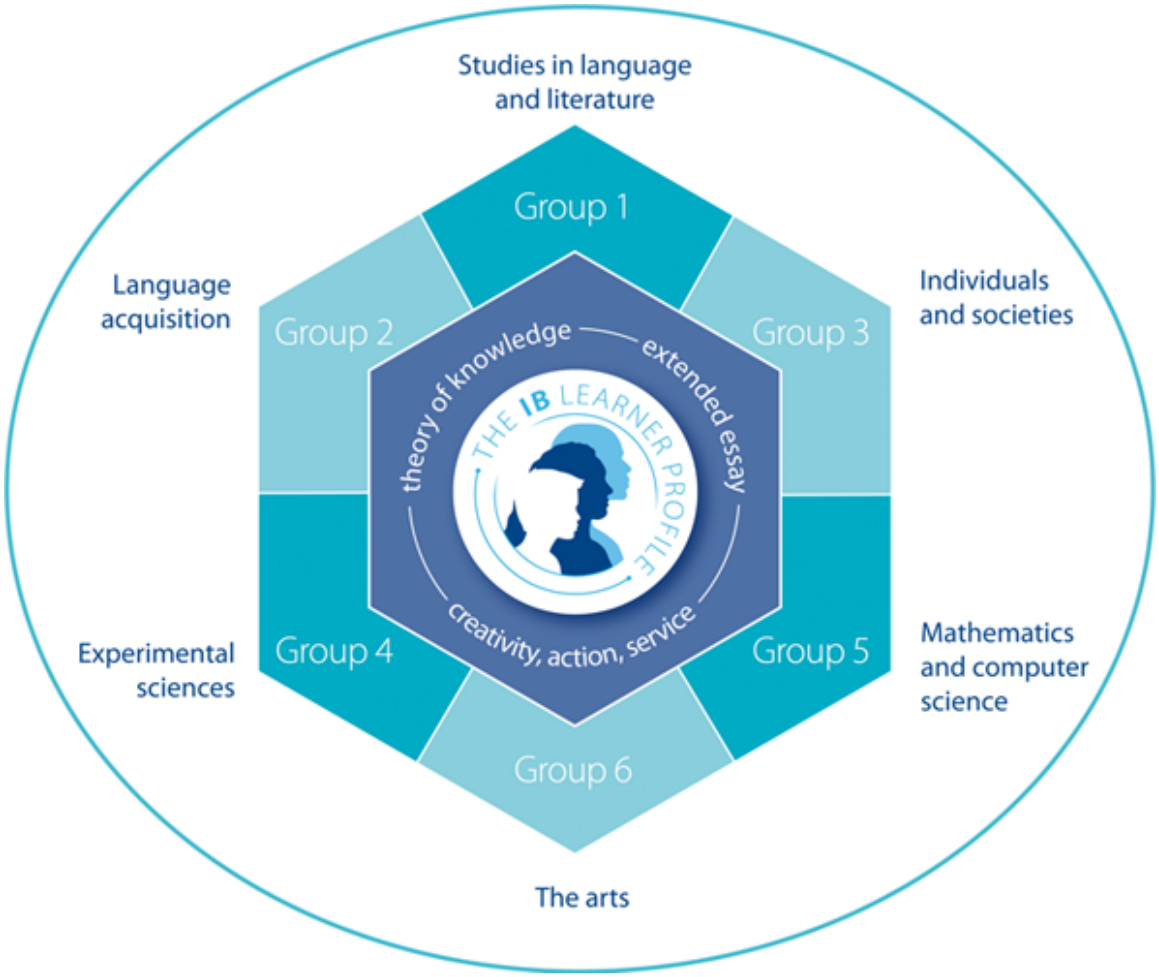

Figure 1

Diploma Programme model

Choosing the right combination

Students are required to choose one subject from each of the six academic areas, although they can choose a second subject from groups 1 to 5 instead of a group 6 subject. Normally, three subjects (and not more than four) are taken at higher level (HL), and the others are taken at standard level (SL). The IB recommends 240 teaching hours for HL subjects and 150 hours for SL. Subjects at HL are studied in greater depth and breadth than at SL. Language ab initio is available at SL only.

At both levels, many skills are developed, especially those of critical thinking and analysis. At the end of the course, students' abilities are measured by means of external assessment. Many subjects contain some element of coursework assessed by teachers. The courses are available for examinations in English, French and Spanish, with the exception of groups 1 and 2 courses where examinations are in the language of study.

The core of the hexagon

All Diploma Programme students participate in the three course requirements that make up the core of the hexagon. Reflection on all these activities is a principle that lies at the heart of the thinking behind the Diploma Programme.

The theory of knowledge course encourages students to think about the nature of knowledge, to reflect on the process of learning in all the subjects they study as part of their Diploma Programme course, and to make connections across the academic areas. The extended essay, a substantial piece of writing of up to 4,000 words, enables students to investigate a topic of special interest that they have chosen themselves. **However, at language ab initio level, students cannot elect to write the extended essay in the language studied.** It also encourages them to develop the skills of independent research that will be expected at university. Creativity, action, service involves students in experiential learning through a range of artistic, sporting, physical and service activities.

The IB mission statement and the IB learner profile

The Diploma Programme aims to develop in students the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to fulfill the aims of the IB, as expressed in the organization's mission statement and the learner profile. Teaching and learning in the Diploma Programme represent the reality in daily practice of the organization's educational philosophy.

Nature of the subject

Group 2

Group 2 consists of two modern language courses—language ab initio and language B—that are offered in a number of languages, and a classical languages course that is offered in Latin and Classical Greek. Language ab initio and language B are language acquisition courses designed to provide students with the necessary skills and intercultural understanding to enable them to communicate successfully in an environment where the language studied is spoken. This process encourages the learner to go beyond the confines of the classroom, expanding an awareness of the world and fostering respect for cultural diversity. The group 2 courses use a balance between approaches to learning that are teacher-centred (teacher-led activities and assessment in the classroom) and those that are learner-centred (activities designed to allow the students to take the initiative, which can also involve student participation in the evaluation of their learning). The teacher is best placed to evaluate the needs of the students and is expected to encourage both independent and collaborative learning. The two modern language courses—language ab initio and language B—develop students' linguistic abilities through the development of receptive, productive and interactive skills (as defined in "Syllabus content"). The classical languages course focuses on the study of the language, literature and culture of the classical world.

It is essential that Diploma Programme coordinators and teachers ensure that students are following the course that is best suited to their present and future needs and that will provide them with an appropriate academic challenge. The degree to which students are already competent in the language and the degree of proficiency they wish to attain by the end of the period of study are the most important factors in identifying the appropriate course. Coordinators, in conjunction with teachers, are responsible for the placement of students. The most important consideration is that the course should be a challenging educational experience for the student.

Language ab initio

The language ab initio course is organized into three themes.

- Individual and society
- Leisure and work
- Urban and rural environment

Each theme has a list of topics that provide the students with opportunities to practise and explore the language as well as to develop intercultural understanding. Through the development of receptive, productive and interactive skills, students should be able to respond and interact appropriately in a defined range of everyday situations. Each language ab initio course has a language-specific syllabus (see "Syllabus content") that is used in conjunction with the guide. Language ab initio is available at SL only.

Language B

Language B is an additional language-learning course designed for students with some previous learning of that language. It may be studied at either SL or HL. The main focus of the course is on language acquisition and development of language skills. These language skills should be developed through the study and use of a range of written and spoken material. Such material will extend from everyday oral exchanges to literary texts, and should be related to the culture(s) concerned. The material should be chosen to enable students to develop mastery of language skills and intercultural understanding. It should not be intended solely for the study of specific subject matter or content.

Classical languages

The classical languages courses introduce students to the languages, literatures and cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. The courses involve the study of texts in the original language, and linguistic skills should lie at the heart of the courses. Teachers are encouraged to supplement the study with texts in translation, but the foundation remains linguistic. It is intended that through studying the classical languages in their cultural context, students will see that culture and language shape one another. At the same time, especially at HL, students are expected to appreciate a wide range of texts—and the registers within them—and to appreciate stylistic characteristics. (The aims of the classical languages courses are separate from those of group 2. For further information, refer to the *Classical languages guide*).

Placement of students in group 2 language courses

The following table is provided to assist teachers in placing students in an appropriate language course. Each course is described through statements explaining the learning outcomes that students who complete the course with a grade 4 or above (where grade 1 is “very poor” and grade 7 “excellent”) will be able to achieve by the **end** of the course.

Diploma Programme coordinators and teachers should ensure that, as far as possible, students are following the course that is most suited to their needs and that will provide them with an appropriate academic challenge.

Note: The language ab initio course is available at SL only.

When establishing assessment tasks and level descriptors, various international standards were used as a reference point.

Group 2

Course	Receptive skills	Productive skills	Interactive skills
Language ab initio SL	Understand, both aurally and in writing, simple sentences and some more complex sentences related to the three themes and related topics. Understand simple authentic (adapted where appropriate) written texts and questions related to them in the target language.	Express information fairly accurately, in both writing and in speech, using a range of basic vocabulary and grammatical structures. Communicate orally and respond appropriately to most questions on the three prescribed themes and related topics. Communicate clearly, in writing, some simple information and ideas in response to a written task.	Understand and respond clearly to some information and ideas within the range of the three prescribed themes and related topics. Engage in simple conversations. Demonstrate some intercultural understanding by reflecting on similarities and differences between the target culture(s) and the student’s own and by providing some appropriate examples and information.

Course	Receptive skills	Productive skills	Interactive skills
Language B SL	Understand straightforward recorded or spoken information on the topics studied. Understand authentic written texts related to the topics studied and that use mostly everyday language.	Communicate orally in order to explain a point of view on a designated topic. Describe with some detail and accuracy experiences, events and concepts. Produce texts where the use of register, style, rhetorical devices and structural elements are generally appropriate to the audience and purpose.	Demonstrate interaction that usually flows coherently, but with occasional limitations. Engage in conversations on the topics studied, as well as related ideas. Demonstrate some intercultural engagement with the target language and culture(s).
Language B HL	Understand complex recorded or spoken information on the topics studied. Appreciate literary works in the target language. Understand complex authentic written texts related to the topics studied.	Communicate orally in order to explain in detail a point of view. Describe in detail and accurately experiences and events, as well as abstract ideas and concepts. Produce clear texts where the use of register, style, rhetorical devices and structural elements are appropriate to the audience and purpose. Produce clear and convincing arguments in support of a point of view.	Demonstrate interaction that flows coherently with a degree of fluency and spontaneity. Engage coherently in conversations in most situations. Demonstrate some intercultural engagement with the target language and culture(s).

Prior learning

The language ab initio course is designed for students with **little or no prior experience** of the language they wish to study. All final decisions on the appropriateness of the course for which students are entered are taken by coordinators in liaison with teachers, using their experience and professional judgment to guide them. The most important consideration is that the language ab initio course should be a challenging educational experience for the student.

Links to the Middle Years Programme

In the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) the study of an additional language—language B—is compulsory and the course is designed to encourage the student to develop a respect for and understanding of other languages and cultures. The MYP language B course is equally designed to equip the student with a skills base to facilitate further language learning.

The aims of the MYP language B and the language ab initio courses have much in common and share the intentions of encouraging students to develop an awareness and understanding of the perspectives of people from other cultures, as well as harnessing linguistic competence.

Group 2 and theory of knowledge

In group 2 there are three modern language courses: language ab initio, language B SL and language B HL. The outcomes of each course are different, but each course is a language acquisition course that seeks to enhance intercultural understanding.

Theory of knowledge (TOK) is central to the Diploma Programme, and the relationship between TOK and group 2 is of great importance. Learning an additional language involves linguistic and metalinguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic and intercultural skills and competencies. Therefore, teachers are challenged to make links between TOK and group 2 courses that encourage consideration and reflection upon how these skills and competencies are acquired by the language learner and, equally, imparted by the teacher.

What follows are some questions that could be used in the language classroom to investigate the link between the four ways of knowing (reason, emotion, perception and language) and additional language acquisition. While it is hoped that some of the questions in italics may be adapted and used in the language ab initio classroom, the expectation is that not all the questions are appropriate for language ab initio students in the target language. All questions, however, can be used for discussion in the language of instruction.

- *Do we know and learn our first language(s) in the same way as we learn additional languages?*
- *If you were to learn a language from a textbook only, how would this differ from learning through interaction only?*
- *Do you understand the world differently when you learn another language? How (for example, time, humour, leisure)?*
- *When, if ever, is it possible to make a perfect translation from one language into another? What might "perfect" mean in this context?*
- When we learn an additional language, do we learn more than "just" vocabulary and grammar?
- The concept of intercultural understanding means the ability to demonstrate an understanding of cultural diversity and/or similarity between the target culture(s) and one's own. To what extent is this definition true?
- "Those who know nothing of an additional language know nothing of their own" (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, playwright, poet, novelist, dramatist, 1749–1832). By learning another culture are we able to enrich our own?
- We can learn grammar intuitively, without conscious thought, or formally, by stating rules. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach? Are these the same for learning in other areas of the curriculum?
- To what extent does membership of a group (a cultural group, a gender group or another group) affect how we come to linguistic knowledge? Are there factors to consider between individuals within a group and between groups?
- To what extent does the learning environment (the physical setting) have an impact on the way an additional language is acquired?
- How is perception encoded differently in different languages (for example, colour, orientation)? What does this tell us about the relationships between perception, culture, reality and truth?

- How are values encoded differently in different languages (for example, family, friendship, authority)?
- What is the relationship between language and thought? Do you think differently in different languages? If so, does it make a practical or discernible difference to how you interpret the world?
- If mathematics is a language, it is clearly different from natural languages. In your experience, do we learn the two differently? What does your answer tell us about the nature of mathematical and linguistic knowledge?

Language ab initio and the international dimension

The study of an additional language in group 2 adds to the international dimension of the Diploma Programme. Within group 2, intercultural understanding is a major cohesive element of the syllabus in both language ab initio and language B. While learning the target language, the student becomes aware of the similarities and differences between his or her own culture(s) and those of the target culture(s). With this awareness, a greater respect for other peoples and the way in which they lead their lives is fostered. Within the course framework, through the study of authentic texts, students investigate and reflect on cultural values and behaviours.

The language ab initio course achieves this reflection on cultural values and behaviours in different ways. The course is divided into three broad themes, all of which are well suited to fostering an international perspective. The language ab initio course, albeit at a basic level, seeks to develop intercultural understanding and foster a concern for global issues, as well as to raise students' awareness of their own responsibility at a local level.

Aims

Group 2 aims

Group 2 consists of three language courses accommodating the different levels of linguistic proficiency that students have when they begin. There is a single set of group 2 aims, which are common to all the courses, but the assessment objectives are differentiated according to what the students are expected to be able to demonstrate at the end of each course.

The aims of group 2 are to:

1. develop students' intercultural understanding
2. enable students to understand and use the language they have studied in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes
3. encourage, through the study of texts and through social interaction, an awareness and appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures
4. develop students' awareness of the role of language in relation to other areas of knowledge
5. develop students' awareness of the relationship between the languages and cultures with which they are familiar
6. provide students with a basis for further study, work and leisure through the use of an additional language
7. provide the opportunity for enjoyment, creativity and intellectual stimulation through knowledge of an additional language.

Language ab initio aims

The aims of the language ab initio course reflect those of group 2 listed above but are to be defined within the parameters of the language ab initio syllabus. The range of contexts, purposes, language skills and texts to be taught are listed in "Syllabus content". The use of appropriate language and the breadth of intercultural understanding to be demonstrated are also defined within the syllabus content.

Assessment objectives

There are five assessment objectives for the language ab initio course. Students will be assessed on their ability to:

1. demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the intercultural elements related to the prescribed topics
2. communicate clearly and effectively in a range of situations
3. understand and use accurately the basic structures of the language
4. understand and use an appropriate range of vocabulary
5. use a register and a format that are appropriate to the situation.

Assessment objectives in practice

Assessment objective	Which component addresses this assessment objective?	How is the assessment objective addressed?
1. Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the intercultural elements related to the prescribed topics	Paper 1	Students respond appropriately to an authentic text.
	Paper 2	Students respond to the task using the appropriate conventions and register.
	Written assignment	Students demonstrate an awareness of the similarities and/or differences between their own culture(s) and the target culture(s) in their chosen topic.
	Internal assessment	Students respond appropriately to the questions on the written assignment.
1. Communicate clearly and effectively in a range of situations	Paper 2	Students respond to written tasks using appropriate language, register and format.
	Written assignment	Students communicate clearly and effectively in the context of their research.
	Internal assessment	Students orally describe a visual stimulus, respond to questions on the stimulus and engage in a general conversation using appropriate language, register and format.
1. Understand and use accurately the basic structures of the language	Paper 1	Students demonstrate comprehension of written texts by responding to text-handling questions.
	Paper 2	Students demonstrate the ability to understand the task and respond appropriately using a variety of text types.
	Written assignment	Students demonstrate comprehension of a variety of texts selected for the purpose of researching their chosen topic and use basic structures accurately.
	Internal assessment	Students interact appropriately with the teacher, using a range of basic structures.

Assessment objective	Which component addresses this assessment objective?	How is the assessment objective addressed?
1. Understand and use an appropriate range of vocabulary	Paper 1	Students demonstrate comprehension of written texts through responding to text-handling questions.
	Paper 2	Students demonstrate the ability to use vocabulary appropriate to the topic.
	Written assignment	Students demonstrate comprehension of a variety of texts selected for the purpose of researching their chosen topic.
	Internal assessment	Students interact appropriately with the teacher on a range of topics.
1. Use a register that is appropriate to the situation	Paper 2	Students use a register appropriate to the task.
	Written assignment	Students write in a register appropriate to the task.
	Internal assessment	Students are able to talk with the teacher in an appropriate register.

Syllabus outline

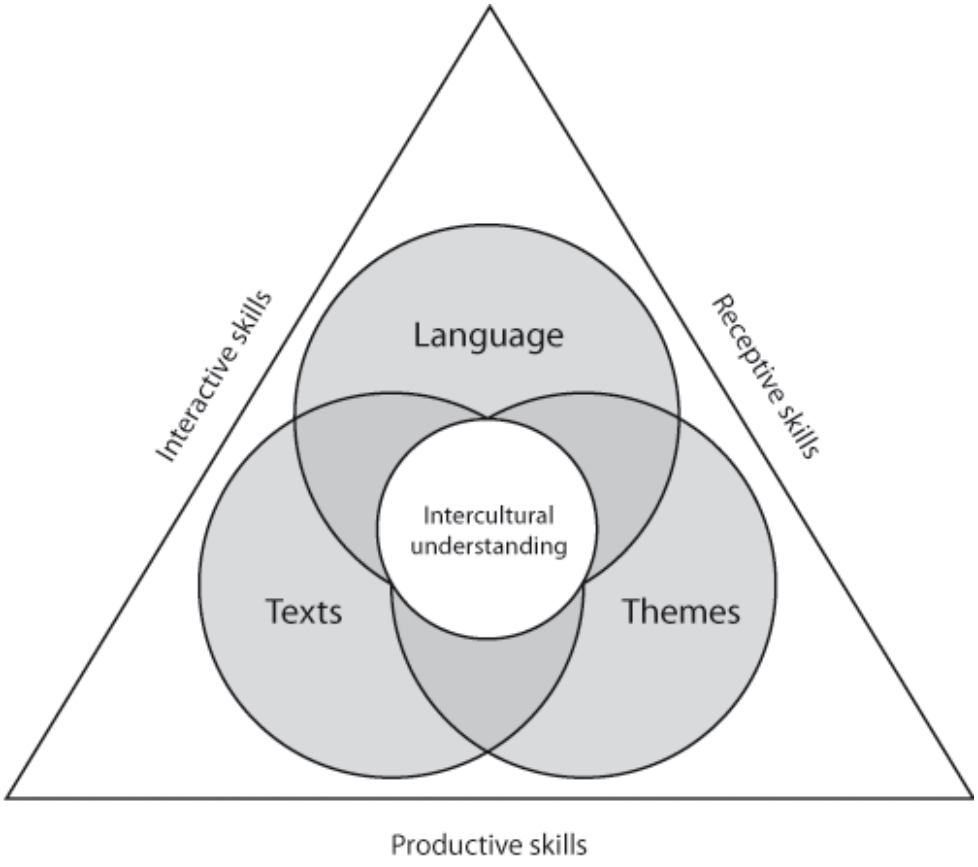

Figure 2

Language ab initio syllabus outline

Three areas of study—language, texts and themes—provide the basis of the two-year language ab initio course. These three fundamental areas are interconnected and should be studied concurrently. Interactive, productive and receptive skills are developed through study in these three areas and are of equal importance.

The language ab initio course is displayed above in a diagram with intercultural understanding at its heart to demonstrate both its importance and its interrelatedness within the areas of language, texts and themes. Intercultural understanding is defined as an ability to demonstrate an understanding of cultural diversity and/or similarity between the target culture(s) and the student's own. The student develops a greater awareness of his or her own culture(s) through learning about another. Intercultural understanding provides both the link between the three areas of the course and the lens through which they should be addressed.

It is essential that teachers are allowed the prescribed minimum number of teaching hours necessary to meet the requirements of the language ab initio course. The course is available at SL only; the minimum prescribed number of hours is 150.

Approaches to the teaching of language ab initio

Teaching the language ab initio course should be supported in ways that are consistent with the IB learner profile and the pedagogical principles that underpin the IB programmes: the promotion of critical- and creative-thinking skills, and learning how to learn.

In keeping with IB principles, teachers are strongly encouraged to design their own course of study and to teach it in a way that takes into account the particular needs and interests of the students and the school's ideals.

The following guidance is not prescriptive but is in keeping with teaching approaches that best reflect the underlying IB philosophy about language and learning. Language acquisition can be supported by teachers in the following ways.

- **Use the language for communication.** Give priority to developing a natural use of the target language that emphasizes fluency as well as accuracy.
- **Debate meaning.** Focus on meaning—this may be when language is the tool for communication in social interactions, or when the language itself is being studied.
- **Show how form affects meaning.** Focus on form as it relates to meaning. Form includes an awareness of grammatical and textual features related to meaning. Appropriate corrective feedback relevant to learners' needs and to maintaining a balance of fluency and accuracy is important here.
- **Provide maximum exposure to the language.** Use the target language whenever possible. For example, using the target language as the medium of instruction vastly increases learners' ability to comprehend.
- **Learn phrases or "chunks".** Provide chunks of formulaic language for rote learning in the early stages of language acquisition, as well as developing competence through the understanding of language rules.
- **Encourage students to use the language actively.** Provide varied and extensive opportunities for learners to practise and work with the target language through both oral and written tasks.
- **Encourage students to interact in the target language.** Provide opportunities for interaction in the target language so that learners have practice in using authentic dialogue. Task-focused, small-group work is an effective strategy for this.
- **Introduce language appropriate to students' current level.** Ensure that the target language being taught is at a level compatible with the learners' development. In this way new learning is effectively constructed upon prior knowledge.
- **Address each student's individual needs.** Ensure that teaching takes into consideration the differences between individual learners. This includes planning and differentiation for different learning styles, motivation, aptitude and stages of learning.
- **Assess students' full range of abilities.** Ensure assessment is comprehensive. It should value and address the free production of the target language, as well as controlled production.

Teachers are encouraged to find ways of delivering the course that are most relevant to their students' interests and needs. The language ab initio course uses a balance between teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches to language learning (as defined in "Nature of the subject"). Teachers have the freedom to construct their own course of study and schemes of work based on textbooks and authentic materials. Authentic texts are considered to be those that were originally produced for users of the target language, although for the purposes of a language ab initio course they may have been edited or simplified. Whenever possible the use of textbooks should be supplemented by a variety of materials (for example, authentic texts, songs, pictures, films, poems).

The approach to teaching the subject matter is both cyclical and integrated. For example, grammatical elements should be integrated into the communicative purpose of the lesson.

In order for students to achieve communicative competence in a variety of everyday situations they must be exposed to a range of learning techniques. Teachers are encouraged to use both independent and collaborative learning techniques: individual work, pair work, small-group work, whole-class work. Within the classroom, the use of the target language should be encouraged. Students are also strongly encouraged to seek opportunities to use and be exposed to the target language in situations away from the classroom.

Syllabus content

The language ab initio syllabus is defined in two documents: the *Language ab initio guide* and the language-specific syllabus.

The language-specific syllabus is a document containing both the prescribed grammar and lexicon necessary in order for students to meet the assessment objectives of the language ab initio course. Each language ab initio course has its own language-specific syllabus. The three common elements in each language-specific syllabus are:

- vocabulary lists under topic headings
- a list of prescribed grammar
- a list of the instructions for the written examination papers.

The language ab initio syllabus comprises three interconnected areas: language, themes and texts.

Language

Language acquisition will be achieved through the development of **receptive, productive** and **interactive** skills and competencies. Elements of language include vocabulary, grammatical structures, register, pronunciation and intonation.

Receptive skills: the ability to comprehend straightforward written and spoken language. Receptive skills entail not only understanding the message but also its cultural and contextual connotations.

Productive skills: the ability to write and speak the target language effectively. Productive skills entail producing and delivering a message or text that is not only coherent but also appropriate to context and purpose.

Interactive skills: the ability to understand and respond effectively to written and spoken language. Interactive skills entail not only conveying messages and responding to written and spoken language but also demonstrating an awareness of social context.

Themes

The three themes (individual and society, leisure and work, urban and rural environment) are made up of a series of 20 topics. These serve as the foundation for the acquisition of the language and the study of different text types (listed in “External assessment details”). Through the study of the three interrelated themes, students will develop the skills necessary to fulfill the assessment objectives of the language ab initio course.

It is important to note that the order of the content is **not** an indication of how the themes and topics should be taught. They are interrelated and teachers are encouraged to adopt an integrated and cyclical approach to teaching. The topic of shopping, for example, may be treated under any of the three themes and could be revisited at several stages of the two-year course.

Prescribed topics

Individual and society	Leisure and work	Urban and rural environment
Daily routines	Employment	Environmental concerns
Education	Entertainment	Global issues
Food and drink	Holidays	Neighbourhood
Personal details, appearance and character	Media	Physical geography
Physical health	Sport	Town and services
Relationships	Technology	Weather
Shopping	Transport	

Texts

During the course, students must be taught to understand and produce a variety of texts. In the context of the language ab initio course, a text can be spoken, written or visual. For the purposes of language ab initio, a visual text is one that contains an image, a series of images, or is a film. It is expected that teachers, where possible, use and adapt authentic texts for use in the classroom. The following list, although not exhaustive, provides examples of appropriate text types.

Examples of text types

Advertisement	Notice
Article from journal, magazine	Novel
Blog	Picture
Book	Poem
Brochure	Postcard
Diary	Poster
Email	Questionnaire
Essay	Radio programme
Film	Recipe
Flyer	Report
Interview	Review
Invitation	Short story
Label	Social networking site
Letter: formal/informal	Song
List	Speech
Map	Survey
Menu	Timetable
Message	Travel guide
Note	Web page

Principles of course design

The IB recognizes that, due to differences in language teaching traditions, it might be easier for the teachers of particular languages to find textbooks to suit the language ab initio course. However, should appropriate textbooks not be available, the syllabus has been designed to allow teachers the freedom to construct their own course of study and schemes of work based on a range of texts linked to one or more of the topics prescribed in the syllabus. Teachers are always encouraged to bring authentic materials into the classroom. In designing a language ab initio course of study teachers should pay particular attention to variety, integration, whole-class projects, learning beyond the classroom, transparency and personal development.

Variety

Teachers should ensure that their students:

- develop language skills through a range of individual and group tasks
- practise the language through a wide variety of pair and group activities
- are introduced to the full range of types of texts appropriate to the course.

Integration

To integrate all the relevant aspects of the course and encourage autonomy, it is necessary for the learner to develop strategies for dealing with unfamiliar situations and unfamiliar language. To achieve this, teachers should provide:

- an environment that promotes the use of the target language in the classroom and prepares the students to communicate in a variety of everyday situations and contexts
- authentic materials for study that, although they may have been edited or simplified, have originally been produced for everyday users of the target language.

Teachers should also ensure that their course encourages students to:

- practise receptive, interactive and productive skills
- interact in the target language through active participation in oral exchanges, by both listening and speaking, or responding to a piece of reading material in either a written or spoken way.

Teachers are reminded that no single part of the syllabus is an end in itself, but that all parts should complement each other and must be integrated. Language should be developed through the study of materials that reflect the culture(s) concerned.

Transparency

Teachers must ensure that their students are given clear information about the course’s aims and objectives, the syllabus and the assessment criteria. Students should be made aware of what is expected of them.

Assessment in the Diploma Programme

General

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. The most important aims of assessment in the Diploma Programme are that it should support curricular goals and encourage appropriate student learning. Both external and internal assessment are used in the Diploma Programme. IB examiners mark work produced for external assessment, while work produced for internal assessment is marked by teachers and externally moderated by the IB.

There are two types of assessment identified by the IB.

- Formative assessment informs both teaching and learning. It is concerned with providing accurate and helpful feedback to students and teachers on the kind of learning taking place and the nature of students' strengths and weaknesses in order to help develop students' understanding and capabilities. Formative assessment can also help to improve teaching quality, as it can provide information to monitor progress towards meeting the course aims and objectives.
- Summative assessment gives an overview of previous learning and is concerned with measuring student achievement.

The Diploma Programme primarily focuses on summative assessment designed to record student achievement at, or towards the end of, the course of study. However, many of the assessment instruments can also be used formatively during the course of teaching and learning, and teachers are encouraged to do this. A comprehensive assessment plan is viewed as being integral with teaching, learning and course organization. For further information, see the IB *Programme standards and practices* document.

The approach to assessment used by the IB is criterion-related, not norm-referenced. This approach to assessment judges students' work by their performance in relation to identified levels of attainment, and not in relation to the work of other students. For further information on assessment within the Diploma Programme please refer to the publication *Diploma Programme assessment: Principles and practice*.

To support teachers in the planning, delivery and assessment of the Diploma Programme courses, a variety of resources can be found on the OCC or purchased from the IB store (http://store.ibo.org). Teacher support materials, subject reports, internal assessment guidance, grade descriptors, as well as resources from other teachers, can be found on the OCC. Specimen and past examination papers, as well as markschemes, can be purchased from the IB store.

Language ab initio is unavailable as an anticipated subject.

Methods of assessment

The IB uses several methods to assess work produced by students.

Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria are used when the assessment task is open-ended. Each criterion concentrates on a particular skill that students are expected to demonstrate. An assessment objective describes what students should be able to do, and assessment criteria describe how well they should be able to do it. Using assessment criteria allows discrimination between different answers and encourages a variety of responses. Each criterion comprises a set of hierarchically ordered level descriptors. Each level descriptor is worth one or more marks. Each criterion is applied independently using a best-fit model. The maximum marks for each criterion may differ according to the criterion's importance. The marks awarded for each criterion are added together to give the total mark for the piece of work.

Markbands

Markbands are a comprehensive statement of expected performance against which responses are judged. They represent a single holistic criterion divided into level descriptors. Each level descriptor corresponds to a range of marks to differentiate student performance. A best-fit approach is used to ascertain which particular mark to use from the possible range for each level descriptor.

Markschemes

This generic term is used to describe analytic markschemes that are prepared for specific examination papers. Analytic markschemes are prepared for those examination questions that expect a particular kind of response and/or a given final answer from the students. They give detailed instructions to examiners on how to break down the total mark for each question for different parts of the response. A markscheme may include the content expected in the responses to questions or may be a series of marking notes giving guidance on how to apply criteria.

Assessment outline

First examinations 2015

Assessment component	Weighting
External assessment	**75%**
Paper 1 (1 hour 30 minutes): Receptive skills Understanding of four written texts. (40 marks) Text-handling exercises.	**30%**
Paper 2 (1 hour): Productive skills Two compulsory writing exercises. (25 marks) Section A (7 marks): **One** question to be answered from a choice of two. Section B (18 marks): **One** question to be answered from a choice of three.	**25%**
Written assignment: Receptive and productive skills A piece of writing, 200–350 words, demonstrating intercultural understanding and written in the **target language**. (20 marks)	**20%**
Internal assessment (10 minutes): Interactive skills **Individual oral (25 marks)** Three-part oral internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB towards the end of the course. • Part 1: Presentation of a visual stimulus (from a choice of two) by the student. • Part 2: Follow-up questions on the visual stimulus. • Part 3: General conversation including at least two questions on the written assignment.	**25%**

External assessment

Two different methods are used to assess students.

- Detailed markschemes specific to each examination paper
- Assessment criteria

The assessment criteria are published in this guide. They are related to the assessment objectives established for the language ab initio course and the group 2 aims.

For paper 1, there are markschemes.

For paper 2, there are assessment criteria.

For the written assignment, there are assessment criteria.

Written examination papers

Two examination papers are set and marked externally—paper 1 and paper 2. They are designed to allow students to demonstrate their competencies in relation to the language ab initio assessment objectives. Paper 1 assesses receptive skills and paper 2 assesses productive skills.

Use of dictionaries and reference material

In papers 1 and 2 the use of dictionaries and reference material **is not** permitted. Students are allowed to use dictionaries and reference material for the written assignment.

Word count

Paper 2, section A: Students are required to write a minimum of 50 words (60 Mandarin characters or 100 Japanese characters).

Paper 2, section B: Students are required to write a minimum of 100 words (120 Mandarin characters or 200 Japanese characters).

Written assignment: Students are required to produce an assignment of 200-350 words. Work which falls significantly beneath the stated word count is unlikely to fully meet the stated requirements of the task and is likely to receive low marks. If the word limit is exceeded, the assessment will be based on the first 350 words.

The three externally assessed components (paper 1, paper 2 and the written assignment) combine to give 75% of the assessment total.

Note: All responses must be in the target language.

Guidance and authenticity

The written assignment submitted for external assessment must be the student's own work.

However, it is not the intention that students should decide upon a title or topic and be left to work on the task without any further support from the teacher. The teacher should play an important role during both the planning stage and the period when the student is working on the task. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that students are familiar with:

- the requirements of the type of work to be assessed
- the assessment criteria (students should understand that the work submitted for assessment must address these criteria effectively).

It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that all students understand the basic meaning and significance of concepts that relate to academic honesty, especially authenticity and intellectual property. The teacher must ensure that all student work for assessment is prepared according to the requirements and must explain clearly to students that the work must be entirely their own.

After liaising with the student to select an appropriate subject for the assignment, the teacher can give verbal advice on a first draft of the task. This advice could be in terms of the way in which the work could be improved but this first draft must not be annotated, edited, or corrected by the teacher. After making general comments on the first draft, teachers should not provide any further assistance.

All work submitted to the IB for moderation or assessment must be authenticated by a teacher, and must not include any known instances of suspected or confirmed malpractice. Each student must verify that the work is his or her authentic work and constitutes the final version of this work. Once a student has officially submitted the final version of the work to a teacher (or the Diploma Programme coordinator) for assessment it cannot be retracted.

Authenticity may be checked by discussion with the student on the content of the work, and by scrutiny of one or more of the following:

- the student's initial proposal
- the first draft of the written assignment
- the references used (the sources for Language ab initio Written assignment)
- the style of writing compared with work known to be that of the student.

The requirement for supervising teachers and students to authenticate the work applies to the work of all students. If either the student or the supervising teacher is unable to authenticate the work, the student will not be eligible for a mark in that component and no grade will be awarded. For further details refer to the IB publication *Academic honesty* and to the relevant articles in the *General regulations: Diploma Programme*.

External assessment details

Paper 1: Receptive skills

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Weighting: 30%

Paper 1 is externally set and externally assessed. The aim of this text-handling paper is to assess, through a variety of exercises, the student's ability to read and understand a range of authentic texts. These texts may have been adapted. The text booklet consists of four texts, and the question and answer booklet contains up to 40 text-handling exercises.

All three themes are represented (see "Syllabus content"). There is a variety of types of texts at a range of levels, with the penultimate text (text C) being the most difficult. For language ab initio courses with vocabulary lists provided, the texts in paper 1 will contain some vocabulary that does not appear in the language-specific syllabus. Students will not be tested on these words unless their meaning can be derived from the context.

All texts and questions are in the target language and all responses must be written in the target language. Use of dictionaries and reference material is not permitted in the examination.

Text-handling responses are assessed according to the markscheme. The maximum mark for paper 1 is 40.

Text-handling exercises

In order to complete the exercises, students will need to use a range of reading techniques such as skimming, scanning or reading for detail. They will be expected to respond to a variety of text-handling exercises, some of which require a short response, for example:

- true or false exercises
- multiple-choice questions
- short-answer questions
- table-filling exercises
- gap-filling exercises
- matching:
    - words from the text with synonyms, antonyms or definitions
    - summary sentences with different paragraphs of the text
    - two halves of one sentence
    - ideas or sequences with pictures
    - a person with a statement.

Students are also expected to:

- deduce the meaning of words from their context
- understand grammatical structures and functions in context
- be aware of the cohesive devices that give coherence to a text.

Paper 2: Productive skills

Duration: 1 hour

Weighting: 25%

Paper 2 is externally set and externally assessed using the productive skills criteria (see “External assessment criteria”). It is divided into two sections.

- **Section A: Short writing task**—Students answer one question from a choice of two.
- **Section B: Extended writing task**—Students answer one question from a choice of three.

All tasks are related to the twenty prescribed topics from the three themes, as described in “Syllabus content”.

The tasks offered are varied and require students to answer using a specific text type (see table that follows).

All tasks are written in the target language and all responses must be written in the target language. Use of dictionaries and reference material is not permitted in the examination.

Section A: Short writing task (7 marks)

A minimum of 50 words, 60 Mandarin characters or 100 Japanese characters is required.

Section B: Extended writing task (18 marks)

A minimum of 100 words, 120 Mandarin characters or 200 Japanese characters is required.

The exhaustive list below shows which text types can be used by examiners in sections A and B in paper 2. New text types may be added to this list during the lifetime of this syllabus. Teachers will be informed of additional text types in Diploma Programme *Coordinator’s notes*.

Section A	Section B
Advertisement/flyer	Article
Blog	Blog
Email	Brochure
Entry/post on social networking site	Diary
Invitation	Email
List	Entry/post on social networking site
Menu	Essay (where appropriate)
Message/note	Interview
Notice	Letters: formal/ informal
Postcard	Report
Poster	Review

Section A	Section B
	Speech/presentation

Written assignment: Receptive and productive skills

Weighting: 20%

The written assignment is the culmination of independent research that the student has carried out on one of the prescribed topics of the language ab initio course in the final year of the programme. Teachers are encouraged to guide students in selecting an appropriate topic and a suitable title for the assignment, guidance for which can be found in the teacher support material. The aim of the assignment is for students to describe the chosen topic before identifying differences and/or similarities between their own culture(s) and the target culture(s). Lastly, students are required to reflect on these differences and/or similarities by responding to a set of guiding questions. The description, comparison and reflection must be presented in the target language in one continuous piece of word processed work under three separate headings: description, comparison and reflection.

The research process is student driven and guided by teachers. There is no formal amount of time for the research process other than the stipulation that it cannot begin in the first year of the programme. Sources (any text that contributes to the research process and that will enable the student to reflect on the culture(s) studied during the course) may be found by the student or generated by the teacher or a combination of both. Sources from the classroom may be included as part of the research process, as can externally generated sources.

The written assignment is externally assessed and must be the independent work of the student. The written assignment must be **word processed** in the **target language** and carried out in a student's own time with guidance from the teacher as specified in "The role of the teacher" section below. The title of the written assignment and theme from which it comes (individual and society, leisure and work, urban and rural environment) should be the choice of the student with guidance from the teacher.

During the language ab initio course, the student will become familiar with the everyday life and culture(s) of the country (or countries) in which the language is spoken. The student will thus become aware of the similarities and differences between societies and come to better appreciate the complex web of relationships that define and link us.

The student is expected to develop a knowledge and understanding of some aspects of intercultural diversity and similarity. Texts should be used as a means of exploring and reflecting on aspects of both the target language culture(s) and the student's own culture(s).

Objectives

- To develop **intercultural understanding** by reflecting on differences and similarities between cultures
- To describe aspects of the target language culture(s)
- To compare aspects of the target language culture(s) with similar aspects in the student's culture(s)
- To develop language competence.

Requirements

The requirements of the written assignment are as follows:

Length	Sources	Communicative purposes
200–350 words	2–4 sources in the **target** language (additional sources in any language are **optional**)	Description, comparison and reflection

The written assignment should take the form of short written responses set out under three separate headings in the target language: A—description, B—comparison, C—reflection.

- **Section A:** A description of the chosen topic in relation to specific aspects of the target culture(s)
- **Section B:** A comparison of the differences and/or similarities between the chosen topic in the target culture(s) and the student's culture(s)
- **Section C:** A reflection related to the chosen topic

The reflection must include answers to all of the following questions.

- Which aspect of your chosen topic surprised you?
- Why do you think these cultural similarities/differences exist?
- What might a person from the target culture(s) find different about your chosen topic in your culture(s)?

If the word limit is exceeded, the assessment will be based on the first 350 words.

Formal guidelines

- The student must submit:
    - a word processed piece of writing
    - the sources in the **target** language
    - a bibliography in standard format with references to all sources in all languages.
- Quotations can be included but **will not** be part of the overall word count. If used they must be appropriately referenced.
- Unacknowledged quotations will be investigated as potential academic misconduct.

The role of the teacher

It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that:

- the written assignment is completed during the **final** year of the course and submitted before the date stipulated by the IB
- guidance is provided to the student in his or her choice of the topic and the source material
- a copy of the assessment criteria is provided to the student
- a copy of the formal requirements below is provided to the student.

Formal requirements
• The written assignment is word processed in the target language. • All extracts from the source material are appropriately referenced. • The sources in the **target** language are included for submission with the assignment. • A bibliography in standard format is included with references to **all** sources in **all** languages.

External assessment criteria

Overview

Paper 2

Assessment criteria are used to assess paper 2, which is divided into two sections—A and B.

Section A is awarded 7 marks and section B is awarded 18 marks. The combined total is 25 marks.

Section A

There are three assessment criteria.

Criterion A	Language	3 marks
Criterion B	Message	3 marks
Criterion C	Format	1 mark
	Total	**7 marks**

Section B

There are three assessment criteria.

Criterion A	Language	8 marks
Criterion B	Message	8 marks
Criterion C	Format	2 marks
	Total	**18 marks**

Written assignment

Assessment criteria are used to assess the written assignment, which is awarded a total of 20 marks.

There are seven assessment criteria.

Criterion A	Description	2 marks
Criterion B	Comparison	3 marks
Criterion C	Reflection question 1	3 marks
Criterion D	Reflection question 2	3 marks
Criterion E	Reflection question 3	3 marks
Criterion F	Language	4 marks
Criterion G	Formal requirements and register	2 marks
	Total	**20 marks**

Paper 2: Productive skills—Section A

Criterion A: Language

- Does the student demonstrate an ability to use the language effectively and accurately?
- Does the student use spelling, calligraphy (see “Glossary of terms”), vocabulary and grammatical structures correctly and accurately?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Language inaccuracies completely obscure communication.
1	Language inaccuracies often obscure communication.
2	Language is generally accurate and does not obscure communication.
3	Language is mostly accurate and communication is clear.

Criterion B: Message

- Is all the relevant information conveyed?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	No relevant information has been conveyed.
1	Some relevant information has been conveyed.
2	More than half of the relevant information has been conveyed.
3	All relevant information has been conveyed effectively.

Criterion C: Format

- Does the format correspond to the task?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The format is not appropriate.
1	The format is appropriate.

Paper 2: Productive skills—Section B

Criterion A: Language

To what extent does the student demonstrate an ability to use the language effectively and accurately?

- Does the student use a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures?
- Does the student show an awareness of the appropriate register for the task?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The response does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.

Marks	Level descriptor
1–2	**The response and communication are of limited effectiveness.** The range of vocabulary used is limited. Some basic grammatical structures are used accurately. These are isolated and limited in range. Register is inappropriate.
3–4	**The response and communication are partially effective.** The range of vocabulary used is sometimes varied. Most basic grammatical structures are used accurately. Register is partially appropriate.
5–6	**The response is generally accurate and communication is generally effective.** The range of vocabulary used is varied. Basic grammatical structures and a limited range of more complex grammatical structures are used accurately. Register is generally appropriate.
7–8	**The response is accurate and communication is effective.** The range of vocabulary used is varied and effective. Basic and some more complex grammatical structures are used accurately. Register is appropriate.

Criterion B: Message

To what extent does the student fulfill the task?

- Are the ideas well developed?
- Is there evidence of a logical structure (paragraphing and sequencing)?
- Are cohesive devices used effectively?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The response does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.

Marks	Level descriptor
1–2	**The task has been partially fulfilled.** One or more ideas have been identified and have been partially developed. There is limited evidence of a logical structure. There is a partially successful use of a limited range of simple cohesive devices.
3–4	**The task has been generally fulfilled.** One or more ideas have been identified and have been developed. There is evidence of a logical structure. There is a generally successful use of a range of simple cohesive devices.
5–6	**The task has been fulfilled.** All ideas have been identified and some have been developed well. There is a logical structure. There is successful use of a range of simple cohesive devices.
7–8	**The task has been fulfilled effectively.** All ideas have been developed well. There is an effective, logical structure. There is successful use of a range of simple and some complex cohesive devices.

Criterion C: Format

To what extent does the student succeed in using the correct text type?

- Does the student use the appropriate format?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The format is not appropriate.
1	The format is partially appropriate.
2	The format is appropriate.

Written assignment: Receptive and productive skills

Criterion A: Description

- To what extent does the student succeed in stating relevant factual information about the target culture(s)?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	At least two pieces of relevant factual information about the target culture(s) is used in the description.
2	More than two pieces of relevant factual information about the target culture(s) is used in the description.

Criterion B: Comparison

- To what extent does the student succeed in presenting one or more cultural differences and/or one or more similarities between the chosen cultural topic in the target culture(s) and in the student's own?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Cultural differences and/or similarities are rarely presented in a clear and coherent manner.
2	Cultural differences and/or similarities are sometimes presented in a clear and coherent manner.
3	Cultural differences and/or similarities are consistently presented in a clear and coherent manner.

Criterion C: Reflection—question 1

The reflection must include an answer to the following question: Which aspect of your chosen topic surprised you?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below **or** the work does not relate to the target language country.
1	A relevant aspect of the chosen topic has been identified but not developed.
2	A relevant aspect of the chosen topic has been identified and partially developed in answer to the question.
3	A relevant aspect of the chosen topic has been identified and fully developed in answer to the question.

Criterion D: Reflection—question 2

The reflection must include an answer to the following question: Why do you think these cultural similarities/differences exist?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	At least one reason why these cultural differences and similarities exist has been identified but not explained.
2	At least one reason why these cultural differences and similarities exist has been identified and partially explained.
3	At least one reason why these cultural differences and similarities exist has been identified and fully explained.

Criterion E: Reflection—question 3

The reflection must include an answer to the following question: What might a person from the target culture(s) find different about your chosen topic in your culture(s)?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below **or** the answer is not from the perspective of a person from the target language country.
1	At least one difference has been identified but not developed.
2	At least one difference has been identified and partially developed in answer to the question.
3	At least one difference has been identified and fully developed in answer to the question.

Criterion F: Language

If the word limit is exceeded, the assessment will be based on the first 350 words.

- To what extent does the student demonstrate an ability to use the language clearly?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	Language clarity often obscures communication.
2	Language clarity sometimes obscures communication.
3	Language is generally clear and does not obscure communication.
4	Language is mostly clear and communication is clear.

Criterion G: Formal requirements and register

The formal requirements of the written assignment are as follows.

1. The written assignment is word processed in the target language.
2. The sources in the **target** language are included for submission with the assignment.
3. A bibliography in standard format is included with references to **all** sources in **all** languages.

- Does the student fulfill all formal requirements of the written assignment?
- Does the student show an awareness of the appropriate register for the task?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The written assignment does not meet all formal requirements and the register is inappropriate to the task.
1	The written assignment either meets all formal requirements **or** uses register appropriate to the task.
2	The written assignment both meets all formal requirements **and** uses register appropriate to the task.

Internal assessment

Purpose of internal assessment

Internal assessment (the individual oral) is an integral part of the course and is compulsory for all students. It enables students to demonstrate orally the application of their skills and knowledge.

In language ab initio students are required to participate in an individual oral. The individual oral is divided into three parts and lasts 10 minutes, plus 15 minutes of preparation. The individual oral carries an overall weighting of 25% and must be recorded.

Part 1: The student's presentation of the visual stimulus (approximately 1–2 minutes)

Part 2: The teacher's questions on the visual stimulus (approximately 2–3 minutes)

Part 3: A general conversation (approximately 4–5 minutes)

All three parts of the individual oral are conducted in the target language.

Guidance and authenticity

Students are allowed to take working notes into the interview room for reference. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that students are familiar with:

- the requirements of the individual oral
- the assessment criteria.

For the individual oral, it is essential that students do not have prior knowledge of the visual stimulus to be presented. The presentation in part 1 must be the work of the student and it may not be written out in full and read aloud. Authenticity may be checked by scrutiny of the notes (if any) used by the student. Students are not allowed access to a dictionary.

The requirement for teachers and students to sign the internal assessment record form for the individual oral applies to the work of all students, not just the recording that will be submitted to an examiner for the purpose of moderation. If the teacher and student sign the form, but there is a comment to the effect that the work may not be authentic, the student will not be eligible for a mark in that component and no grade will be awarded. For further details refer to the IB publication *Academic honesty* and the relevant articles in the *General regulations: Diploma Programme*.

Using assessment criteria for internal assessment

For internal assessment, a number of assessment criteria have been identified. Each assessment criterion has level descriptors describing specific achievement levels, together with an appropriate range of marks. The level descriptors concentrate on positive achievement, although for the lower levels failure to achieve may be included in the description.

Teachers must judge the internally assessed work against the criteria using the level descriptors.

- The aim is to find, for each criterion, the descriptor that conveys most accurately the level attained by the student, using the best-fit model. A best-fit approach means that compensation should be made when a piece of work matches different aspects of a criterion at different levels. The mark awarded should be one that most fairly reflects the balance of achievement against the criterion. It is not necessary for every single aspect of a level descriptor to be met for that mark to be awarded.
- When assessing a student's work, teachers should read the level descriptors for each criterion until they reach a descriptor that most appropriately describes the level of the work being assessed. If a piece of work seems to fall between two descriptors, both descriptors should be read again and the one that more appropriately describes the student's work should be chosen.
- Where there are two or more marks available within a level, teachers should award the upper marks if the student's work demonstrates the qualities described to a great extent. Teachers should award the lower marks if the student's work demonstrates the qualities described to a lesser extent.
- Only whole numbers should be recorded; partial marks, that is fractions and decimals, are not acceptable.
- Teachers should not think in terms of a pass or fail boundary, but should concentrate on identifying the appropriate descriptor for each assessment criterion.
- The highest level descriptors do not imply faultless performance but should be achievable by a student. Teachers should not hesitate to use the extremes if they are appropriate descriptions of the work being assessed.
- A student who attains a high achievement level in relation to one criterion will not necessarily attain high achievement levels, in relation to the other criteria. Similarly, a student who attains a low achievement level for one criterion will not necessarily attain low achievement levels for the other criteria. Teachers should not assume that the overall assessment of the students will produce any particular distribution of marks.
- It is recommended that the assessment criteria be made available to students.

Internal assessment details

Individual oral: Interactive skills

Duration: 10 minutes (plus 15 minutes of preparation)

Weighting: 25%

The language ab initio internal assessment consists of a compulsory, recorded oral examination that assesses interactive skills. The individual oral is a summative assessment conducted between the teacher and student in the school by the date provided by the IB in the final year of the course. In order to better prepare students for this assessment, it is strongly advised that teachers carry out a formative assessment prior to the summative assessment on a previously unseen visual stimulus.

The internal assessment score in language ab initio consists of the mark awarded for the individual oral. This is a compulsory, recorded activity worth 25% of the overall mark for assessment.

Note: The IB reserves the right to change the method by which recordings can be conducted during the lifetime of the course.

The individual oral is assessed using the internal assessment criteria.

The oral comprises three distinct parts.

Supervised preparation time	The student receives two previously unseen stimuli and selects one for the presentation. Working notes can be made at this stage.	15 minutes
Part 1: Presentation	Presentation of a visual stimulus by the student.	(approximately) 1–2 minutes
Part 2: Questions	Follow-up questions on the visual stimulus.	(approximately) 2–3 minutes
Part 3: Conversation	At least two questions on the written assignment followed by general conversation on a broad range of topics.	(approximately) 4–5 minutes

Part 1

The student's presentation of the visual stimulus (approximately 1–2 minutes).

At the beginning of the 15-minute preparation period, the student should be shown two **previously unseen** visual stimuli. These should be from different topic areas within the three themes and represent different genres (for example, picture, photograph, cartoon) provided by the teacher. They should also be relevant to the culture(s) of the country (or countries) where the language is spoken.

An effective visual stimulus should:

- allow the student to describe a scene or situation objectively
- allow the student to narrate a story
- allow the student to offer a personal interpretation of that scene or situation
- enable the teacher to lead the student into a wider conversation
- be relevant to the age range of the students

- be relevant to the topics prescribed in the syllabus
- be culturally relevant to the language studied.

The student chooses one stimulus and prepares a presentation on that stimulus. The 15-minute preparation time should take place immediately prior to the recorded interview. Dictionaries or other reference material are not permitted. The student is allowed to take brief working notes into the interview room for reference. These notes should be used for reference only and should not be read aloud. The student should begin the individual oral by giving a presentation based on the visual stimulus, lasting 1–2 minutes. Once the interview has begun, the recording should not be interrupted or stopped. Teachers are advised to prepare stimuli according to the table below.

Number of students	Number of visual stimuli required
1	2
2	3
3	4
4	5
5–10	6
11–15	7
16–20	8
21–25	9
26–30	10

Part 2

The teacher's questions on the visual stimulus (approximately 2–3 minutes).

The teacher should then engage the student in conversation arising from the visual stimulus. This conversation should not be limited to a simple question and answer format. Questions asked by the teacher should:

- encourage the student to describe and comment on the visual stimulus
- encourage the student to comment further on the visual stimulus
- provoke discussion on the same topic area as the stimulus.

Part 3

A general conversation (approximately 4–5 minutes).

This should begin with at least **two questions on the written assignment** and move on to a discussion on a broad range of topics (at least two topics) from the prescribed list in the language ab initio syllabus content. The topics selected for discussion should be different from that of the visual stimulus and the written assignment.

These questions should be open and are intended to give the student an opportunity to talk about the written assignment as openly as possible. The following list is not exhaustive and any two may be used by the teacher in this part of the individual oral.

- What is your written assignment about?
- Why did you choose this as your written assignment?
- What did you learn from the written assignment?

The teacher should then tell the student that the assessment is moving towards a more general conversation by using, for example, one of the following statements.

- Let's now talk about other things.
- We'll now talk more generally.
- I'd like to ask you some questions about other things.

Note: The individual oral must not be rehearsed.

Conduct of the individual oral

- The individual oral must be scheduled during the final year of the course.
- Students should be given adequate notice of when the individual oral is to take place. The individual oral may take place in or out of the classroom.
- Recordings of the individual oral will be required for external moderation. Care should be taken to ensure that high quality recordings are sent for moderation.
- Under no circumstances should the recording be stopped, interrupted or enhanced.
- Procedures for the recording and sending of samples for moderation are provided each year in the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*.
- It is essential that the teacher obtains details of the procedures from their Diploma Programme coordinator.
- The individual oral should last 10 minutes. The timings given for each part of the individual oral are approximate since they will depend on the flow of the conversation. The teacher is best placed to decide the appropriate moment to engage in the general conversation. However, it is imperative that the conversation does take place.
- The teacher is encouraged to interact with the student but should avoid dominating the oral.

The teacher's role in conducting and assessing the individual oral

- The teacher must be aware that the purpose of the individual oral is to assess the student's ability to produce, receive and interact with the spoken language.
- It is important that the teacher has a thorough knowledge of the assessment criteria.
- The type of questions asked should be adapted to the student's ability.
- The teacher should allow sufficient time for the student to respond to questions.
- If a student fails to answer, it is acceptable for the teacher to repeat and/or rephrase the question.

- The teacher should avoid correcting the student.

Internal assessment criteria

Overview

Individual oral

Assessment criteria are used to assess the individual oral, which is awarded a total of 25 marks.

There are two assessment criteria.

Criterion A	Productive skills	10 marks
Criterion B	Interactive and receptive skills	15 marks
	Total	**25 marks**

The internally assessed component contributes 25% of the assessment total.

Individual oral: Interactive skills

Criterion A: Productive skills

To what extent does the student demonstrate an ability to use the language effectively and accurately?

- Do the student's pronunciation and intonation facilitate the understanding of the message?
- Does the student's use of vocabulary facilitate the understanding of the message?
- Does the student's use of grammar facilitate the understanding of the message?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Communication does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	**The response and communication are of limited effectiveness.** Pronunciation and intonation used limit the understanding of the message. The range of vocabulary used is limited. Some basic grammatical structures are used accurately. These are isolated and limited in range.
3–4	**The response and communication are partially effective.** Pronunciation and intonation used generally limit the understanding of the message. The range of vocabulary used is sometimes varied. Most basic grammatical structures are used accurately.

Marks	Level descriptor
5–6	**The response is generally accurate and communication is generally effective.** Pronunciation and intonation used generally facilitate the understanding of the message. The range of vocabulary used is varied. Basic and a limited range of more complex grammatical structures are used accurately.
7–8	**The response is accurate and communication is effective.** Pronunciation and intonation used almost always facilitate the understanding of the message. Vocabulary is varied and effective. Basic and some more complex grammatical structures are used accurately.
9–10	**The response is accurate and communication is very effective.** Pronunciation and intonation used always facilitate the understanding of the message. Vocabulary is varied and effective. Basic and more complex grammatical structures are used accurately.

Criterion B: Interactive and receptive skills

To what extent does the student understand and demonstrate an ability to interact and develop answers throughout the oral?

- Is the student able to understand straightforward exchanges?
- Is the student able to answer appropriately?
- Is the student able to maintain a conversation?

Marks	Level descriptor
0	Comprehension and interaction do not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.

Marks	Level descriptor
1–3	**Comprehension and interaction are limited.** Limited responses in the target language are produced and rarely demonstrate comprehension. Limited appropriate information is provided. Participation is limited: most questions must be repeated and/or rephrased.
4–6	**Comprehension and interaction are partially sustained.** Responses in the target language are produced and occasionally demonstrate comprehension. Appropriate information is occasionally provided. Participation is partially sustained: some questions must be repeated and/or rephrased.
7–9	**Comprehension and interaction are generally sustained.** Responses in the target language are produced and generally demonstrate comprehension. Appropriate information is generally provided. Participation is generally sustained.
10–12	**Comprehension and interaction are mostly sustained.** Responses in the target language are produced and most demonstrate comprehension. Appropriate information is provided. Participation is sustained.
13–15	**Comprehension and interaction are consistently sustained.** Responses in the target language are produced and demonstrate comprehension. Appropriate and detailed information is provided. Participation is sustained with some independent contributions.

Glossary of terms

Terms with definitions

Students should be familiar with the following key terms and phrases used in the context of the language ab initio course, which are to be understood as described below.

Bibliography
For the purposes of the written assignment, a bibliography is a list of the sources in all languages that are used or consulted in the preparation of the task or that are referred to in the text.

Calligraphy
The manner in which the student writes characters in non-Roman script languages.

Cohesive devices
Refers to the grammatical and/or lexical items that give coherence to the text (for example, however, on the other hand, therefore).

Comparison
For the purposes of the written assignment, a comparison is an assessment of cultural differences and/or similarities between the chosen topic in the target culture(s) and the student's own culture(s).

Description
For the purposes of the written assignment, description is factual information about the chosen cultural topic.

Intercultural understanding
The ability to demonstrate an understanding of cultural diversity and/or similarity between the target culture(s) and the student's own.

Reflection
For the purposes of the written assignment, reflection is an expression of personal input about the chosen topic guided by the set questions provided in the external assessment details.

Reference material
Any material containing verb tables, vocabulary lists and/or grammatical explanations.

Source
Any text used for research purposes for the completion of the written assignment.

Text type
The format that the student is expected to use in order to respond to the tasks in paper 2.

Bibliography

This bibliography lists the principal works used to inform the curriculum review. It is not an exhaustive list and does not include all the literature available: judicious selection was made in order to better advise and guide teachers. This bibliography is not a list of recommended textbooks.

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