

Language Pathways & Placements

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Housekeeping

- Webinar format, with times for Q&A
- Approximately 1.5 hours
- Zoom etiquette
- Post questions on the chat throughout, or ask verbally at section ends.

We will cover...

- Why languages need pathways
- IB expectations for multilingualism and language coverage
- “Student chooses the language, school chooses the level” philosophy
- Defining “appropriate challenge”
- Mapping language proficiency to entry and exit points

Why?

Why Pathways?

Why Placement policies?

- Learning & Compliance
 - Multilingualism as a central tenet of IB Education
 - Academic Integrity ramifications
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Multilingualism in the IB

ML is a fact, a right, and a learning resource in all IB schools

Every teacher is a language teacher

Inseparability of language and identity makes placement delicate and profound

Misplacing students has consequences across whole learning journey

Special attention must be paid to:

- Personal/home/best language of each student
- Host country language (if different)

Why the effort?

If students are placed “too low”...

- They are deprived of the chance to learn and develop
- Others in the class are intimidated into silence, deprived of the chance to learn to their potential
- They gain an unfair advantage over peers
- The global cohort suffers from skewed grade boundaries

If students are placed “too high”

- Their achievement is artificially limited

The other 'why'...

Maladministration

From *Academic Integrity (IBO)*, 2019, p.28.

The IB's penalty matrix for maladministration warns schools that allowing misplacement could lead to serious consequences.

Current students.

Future students.

Past students.

IB are paying more attention to this now.

Infringements relating to school leadership undermining the integrity of IB assessments	Actions or sanctions—multiple actions may be taken
<u>Misrepresenting language proficiency</u> , inclusive access arrangements or adverse circumstances to give students an unfair advantage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Record the incident on IB systems, to be part of follow-up actions, such as unannounced examination visits and evaluation visits
Failing to implement an action plan required by the relevant IB authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Immediate inspection visitControlled dispatch of IB examination content⁴
Failing to report incidents of student misconduct or school or teacher maladministration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Deployment of independent invigilators⁵Relocation of students to another venue⁶
Failing to support an investigation into student misconduct or school or teacher maladministration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><u>Annulment of grades for the students concerned or the entire cohort</u><u>Authorization withdrawal</u>
Failing to report an examination security breach or alleged breach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Include school in session monitoring for five consecutive sessions

Placing

Verb:

The intentional act of one party to determine the positioning of another

- DP placement options
 - HL & SL considerations
 - MYP L&L vs LA
 - State requirements
 - Appropriate factors in placing
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Group 1 – “Lang Lit” – “A”

Language & Literature (HL/SL)

Literature (HL/SL)

SSST Literature (SL)

Literature & Performance (SL)

“There are no formal requirements for students undertaking the studies in language and literature courses. Students who take these courses will often have varied language profiles and may be multilingual. While it is recommended that students have had experience of writing critical essays about texts, not having done so should not exclude them from studies in language and literature.”

Language A guide

Group 2 - "Lang Acq." - "B" or "Ab"

Language B (HL/SL)

Ab Initio (SL)

HL or SL

State Requirements?

The pre-DP learning & curriculum

MYP schools have some extra help in placing...

From *MYP Language Acquisition guide*

- Phase 6 learners go to Lang Lit
- Phase 5 learners should also go to Lang Lit

Those in MYP Lang Lit must go to DP Lang Lit.

MYP phase placement relies on reliable teacher assessment.

Start of MYP 1	MYP		DP	CP
Schools may offer introductory MYP language acquisition courses (languages carousel courses) and consider the student's previous learning in the language during primary school education in order to determine placement. Refer to the written and taught curriculum requirements section in this guide.	Emergent	Phase 1	Ab initio	If the CP student is taking a DP language acquisition course, refer to the placement recommendations shown in the DP column to the left. If the CP student is not taking a DP language acquisition course, refer to the CP language development guide for recommendations.
		Phase 2	Ab initio (in rare cases) Language B SL	
	Capable	Phase 3	Language B SL	
		Phase 4	Language B SL/HL	
	Proficient	Phase 5	Language B SL /HL Language A: literature SL Language A: language and literature SL Literature and performance SL	
			Phase 6	

The pre-DP learning & curriculum

Non-MYP schools have a little more digging...

Many syllabuses offer CEFR mapping

These examples from Cambridge IGCSE.

- Some are “Second Language”
- Some are “Foreign Language”

No CEFR mapping? Use the “can-do” statements in the outcomes of a syllabus to map yourself.

Cambridge IGCSE First Language syllabus 0500 or 0900 (Speaking and Listening Endorsement)

Grade E or 3 overall, with grade 2 or Merit in Speaking & Listening can be considered to be at a level equivalent to **B2** on the CEFR.

Grade B or 6 overall, with grade 1 or Distinction in Speaking & Listening can be considered to be at a level equivalent to **C1** on the CEFR.

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language syllabus 0510 or 0993 (Speaking Endorsement)

Grade C or 4 overall, with grade 2 or Distinction in Speaking can be considered to be at a level equivalent to **B2** on the CEFR.

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language syllabus 0511 or 0991 (Count-in Speaking)

Grade E or 3 overall, with grade 3 or Merit in Speaking can be considered to be at a level equivalent to **B1** on the CEFR.

Cambridge IGCSE Mandarin Chinese has been designed to help candidates develop language proficiency to level A2 (Basic User) of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR).

Assessment objectives, subject content, mark schemes and task types have been designed with reference to the CEFR to ensure that candidates have opportunities to demonstrate proficiency at the intended levels.

Course Aims

Enable students to:

- develop the language proficiency required to communicate effectively in French at level A2 (CEFR), with elements of level B1
- offer insights into the culture and society of countries and communities where French is spoken

Factors in placing

Do consider...

- Proficiency, proficiency, proficiency
- HL/SL balance
- State requirements
- Home/Best/Personal language
- Prior learning and exposure

Don't consider...

- Passport
- Accent
- Parents' languages
- Name-language indicators
- Risk of not reaching minimum Diploma points
- Balance of class sizes

Defining Appropriate Challenge

Evidence-based placement

- IB-commissioned research
 - Insights from IB Curriculum & Academic Integrity offices
 - CEFR-mapping
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For DP Language A...

[The sound of crickets]

For DP Language A...

“Obviously, students would need to have the ability to both read and write in the language to be able to handle the receptive (reading) and productive (writing) required in the language A course, though this would likely be similar in nature to that required of language B HL.”

IB Curriculum Manager for Languages, 2020

For DP Ab Initio...

If a student...	the recommended course is...
...has no prior experience in or has had very limited previous exposure to the target language.	Language ab initio

How much exposure is too much exposure?

- IB cites Ismail (1991), *Language Exposure and Second Language Learning* to help define exposure.
- “[Exposure] may include a wide variety of situations - exchanges in restaurants and stores, conversations with friends, watching television, reading street signs and newspapers, as well as classroom activities.”
- Bottom line: even 1 year of prior learning “is well out of the range of ‘very limited previous exposure’ and... does constitute maladministration.”

For DP Language B...

“If it appears obvious at the start of the course that the student is already capable of achieving a 4 or 5, then the student is likely not appropriately placed in the course and should be moved up.”

IB Curriculum Manager for Languages, 2020

“If a student can already communicate successfully in the language on a range of topics in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts, then a DP studies in language and literature course must be considered the appropriate placement.”

DP Languages courses: overview & placement guidance, 2021

“At the beginning of the course, if the degree of challenge for the student makes it evident that the student cannot possibly be capable of achieving a grade 4 [at the end], moving down may be appropriate.”

IB Curriculum Manager for Languages, 2020

Proficiency \neq Literacy

Mapping IB Grades to CEFR

From IB, *Benchmarking selected International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme English, French, German and Spanish subjects to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 2023*

CEFR level	English B		French B		Spanish B		German B	
	HL	SL	HL	SL	HL	SL	HL	SL
C1	7	*	7	*	7	*	7	*
B2+	6	7	6	7	6	7	6	*
B2	5		5		6		5	6
B1+	3 and 4	5	3 and 4	5	3 and 4	5	4	5 and 6
B1	2	4	2	4	2	4	3	4
		3		3				
A2+	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	
A2							*	*

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	HL	SL	HL	SL	HL	SL	HL	SL
C1	7	*	7	*	7	*	7	*
B2+	6	7	6	7	6	7	6	*
B2	5		5		6		5	6
B1+	3 and 4	5	3 and 4	5	3 and 4	5	4	5 and 6
B1	2	4	2	4	2	4	3	4
A2+		3		3		3	3	3
A2	*	2	*		2	*	2	2

Guide to entry points

Concrete guidance on
establishing pathways

- MYP → DP
 - IGCSE → DP
 - IELTS/Oxford
English/DELF/HSK etc...
-

Concreting the Entry Points

Lang Lit entry is mostly straightforward

Ab Initio is mostly straightforward

Language B entry: If we know that “a student already capable of a 4 at the start of the course is placed too low...”, then:

- 4 = which CEFR level?
- That CEFR level = which proficiency credential? E.g....
 - (I)GCSE
 - MYP
 - IELTS/OPT
 - DELF/HSK



<https://is.gd/iblanguagescrosswalk>

Student chooses the language,
school chooses the level

Backwash effect

Preparing students for success

- Home/Best language provision pre-DP
 - Mind the gaps
 - Capturing the current proficiency
-

Home/Best/Personal Language

- Use it or lose it
- DP: Taught Language A course **or** SSST A
- Ergo, pre-DP: teach Lang Lit in that language **or** provide for an SSST-adjacent provision

SSST pre-DP

- Literature expertise to coordinate
- Language tutor to discuss texts and challenge
- Time scheduled for independent learning.

Preparing 'Home Lang' in pre-DP years

When most students are timetabled for second language, place 'Home Language' students in a class with the Literature-expertise teacher (for some or all of the time)

Their curriculum mirrors the Lang Lit class, just with a variety of other languages

Have your Coordinator grow a list of trusted language tutors, liaise often

Formal assessment should mirror the taught Lang Lit class, with time offset



MIND THE GAP

Minding the gap

Between B and A...

- Monitor students frequently in G6-10. Progress them to the next phase/tier as soon as possible - don't wait til next year.
- Gradually increase the literary works engagement into Lang Acq.
- Identify potential borderline students early. Aim to allow them at least one semester of Lang Lit study (move into Home Lang class or offer differentiated tasks) before DP A.

Minding the gap

Between Ab and B...

- Monitor students frequently in G6-10. Where students have plateaued at phase 1/A1 for 2-3 terms, target robust support intervention.
- Offer Ab Initio languages in DP that are not in G6-10.
- Consider B SL on condition of additional 1-1 tutoring for a fixed amount of time.

Minding the gap

Is your curriculum mapped to CEFR - directly or via external qualification board?

How do you assess language proficiency coming into school?

Are your assessment outcomes mapped to CEFR?

Are your teachers assessing accurately?

Are all your teachers assessing to the same standard?

How do you know?

Your language teachers' professional judgement is key.

Capturing Language Levels

Template - edit to your own context

Important considerations:

- Your teachers' accurate professional judgement is the biggest influencer
- **Current** proficiency is needed, not necessarily their thoughts on which class they should go into (yet)
- You need hard data: evidenced CEFR level, MYP Phase, predicted or awarded grade...



<https://is.gd/languagelevelscapture>

Common Anxieties

And how to pre-empt them

- Speaking & Listening vs Reading & Writing
 - Dialect variation
 - Harder language
 - No academic experience
 - It's hard
 - I need a 7
-

Oft-expressed student/parent anxieties...

- I can't do A - I'm not a native speaker
- I speak well but can't read or write well
- I speak a non-standard dialect
- This language is harder than the others
- I need a 7 for my university
- I did a past paper and it was really hard

Oft-expressed teacher anxieties...

- I'll get in trouble if students get 4s and 3s.
- I don't have time in class to support the weak students.
- My language is harder/special.
- Student x shouldn't do my language.
- Student y just doesn't try.



Image by Gemini AI, prompt: More than just coffee o' clock, it's the end of the session!

- Slides downloadable on kpburgess.com
- Official, certificated IB workshops on ibicus.org.uk
- Email me at kieran@kpburgess.com for coaching or consultancy
- Happy placing!

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