



## QAIS Language Policy

**“Those who know nothing of foreign languages  
know nothing of their own.”**

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, writer and polymath

**“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you  
where its people come from and where they are going.”**

Rita Mae Brown, writer and feminist

**“One language sets you in a corridor for life.  
Two languages open every door along the way.”**

Frank Smith, psycholinguist



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**Definition - Mother tongue:** The language(s) learned first; the language(s) identified with as a “native” speaker; the language known best; the language used most.

## I. Philosophy

We understand that language is intimately bound and universal in all cultures permeating all learning. Language is our window on the world and shapes our personal thinking and how we share our knowledge and understanding. It also allows us to develop group memberships, develop our identity and empower and affirm our relationships with others. We believe that meaningful communication through language promotes international mindedness and helps students to become globally engaged, improves intellectual growth, raises self-esteem, lowers anxiety and creates more positive attitudes to learning.

Consequently, language allows us to create and express our identity, and so we expect all teachers to promote language learning first and subject knowledge second, thereby promoting the understanding of different cultures and perspectives. We also recognize that communication also includes non-verbal language and subject specific language derived from the study of different areas of knowledge.

To continually develop and promote language learning at QAIS, we seek to employ teachers who have an understanding of the active use of multiple languages, experienced and trained in working in plurilingual environments (where people have multiple identifications) and who are sensitized to the language needs of our students. We view the on-going language development for our students as the shared responsibility of all teachers, parents, and students. We are all responsible for supporting language acquisition and teachers are expected to consider themselves language teachers first and subject specialists second. At QAIS we promote opportunities to build and extend language use and appreciation through both formal and informal structures.

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

Furthermore, we believe that all students must acquire a second language and the opportunity to acquire further languages at QAIS as this provides significant experiences in international education, enabling students to understand the thinking of others, develop open-mindedness, and a more intimate understanding of other cultures. Through effective communication in another language, we see students more accepting of the diversity of cultures through language, and extend this to better understand the global world in which they live preparing them to be active participants in communities at home and around the world.

Finally, we believe that language is best learned in context. In the classroom we believe that this is best learned authentically and that formal learning should be in the target language.

## 2. Student language profile

We value each student’s linguistic heritage and develop a language profile for each student based on the input of parents, students and teachers. This profile is a living document that reflects their history of language development, their most recent appraisal of language learning and the expected path of student learning.

While each student’s language profile is individualized, there are some general patterns and expectations that arise from our programs. These are:

Program	Profile of students
PYP	Early years: Bilingual immersion Chinese-English. Elementary: English A/B and Chinese A/B programs. Incrementing bilingualism in the program.
MYP	English A/B, Chinese A/B, and English A/Chinese A programs. Encouragement to continue studies with other mother-tongue languages.
DP	English A/B, Chinese A/B and English A/Chinese A programs (including <i>ab initio</i> ) with the opportunities for self-taught mother tongue Literature SL.

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## 3. Admissions and assignment to language classes

English is the operational and main instructional language of QAIS and admission requires English assessment to ensure that the student can access the curriculum delivered in English, or that systematic support can be provided for the student to work towards developing meaningful access to the curriculum.

For PYP admission, students are tested in Chinese and English, using QAIS diagnostic tests. Decisions on admission are made holistically together with testing in other learning domains. The results of the diagnostic tests are used to assign students to an appropriate language class. All PYP homeroom classes have a mother tongue English and a mother tongue Chinese teacher.

In the MYP, the Oxford online English tests are used for admissions purposes. MYP students are placed into language and literature courses and language acquisition subject groups through in-house written and oral assessments, administered by MYP language teachers (see Appendix A). The results of the Oxford tests are used as a guide for English teachers to select the appropriate placement tests.

Students externally applying to the DP are tested for English and QAIS tests are administered for English and Chinese when appropriate for language placement.

For all students, we build language portraits by identifying past and present language learning experiences and abilities, and in consultation with students, teachers and parents we construct language learning pathways which reflect the aspirations, needs, abilities of the student and the potential opportunities available. Because we understand that a student's ability and experience in their mother tongue is often correlated to their cognitive development and acquisition of further languages, whenever possible, we additionally assess the mother tongue language of students if it is not English or Chinese in all programs so as to develop a more informed student language portrait.

To ensure that mother tongue is maintained and there is continuity in acquired languages, we pass student language portraits and evidence of language learning from grade to grade in each programme and between programmes. It is the responsibility of the respective coordinators articulating the programmes to ensure that this happens.

## 4. English in the classroom

Our language policy and procedures are designed to provide language support and promote a stimulating learning environment for students who do not speak the language of instruction at a level adequate to participate fully in our programmes.

American English is the normal form of English used at QAIS to communicate administratively. However, for students, any form of English is acceptable provided that it is used consistently within any piece of work. While we encourage students to take every opportunity to communicate in English both inside and outside the classroom (not the least that is the only fully inclusive language for the whole school) students must be able to discuss with other students, using their own language, concepts and ideas as this supports their understanding of higher level concepts.

Lesson planning must recognize the diversity of student language profiles. We expect teachers to model SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) in the MYP and DP classroom, so that the teacher provides meaningful instruction in the content areas to transition students with Limited English Proficient (LEP) towards higher academic achievement while they reach English fluency.

## 5. Mother tongue

We value mother tongue language as it supports identity and learning of each individual. Where the school is unable to support mother tongue languages, parents are encouraged to continue language studies in a student's mother tongue if it is not taught at school. We believe that structured studies in a mother tongue facilitate the learning of more languages, enrich our cultural knowledge, stimulate cognitive development and enable students to retain connections to their own culture.

We take opportunities for students to demonstrate the use of their mother-tongue within the school for example: Peace Day when readings were given in several languages, Spring Festival, which embraces the Chinese language and culture, the Talent Show and Winter concert where acts can be in any language, and through Art where students can project their own cultural identity into the school culture. We also seek to have mother tongue languages, other than English, visible around the school, and celebrate UNESCO's International Mother-language Day on the 21<sup>st</sup> February (or a suitable date before if it falls in a vacation).

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We promote the respect for the literary heritage of each student's home language in the curriculum and in practice. To facilitate this mother-tongue entitlement, we encourage parents to engage with students in mother tongue experiences in school whenever possible.

## 6. Host-culture language

Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua) is the official language of the Chinese mainland and all students in the school have appropriately targeted Mandarin classes in the PYP and MYP and the opportunity to study Mandarin as Language and Literature (Group 1) or an acquired language (Group 2) in the DP.

Montessori classes are fully bilingual in English and Chinese.

All IBMYP students must study both English and Chinese in school, unless there is a valid educational reason (such as having Chinese phased in for students who have no prior English learning).

DP students must study at least two languages as part of their programme, and suitable English and Chinese programmes will be offered in both groups 1 and 2.

We actively endeavor to develop an understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture and language learning in our teachers for those who do not already have this, and QAIS provides free language classes on weekends for teachers for whom this would be appropriate. Additionally, the school celebrates major Chinese festivals and cultural vacations, has a combination of Chinese and Western food in the canteen, brings local artists into the school, and has after-school enrichment activities delivered in Chinese and related to Chinese and Asian culture such as *shufa* (Chinese calligraphy) or Tae Kwon Do.

## 7. Supporting English, Chinese and additional languages within the school

We seek to offer languages other than English and Chinese as and when it is financially viable as we believe that the study of multiple languages allows us to develop our understanding of different ways of thinking.

Through effective communication in another language, students are sensitized to cultural diversity and better able to understand the global world in which they live, preparing them to be active participants in multilingual communities at home and around the world.

We believe that students should be exposed to texts and translated texts from other cultures in all their classes whenever possible, so that they are exposed to multiple perspectives even though they do not know the original language of the text.

So as to support all students, school administrators, teachers, librarians and other support staff involved with teaching and learning will receive on-going professional development in language acquisition and development.

When possible, we will try to have documents used in class translated into other mother tongues to help students in the early phases of MYP English Language Acquisition to access at least simple task and summative assessment information.

The school can provide additional paid English classes for MYP students in addition to MYP English Acquired Languages. These take place outside curriculum hours.

## 8. Role of the library in language development

QAIS considers the building of a bank of linguistic resources essential for all students in the school.

The library actively collects books, and solicits donations of high quality reading resources from the community so as to bolster mother-tongue support throughout the school, and help ensure that the books in the library reflect the inclusive nature and language profiles of our school.

The library works to identify and plan for access to resources that support the variety of student learning styles and interests, as well as language profiles of the student body, and help create project boxes and resource lists (websites, videos, magazines, books, newspaper articles etc.) for specific topics in IB programmes. To achieve this, the librarians regularly and actively solicit teachers to suggest general readers (including novels) and subject specific texts (such as for MYP units of work or PYP units of inquiry).

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## 9. Communicating with parents

School official written daily communication with parents is in English only although sections of the school web site and newsletters and forms home that are translated into Chinese. For students where no one at home can access English, we translate the narratives of the report when practicable.

## 10. Equity of access (fair and impartial access)

The QAIS Secondary Inclusivity Policy describes how we work to provide equity of access for all including those with special educational needs or who require learning support. The inclusivity policy includes information on differentiation in classes that enable access for students with differing language abilities and support needs.

## 11. Policy disseminating mechanisms

- A. Digital copies to teachers with the option of them printing a hard copy
- B. Staff and student wikis
- C. ManageBac
- D. School's web site (opportunities for feedback from the global community)
- E. Collaborative Planning meetings (opportunities for feedback from IB practitioners)
- F. Community Meetings (opportunities for feedback from IB students and teachers)
- G. Meetings with Parents (opportunities for feedback from parents)
- H. Curriculum
- I. Teaching and Learning (developmentally appropriate documents concerning academic integrity)
- J. Age appropriate written information on Academic Integrity for MYP students
- K. The QAIS Student Council (opportunities for feedback from students)

## 12. Policy review process

We aim to review our language policy at the calendar year and the end of each academic year to ensure that it is coherent with any changes in the student and community demographics or other circumstances, and that policy and practice are aligned, and we incorporate new research, perspectives and understandings. We will use the document "Guidelines for school self-reflection on its language policy" published by the IB guide our policy review. These reviews will stem initially from collaborative planning meetings in the different sections of the school, where coordinators and teachers can provide their professional input, and then move to the academic leadership team. Input from the student council and parents will also be solicited. Finally, it is the responsibility of the Head of School to authorize the policy. Policy and changes will be disseminated to the community through the school website, ManageBac and news bulletins, and added to the relevant induction packages for teachers new to the programmes.

This policy may be revised between formal reviews if deemed appropriate. Opportunities of this type may occur, for instance, during new teacher induction where policies will be reviewed by teachers new to the school, or by collaboration with the student council or parent's body.

We also anticipate that the policy will be immediately reviewed whenever student enrollment creates significant changes in the number of mother-tongue learners, other than Chinese or English, in any single programme or grade.

## 13. Related documentation

*Berthold, Michael.* Reliability of Quick Placement Tests How much faith can we place on quick paper or internet based placement tests?

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<http://humanities.curtin.edu.au/schools/EDU/education/pdf/alaa/M-Berthold.pdf>

*Center for Applied Linguistics* (2014). Investigating Language Policies in IB World Schools: Final Report.

*Council of Europe* (2001). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.

*International Baccalaureate Organization* (2008). Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme: Guidelines for developing a school language policy

*International Baccalaureate Organization* (2008). Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme: Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes

*International Baccalaureate Organization* (2009). Diploma Programme: From Principles into Practice

*International Baccalaureate Organization* (2009). Making the PYP happen: Pedagogical leadership in a PYP school (updated 2011)

*International Baccalaureate Organization* (2009). Primary Years Programme: Language scope and sequence

*International Baccalaureate Organization* (2011). The IB programme continuum of international education Science across the IB continuum

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*International Baccalaureate Organization* (2013). IB learner profile in review

*International Baccalaureate Organization* (2014). Developing academic literacy in IB programmes.

*International Baccalaureate Organization* (2014). MYP: From Principles into Practice (September 2014)

*Pollitt, A.* The Oxford Online Placement Test: The Meaning of OOPT Scores

[http://www.oxfordenglishtesting.com/uploadedFiles/Buy\\_tests/oopt\\_meaning.pdf](http://www.oxfordenglishtesting.com/uploadedFiles/Buy_tests/oopt_meaning.pdf)

*Purpura, J.* The Oxford Online Placement Test: What does it measure and how?

[http://www.oxfordenglishtesting.com/uploadedfiles/6\\_New\\_Look\\_and\\_Feel/Content/oopt\\_measure.pdf](http://www.oxfordenglishtesting.com/uploadedfiles/6_New_Look_and_Feel/Content/oopt_measure.pdf)

**Appendix A: QAIS model for student language profiles, pathways and placements in the MYP**



## QAIS model for student language profiles, pathways and placements in the MYP

