



**SCHOOL OF THE NATIONS**  
聯合國學校

# 2023-2025 COURSE OUTLINE

**International Baccalaureate  
Mandarin ab initio  
Form 5 and Form 6**

The School of the Nations course outline provides parents and students with information about the overall structure of the courses of study, the assessments and expectations.

## 1. Course Overview

Language acquisition Language acquisition 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. Owing to the nature of language study in the latter, there are specific aims for classical literature that can be found in the Classical languages guide. 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 allows the learner to go beyond the confines of the classroom, expanding their awareness of the world and fostering respect for cultural diversity. 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 the "Syllabus content" section). The classical languages course focuses on the study of the language, literature and culture of the classical world.

Language ab initio is a language acquisition course designed for students with no prior experience of the target language, or for those students with very limited previous exposure. It should be noted that language ab initio is offered at SL only. Because of the inherent difficulty of defining what constitutes "very limited exposure" to a language, it is not possible to list specific conditions such as the number of hours or the nature of previous language instruction; however, it is important to note that any student who is already able to understand and respond to spoken and written language on a range of common topics is not to be placed in language ab initio as this would not provide an appropriate academic challenge, nor is it fair for those students who are genuine beginners of the language. In order to ensure that the range of language and structures covered in language ab initio classes is manageable for all students, and so that they marry closely with the format and contents of final assessments, language-specific syllabuses have been provided and are available on the programme resource centre. At the language ab initio level; a student develops receptive, productive and interactive communicative skills. Students learn to communicate in the target language in familiar and unfamiliar contexts. Receptive: Students understand, both aurally and in writing, simple sentences and some more complex sentences relating to the five prescribed themes and related topics. They understand simple authentic and adapted written and audio texts and related questions in the target language. Productive: Students express information fairly accurately, in both writing and in speech, using a range of basic vocabulary and grammatical structures. They communicate orally and respond appropriately to most questions on the five prescribed themes and related topics. Interactive: Students understand and respond clearly to some information and ideas within the range of the five prescribed themes and related topics. They engage in simple conversations. They use strategies to negotiate meaning and foster communication.

## 2. Course Aims

### Language acquisition aims

The following aims are common to both language ab initio and language B

- Develop international-mindedness through the study of language, cultures, and ideas and issues of global significance.
- Enable students to communicate in the language they have studied in a range of context and for a variety of purposes.
- Encourage, through the study of texts and through social interaction, an awareness and appreciation of a variety of perspectives of people from diverse cultures.
- Develop students' understanding of the relationship between the languages and the cultures with which they are familiar.

- Develop students' awareness of the importance of language in relation to other areas of knowledge.
- Provide students, through language learning and the process of inquiry, with opportunities for intellectual engagement and the development of critical-and creative-thinking skills.
- Provide students with a basis for further study, work and leisure through the use of an additional language.
- Foster curiosity, creativity and a lifelong enjoyment of language learning.

### **Assessment objectives**

The following assessment objectives are common to both language ab initio and language B. The level of difficulty of the assessments, and the expectations of student performance on the tasks, are what distinguishes the three modern language acquisition courses.

- Communicate clearly and effectively in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes.
- Understands and use language appropriate to a range of interpersonal and/or intercultural contexts and audiences.
- Understand and use language to express and respond to a range of ideas with fluency and accuracy.
- Identify, organize and present ideas on a range of topics.
- Understand, analyse and reflect upon a range of written, audio, visual and audio-visual texts.

## **3. Core Components**

### **3.1 Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS)**

Creativity, activity, service (CAS) experiences can be associated with each of the subject groups of the DP.

CAS and language acquisition can complement each other in a variety of ways. Students can enhance intercultural understanding through the active and purposeful use of their acquired language within the specific real-life contexts provided by their CAS experiences. Students may also draw on their CAS experiences to enrich their involvement in language acquisition both within and outside the classroom.

An important characteristic of the language acquisition courses is the conceptual understandings that students develop. Through the five prescribed themes around which the language acquisition courses are centred, students might be able to investigate, plan, act and reflect on CAS experiences and projects in a more informed and meaningful way. Similarly, CAS experiences can ignite students' passion for addressing particular personal, local, national and global issues.

Language acquisition teachers can assist students in making links between their subjects and their CAS experiences, where appropriate. This will provide students with relevance in both their subject learning and their CAS learning through purposeful discussion and real experiences.

The challenge and enjoyment of CAS can often have a profound effect on language acquisition students, who might choose, for example, to engage with CAS in the following ways.

- As a CAS experience, a student can extend engagement with the language acquisition theme of "sharing the planet" (for example, environment) by conducting a separate activity in learning the names of organic and human-made materials in the target language. The student could then walk around the school to collect human-made waste (for example, plastic) that is discarded during one day, and then display it.

- In a series of CAS experiences relating to the language acquisition theme of "social organization" (for example, social relationships, community, social engagement), a student interacts with elderly target-language speakers, over a number of visits, to collect sayings, idioms or adages used by the older generations. These could then be shared in an article on the school or programme blog.
- Students can develop a CAS project linked to the language acquisition theme of "experiences" (for example, migration) in which they engage with members of a local refugee population. The students could collaborate in an investigation of how migrants balance negotiating a new culture with maintaining their cultural heritage. An outcome of this interaction could be the creation of a mural representing the cultural balance.

It is important to note that a CAS experience can be a single event or may be an extended series of events. However, CAS experiences must be distinct from, and may not be included or used in, the student's diploma course requirements.

Additional suggestions on the links between DP subjects and CAs can be found in the Creativity, activity, service teacher support material.

### 3.2 Theory of Knowledge (TOK)

Theory of knowledge (TOK) is one of the three core elements of the Diploma Programme (DP). It plays a special role in the programme by providing an opportunity for students to reflect on the fundamental question of how they know what they know. It aims to help students become more aware of their own perspective, as well as developing an awareness of multiple perspectives. More information on TOK can be found in the Theory of knowledge guide. Language is itself one of the specific ways of knowing that is identified in the TOK course. In addition to this explicit exploration of language, the skills and wider conceptual understandings that students develop in TOK can make an extremely positive contribution to their study of language acquisition. TOK develops higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis and evaluation, and also helps students to make connections and comparisons across their subject areas and the DP core. In this way, language acquisition both supports and is supported by TOK. As well as using the skills developed in TOK in acquiring an additional language, students will also benefit from guiding questions that can connect TOK to the five themes of the language ab initio curriculum. The following discussion questions are examples and are not meant to be either prescriptive or exhaustive.

- Is it possible to think without language?
- What would be lost if the whole world shared one common language?
- If people speak more than one language, is what they know different in each language?
- Do you think maths, logic or music should be classified as languages?
- In what ways can language be used to influence, persuade or manipulate people?
- Does language describe our experience of the world, or does it actively shape our experience of the world?
- How are metaphors used in the construction of knowledge?
- To what extent is our perspective determined by our membership of a particular culture?
- To what extent are we aware of the impact of culture on what we believe or know?
- Is there anything that is true for all cultures?

### 3.3 The Extended Essay (EE)

Although writing an extended essay (EE) provides students with an excellent opportunity to explore an aspect of one of their DP courses in greater depth, language ab initio students cannot elect to write an EE for the ab initio language being studied.

## 4. Course Content

Language learning process. As appropriate to the level of the course, communication skills are reinforced through the other categories of approaches to learning skills: thinking, research, social and self-management skills. The recommended teaching time is 240 hours to complete HL courses and 150 hours to complete SL courses, as stated in the document General regulations: Diploma Programme (2016: 6, article 8.2).

## 5. IB Approaches to Teaching and Learning

Approaches to teaching and learning are deliberate strategies, skills and attitudes that permeate the IB teaching and learning environment.

**The approaches to *teaching* are:**

- focused on conceptual understanding
- developed in local and global contexts
- focused on effective teamwork and collaboration
- differentiated to meet the needs of all learners
- informed by formative and summative assessment

**The approaches to *learning* are:**

- Thinking skills
- Communications skills
- Social skills
- Self-management skills
- Research skills

## 6. IB Learner Profile

The aim of the IB programme 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.

IB learners strive to be:

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| • Inquirers     | • Open-minded |
| • Knowledgeable | • Caring      |
| • Thinkers      | • Risk-Takers |
| • Communicators | • Balanced    |
| • Principled    | • Reflective  |

The IB Learner Profile closely reflects the SON Learner Profile, identifying elements of identity which prepares world citizens who will become active, positive and conscientious participants in the advancement of society and in their own development. Each element is composed of a set of attitudes, qualities, understandings, skill and habits. These are incorporated in the teaching and learning process. The details of the SON Learner Profile can be found in the [Student and Parent Handbook](#).

## 7. Grading

### 7.1 School Internal Grades

#### 7.1.1 Academic Achievement

The School's grading system for the IB Diploma Programme follows the IBO scale of 1 to 7. A student's performance in individual subjects is graded as follows:

Grade	Interpretation
7	Excellent
6	Very Good
5	Good
4	Satisfactory
3	Basic Standard
2	Poor
1	Very Poor

Note: Because of School's internal requirements such as attendance, timeliness and accuracy of homework, special projects, or performance on formative and summative tests in the classroom, students' performance may vary between School assigned grades and IB assessments.

### 7.1.2 Effort

Effort marks are given and recorded in the report cards for Forms 5 and 6 for all subjects.

Grade	Descriptor
5	Consistently demonstrating a high degree of effort in all areas of the subject
4	Frequently demonstrating a high degree of effort in all areas of the subject
3	Generally demonstrating a significant degree of effort in all areas of the subject
2	Occasionally demonstrating effort in some areas of the subject
1	Rarely, if ever, demonstrating effort in some areas of the subject

### 7.1.3 Project Week (Form 5 only)

The mid-year assessment is comprised of a full week of collaborative project-based learning. During the project week students develop various cross curricular soft skills. Assessment and reporting of learning is based on the following rubric.

Project Week Assessment Rubric						
Collaboration 合作	She/he demonstrates effective collaboration skills by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>actively contributing to the group’s processes of planning, decision making and action</li><li>being sensitive and respectful towards others and as well as responsive to their needs</li><li>actively listening to others’ points of view and considering others’ perspective willingly</li><li>fully supporting and whole-heartedly applying the decisions of the group</li><li>completing assigned tasks effectively and using feedback from others to improve work</li><li>supporting others to achieve their goal</li></ul> 她/他通過以下方式展示有效的合作技能： <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>積極參與團隊的計劃、決策和行動流程</li><li>對他人善解人意和尊重，並回應他們的需求</li><li>積極傾聽他人的觀點，樂意地考慮他人的觀點</li><li>完全支持並全心全意地應用團隊的決定</li><li>有效完成分配的任務並利用他人的反饋改善工作成果</li><li>支持他人實現目標</li></ul>	1	2	3	4	5
		Emerging 萌芽		Achieving 實現中		Excelling 優秀

<b>Organisation 組織</b>	<p>She/he demonstrates effective organisation skills by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• having a clear goal and a thought-through plan of how to achieve it</li> <li>• being methodical and systematic in approach</li> <li>• following through with assigned tasks in a timely manner</li> <li>• monitoring progress and addressing challenges</li> <li>• staying focused on tasks and remaining positive despite challenges</li> </ul> <p>她/他通過以下方式展示有效的組織技能：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 有一個明確的目標，並對如何實現目標有一個深思熟慮的計劃</li> <li>• 方法有條理和系統化</li> <li>• 及時完成分配的任務</li> <li>• 監測進展並應對挑戰</li> <li>• 專注於任務並在面臨挑戰時保持積極的態度</li> </ul>			
<b>Research and Critical Thinking 研究及批判性 思維</b>	<p>She/he demonstrates critical thinking skills by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• striving to independently investigate and understand issues</li> <li>• actively seeking answers to questions</li> <li>• investigating the purpose, evidencing research and producing reasoning</li> <li>• being open-minded and fair-minded when considering new ideas and perspectives</li> <li>• making connections by looking for links between ideas and concepts</li> <li>• seeking out reliable and accurate information through independent research</li> </ul> <p>她/他通過以下方式展示批判性思維技能：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 努力獨立調查和理解問題</li> <li>• 積極尋求問題的答案</li> <li>• 調查目的、證明研究和推理</li> <li>• 在考慮新想法和觀點時保持開放和公正的態度</li> <li>• 通過尋找想法和概念之間的聯繫來建立連結</li> <li>• 通過獨立研究尋找可靠和準確的信息</li> </ul>			
<b>Presentation 報告及展示</b>	<p>She/he demonstrates effective presentation skills by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring the group's presentation/project uses relevant, well-chosen descriptions/facts/details</li> <li>• ensuring the group's presentation/project includes all the required elements</li> <li>• ensuring the presentation/project is well structured and coherent</li> <li>• ensuring the presentation stays within the allocated frame</li> <li>• keeping eye contact with the audience (most of the time)</li> <li>• using a clear voice with appropriate tone and volume</li> <li>• using appropriate language, demonstrating command of formal English</li> <li>• responding to questions from the audience</li> </ul> <p>她/他通過以下方式展示有效的報告技能：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 確保小組的展示文稿/項目使用相關的、精心挑選的描述/事實/細節</li> <li>• 確保小組的展示/項目包括所有必需的元素</li> <li>• 確保展示/項目結構良好且連貫一致</li> <li>• 確保展示文稿保持在分配的框架內</li> <li>• 與觀眾保持目光接觸（大部分時間）</li> <li>• 使用清晰的聲音和適當的語氣和音量</li> <li>• 使用適當的語言，表現出對正式英語的掌握</li> <li>• 回答觀眾的問題</li> </ul>			
<b>Reflection 學生反思</b>	<p>She/he demonstrates effective reflection skills by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effectively analysing experiences to identify those which have led to growth/learning</li> <li>• accurately identifying areas of strength and weakness</li> <li>• generating creative solutions to problems/ways to improve in the future</li> <li>• demonstrating the ability actively and effectively reflect with her/his team members</li> </ul> <p>她/他通過以下方式展示有效的學生反思技能：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 有效地分析經驗以確定那些經驗導致成長/學習</li> <li>• 準確識別優勢和劣勢領域</li> <li>• 為問題提出創造性的解決方案/未來改善的方法</li> <li>• 展示積極有效地與團隊成員進行反思的能力</li> </ul>			

## 7.2 IB Subject Grade Descriptors

The following outlines the IBDP Mandarin ab initio grade descriptors:

Grade	Descriptor
7	Receptive skills: students respond clearly and effectively to all basic and most complex information and ideas. Interactive skills: students respond accurately, communicate effectively and demonstrate comprehension; pronunciation and intonation always facilitate the understanding of the message; students sustain participation and make good independent contributions. The message is always clear. Productive skills: students develop ideas well using an effective, logical structure; they successfully use a range of simple and some complex cohesive devices; they use both basic and complex grammatical structures accurately. However, they may make occasional errors in complex structures; they use varied and effective vocabulary and appropriate register; they demonstrate clear evidence of intercultural understanding where required.
6	Receptive skills: students respond clearly to all basic and most complex information and ideas. Interactive skills: students respond mostly accurately, communicate almost always effectively and demonstrate comprehension; pronunciation and intonation almost always facilitate the understanding of the message; students almost always sustain participation and make independent contributions. The message is usually clear. Productive skills: students develop ideas well using a logical structure; they successfully use a range of basic and some complex cohesive devices; they use both basic and complex grammatical structures accurately. However, they may make several errors in complex structures; they use varied vocabulary and appropriate register; they almost always demonstrate clear evidence of intercultural understanding where required.
5	Receptive skills: students generally respond clearly to basic and some complex information and ideas. Interactive skills: students respond accurately and generally demonstrate comprehension; pronunciation and intonation often facilitate the understanding of the message; students generally sustain participation and make some independent contributions. The message is often clear. Productive skills: students develop some ideas using a logical structure; they often use a range of basic and some complex cohesive devices; they use basic grammatical structures accurately. However, complex structures are rarely accurate; they use a range of basic vocabulary and appropriate register; they often demonstrate evidence of intercultural understanding where required.
4	Receptive skills: students respond clearly to most basic information and ideas. Interactive skills: students respond accurately and demonstrate comprehension in simple exchanges; pronunciation and intonation usually facilitate the understanding of the message; students sustain participation in simple exchanges. The message is usually clear. Productive skills: students develop basic ideas using a logical structure; they use a range of simple cohesive devices successfully; they use most basic grammatical structures accurately; they use basic vocabulary and appropriate register successfully; they usually demonstrate evidence of intercultural understanding where required.
3	Receptive skills: students sometimes respond clearly to basic information. Interactive skills: students sometimes respond accurately and sometimes demonstrate comprehension in simple exchanges; pronunciation and intonation sometimes facilitate the understanding of the message; students sometimes sustain participation in simple exchanges. The message is sometimes clear. Productive



	skills: students sometimes develop basic ideas; they sometimes use simple cohesive devices successfully; they sometimes use basic grammatical structures accurately; they sometimes use basic vocabulary and appropriate register successfully; they sometimes demonstrate evidence of intercultural understanding where required.
2	Receptive skills: students rarely respond clearly to basic information. Interactive skills: students rarely respond accurately or demonstrate comprehension; pronunciation and intonation rarely facilitate the understanding of the message; students rarely sustain participation in simple exchanges. The message is rarely clear. Productive skills: students rarely develop basic ideas; they rarely use simple cohesive devices; they rarely use basic grammatical structures accurately; they rarely use basic vocabulary or appropriate register successfully; they rarely demonstrate evidence of intercultural understanding where required.
1	Receptive skills: students very rarely respond clearly to basic information. Interactive skills: students very rarely respond accurately or demonstrate comprehension; pronunciation and intonation very rarely facilitate the understanding of the message; students very rarely sustain participation in simple exchanges. The message is very rarely clear. Productive skills: students very rarely develop ideas; they very rarely use simple cohesive devices; they very rarely use basic grammatical structures accurately; they very rarely use basic vocabulary or appropriate register successfully; they very rarely demonstrate evidence of intercultural understanding where required.

## 8. Assessments

### 8.1 Assessment Objectives

The following assessment objectives are common to both language ab initio and language B. The level of difficulty of the assessments, and the expectations of student performance on the tasks, are what distinguishes the three modern language acquisition courses.

1. Communicate clearly and effectively in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes.
2. Understand and use language appropriate to a range of interpersonal and/or intercultural contexts and audiences.
3. Understand and use language to express and respond to a range of ideas with fluency and accuracy.
4. Identify, organize and present ideas on a range of topics.
5. Understand, analyse and reflect upon a range of written, audio, visual and audio-Visual texts.

### 8.2 School-based Assessments

School-based assessments are ongoing and are intended to measure student learning and provide constructive feedback. These assessments include a variety of formative and summative assessments. Forms of assessment vary and may include but are not limited to assessment tools such as quizzes, topic tests, graphic organizers, reports, essays, group projects and observational evidence during lessons.

#### 8.2.1 Weightages

The following represents the percentage weight for each academic year:

	Term 1	Term 2	Mid-Year Assessment	Term 3	Final Exam
<b>Form 5</b>	28%	28%	Project Week See passing criteria	28%	16%

<b>Form 6</b>	30%	30%	Mid-Year Exam 15%	N/A	25%
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### 8.2.2 Passing Criteria

F5 Students whose total score is 23 points or above in the six IB Subject Groups will be promoted to the next level, along with:

- satisfactory completion of the Extended Essay requirements for DP year 1
- a final mark of a C or higher in Theory of Knowledge for year 1
- satisfactory completion of CAS (Creativity, Action & Service) activities for year 1
- a total of 12 HL points for students who are on the full diploma track
- no grade 2 or lower in any Higher Level (HL) subject
- the grade for project week is a 3 (out of 5) or higher

To graduate from Secondary at the end of F6, students must gain 23 points or above in the six IB Subject Groups, along with:

- completion of the Extended Essay
- a final mark of a C or higher in Theory of Knowledge
- completion of CAS (Creativity, Action and Service) activities
- a total of 12 HL points for students who are on the full diploma track
- no grade 2 or lower in any Higher Level (HL) subject

Should a student's academic performance falls below standard, the School reserves the rights of not registering a student for the full diploma track.

## 8.3 Official IBDP Assessments

### 8.3.1 Internal Assessment

DP assessment procedures measure the extent to which students have mastered advanced academic skills such as analyzing and presenting information, evaluating and constructing arguments, solving problems creatively as well as basic skills such as retaining knowledge, understanding key concepts applying standard methods.

#### Internal Assessments

Internal assessment is an integral part of the course and is compulsory for students. It enables students to demonstrate the application of their skills and knowledge, and to pursue their personal interests, without other constraints that are associated with written examinations.

#### Internal Assessment Criteria

Language	Message-visual stimulus	Message-conversation	Interactive skills-communication	Total
12 (40%)	6 (20%)	6 (20%)	6 (20%)	30 (100%)

### 8.3.2 External Assessment Components

#### Standard Level

Component	Overall weighting (%)	Duration (hours)
Paper 1	25	1
Paper 2	50	1 ¾
Internal assessment	25	½

### **8.3.3 External Assessment Details**

#### **Paper 1-Productive skills: writing**

**Duration: 1 hour**

**Weighting: 25%**

- Two written tasks of 84-180 words each from a choice of three tasks, choosing a text type for each task from among those listed in the examination instructions.

#### **Paper 2-Receptive skills: separate sections for listening and reading**

**Duration: 1 hour 45 minutes**

**Weighting: 50%**

Comprehension exercises on three audio passages and three written texts, drawn from all five themes.

- Listening comprehension
- Reading comprehension

## **14. Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to uphold a high standard of academic honesty and integrity. All homework, assignments, tests and exams are expected to represent the student's own effort. All forms of cheating or copying on assignments, tests or exams, plagiarism and other forms of deception to obtain credit are universally recognized as improper and dishonest conduct. Such behaviour is not acceptable and marks will not be awarded for work that does not represent the students' personal effort. For details of the policy regarding academic integrity please refer to [Student and Parent Handbook](#).

## **15. Late Submission of Work**

Assignments and homework are an important component of the teaching-learning process and are expected to be completed with quality and submitted on time. Assignments and homework tasks will be posted Managebac.

The following policy will apply for late work submission:

### **School-based Assessments**

Late submission of work may result in a lower effort grade.

### **IB Official Assessments**

Students may receive a zero for a given component of work if it is not submitted by the assigned deadline. Missing any of the required component grades may result in 'no grade' in the official IB results.

## **16. Classroom Materials and Procedures**

Students will need to bring the following items to their lessons unless otherwise specified by the teacher:

- notebook
- folders
- assigned textbook and workbooks (if any)
- pen, pencil, eraser, ruler, highlighter
- calculator

Students will be informed in advance if any additional items, such as laboratory coats, safety goggles or other items are expected to be purchased.