Language Policy
The Australian School of Abu Dhabi

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1.1 Philosophy

Language is one of the most important tools for communication between individuals within communities and across communities. Therefore, language acquisition is essential in the learning process for students since through it they can develop into successful and able communicators. Through the acquisition of language, students will be able to face the challenges and prospects of a variable world in a successful manner.

ASAD believes that language and learning are one entity. Through spoken and taught languages, students can gain knowledge, learn about other cultures and have a better comprehension of who they are.

ASAD further believes that:
- all teachers are language teachers regardless of discipline or grade level
- mother tongue development (Arabic) is vital in order to maintain culture, heritage and community links
- whilst all languages are equally valuable; the language of instruction and mother tongue should receive additional support in order to further fulfil each student's educational and social potential
- all members of the school community have an important role in a student's language development either through use of language and/or promotion of language learning
- the school promotes the facilitation of national and international through promotion of bilingualism
- students of other mother tongues should also receive additional support through effective mechanisms

2.1 Languages at ASAD

ASAD offers an international programme to a largely Emirati and Arab school population. All students must study Arabic regardless of nationality. The language of instruction is English with Arabic taught at all grade levels and French offered as a second or third language in Middle and Secondary Schools. It is proposed that all ASAD students will be bilingual in English and Arabic by the time they graduate. Mother tongue (Arabic) is used in some classes depending on grade level e.g. Islamic Religion (in Primary, Middle and Secondary) and Social Studies (in Primary and Middle).

At primary level, the emphasis is on continuing acquisition of English language skills and refinement of Arabic. Core (English, Maths, Science and ICT) and Foundation subjects are delivered in English with Arabic as the language of instruction for Arabic Language, Social Studies and Islamic Religion (as required by the Ministry).

In secondary, all subjects are delivered in English with the exception of Arabic, French and Islamic Religion. French is offered as an additional language at IB Diploma level and MYP. All students will be encouraged to use the language of instruction in the corresponding class.

Arabic use within classes other than in Arabic, Religion (Islamic) and Social Studies (in Primary) is not, as a rule, permitted unless an Arabic equivalent is needed in order to explain a word. Teachers will refrain from using Arabic as a pedagogical practice.

As language is the key to all learning, appropriate linguistic strategies will be taught throughout all subjects regardless of the language of instruction.

3.1 Mother Tongue (Arabic)

As the most widely used mother tongue in our context, Arabic assumes an important role in the lives of our students. For linguistic and cultural reasons, the teaching of standard Arabic is given high value at ASAD.

Arabic development in Primary level is supported directly for students through the teaching of Arabic by specialist teachers with hours allocated according to level and Ministry requirements.

At Middle and Secondary level (Grades 6-12), all Emirati and Arab students must study Arabic. Additional support will be given by the Arabic Department to students who are having difficulty. Arabic is further developed by the teaching of Arabic through Islamic Religion and Social Studies as well as the scheduled Arabic classes. This is in accordance with local Ministry regulations.

For students with other mother tongues, language development is encouraged and supported where possible. For such students, ASAD has found appropriate resources in order to offer an "Arabic for Non-Arabs" course

4.1 Additional Language Support

As an English medium school, ASAD recognises that not all students learn at the same pace or have similar learning abilities as regards languages. Accordingly, additional English support will be provided in the form of Intensive English Classes for those students who require extra help.

5.1 Placement

5.1.1 Admissions

All students entering ASAD will undergo an admissions test. Based on the results student will be offered a place at ASAD.

6.1 Curriculum

6.1.1 Language in the PYP (KG-Grade 5)

Introduction

The need to communicate is instinctive. The development of language is fundamental to that need to communicate; it supports and enhances our thinking and understanding. Language permeates the world in which we live; it is socially.
(Making the PYP Happen 2009)

Early Years language teaching consists of providing a wide variety of opportunities for children to speak, listen and develop their language skills. This will come from planned activities and guided play as well as literacy specific tasks.

A structured phonics programme in English and Arabic to support the children towards reading and writing is taught. Parental support will be in the form of home/school conversations, talk homework and phonic sheets.

Language in the PYP is taught through the context of the units of inquiry with some skills taught in their own right to be transferred at a later date such as selecting a purpose for writing e.g. to inform, to persuade etc and most often these are explored in the other strands of language at the same time.

PYP Language Philosophy

At ASAD, we believe through language students can connect with other people and make sense of their experiences. Students use language to let others know how they feel, what they need, and to ask questions. At ASAD, we shape our students' language development to reflect the identity, values, and experiences of their family and community. We believe that language opens the mind and presents opportunities that will cultivate internationally-minded citizens through the attributes in the IB learner profile.

PYP Language of Instruction

English is the language of instruction at the Australian School of Abu Dhabi. Through language instruction, we are encouraging new perspectives, curiosity, and an appreciation of our world's diversity. Through the exploration of language, our students become communicators in our multilingual world. At ASAD, language is the major connecting element across the curriculum. In order to promote inquiry-based language learning within the context of the PYP, we recognize the importance of incorporating the teaching and learning of language throughout the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry.

PYP Language in the Classroom

The PYP has identified three strands—**oral language, written language, visual language**-that are learned across and throughout our curriculum, with each strand forming an integral component of language learning.

- **Oral language – listening and speaking**
  Listening and speaking are essential skills for ongoing language development, for learning and for relating to others. Oral language moves students from the conceptual understanding that people listen and speak to share thoughts and feelings to people draw on what they already know in order to infer new meaning when speaking and listening.

- **Written language – reading and writing**
  Reading is a developmental process that involves constructing meaning from text. Reading moves students from the conceptual understanding that Illustrations and print convey meaning in their own right or combined to synthesizing ideas and information from texts leads to new ideas and understanding.

  Writing is a genuine expression of the individual. Writing moves students from the conceptual understanding that writing conveys meaning to knowing what we aim to achieve helps us to plan and develop different forms of writing.

- **Visual language – viewing and presenting**
  Visual language allows students to understand the ways in which images and language interact to convey ideas, values and beliefs. Visual language moves students from the conceptual understanding that the pictures, images, and symbols in our environment have meaning to synthesizing information from visual texts is dependent upon personal interpretation and leads to new understanding.

At ASAD students are exposed to and explore a range of language genres in all of the three above-mentioned areas. They are placed on the PYP language scope and sequence continuum to identify skills and knowledge they can apply independently. This also enables us to have a clear direction of the next phase of development for their individual needs.

Support for PYP Language Development

At ASAD we have several support services available to help students in their language development. These include:

- **Special Education**
  Students who have special educational needs are supported by the classroom teacher and Special Education department staff. The special education teachers and the classroom teacher work hand in hand to implement the students to help students in their language development. Learning is differentiated in the classroom in a variety of ways. Students are individual assessed in their reading ability, organized into groups, book clubs, and literature studies.

- **Gifted and Talented**
  Students who have been identified as Gifted and Talented receive services from the classroom teacher. Teachers work closely with students to provide depth, complexity and enrichment to math and language lessons this is shown through the differentiated work in the classrooms.

PYP parent Support for Language

Parents are encouraged to support language skills at home through homework assignments, diary sheet and Unit of Inquiry information letter. Parents are encouraged to read with students on a regular basis, discuss concepts to check for understanding/comprehension, assist with inquiry-guided research, complete writing prompts, and encourage oral communication.

PYP Language Policy Review

The PYP coordinator will ensure that the language policy is reviewed and revised every two years. All staff at ASAD is involved in the development and will agree on the language policy. All staff is responsible to ensure that the language policy is a working document, that it is referred to and reflected upon. Teachers will review the language agreements and policy annually.

6.1.2 Grades 6-10

All of the language specific classes in ASAD Middle and Secondary School generically follow their respective International Baccalaureate guidelines. All Languages A and B respectively, regardless of whether it being Arabic, English or French, work with and apply the published MYP and DP aims, objectives, including the MYP interim objectives, and assessment criteria for their respective subject group. Moreover, technology is incorporated into language learning and there is an increased emphasis on cross disciplinary work and real life usage.

Students in Grades 6-10 follow the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. According to IB specifications, Language A (Arabic and English) follow an integrated approach to language learning and focus on language through literature and use of film and other media. Language A programmes are designed for students who are native or near native level. Students will be expected to write academic essays and original creative pieces as well as responses to literature.

Students who study Language B (English, Arabic and/or French) are usually non native speakers or students who have been predominantly in a non Arabic/English/French speaking environment. The emphasis is on fluency and accuracy in the language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Lessons will focus more on acquisition of language skills as opposed to literature appreciation and analysis. The goal for Language B learners is to have functional fluency in Arabic and English by the end of Grade 10, though not necessarily the ability to use the Language B as extensively as Language A.
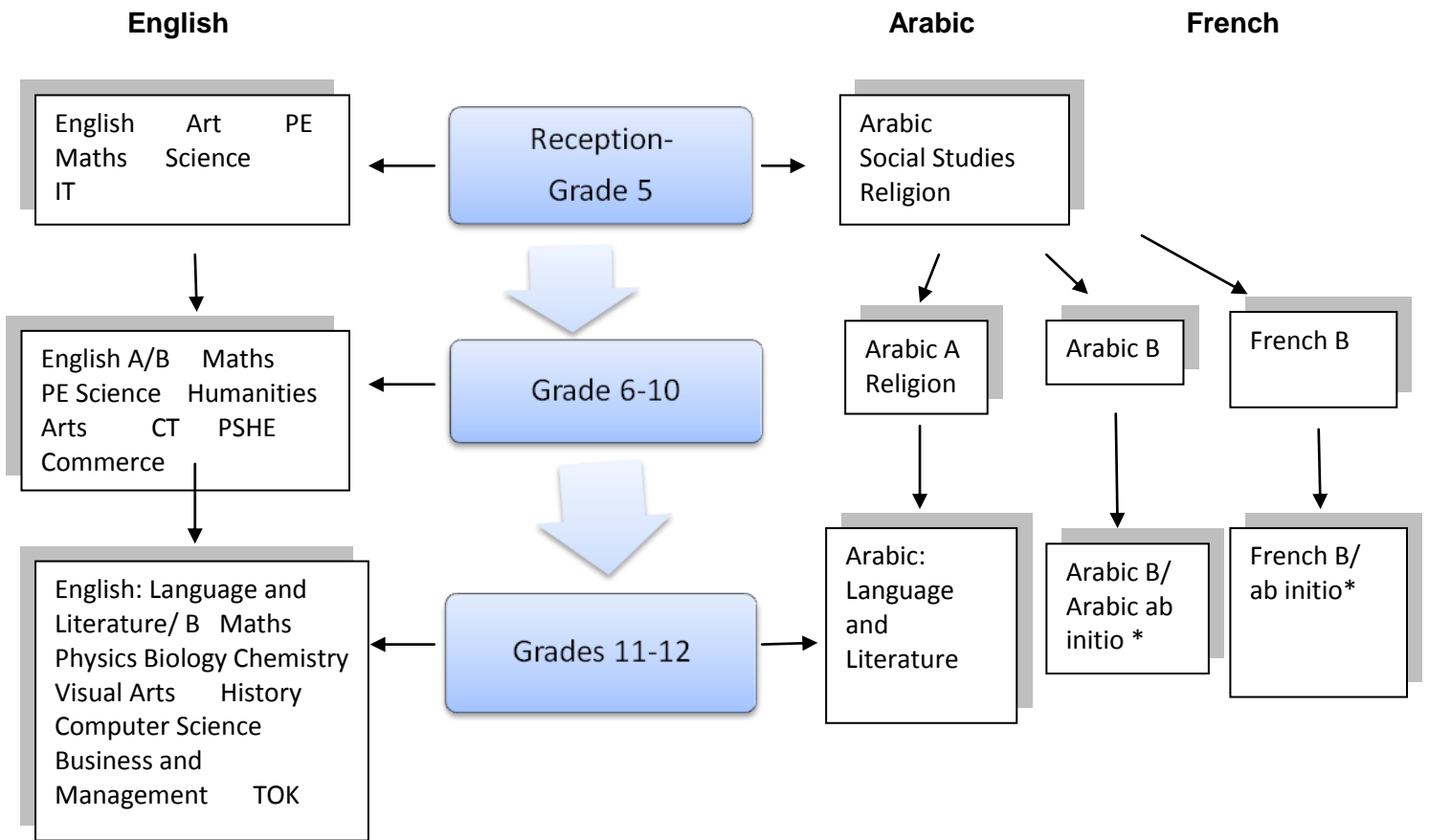
6.1.3 Grades 11-12

Students at International Baccalaureate Diploma level must take as a minimum two languages- one from Group 1 and one from Group 2 or alternatively two languages from Group 1. Levels are similar to IB MYP in that student must take a Language A (Group 1) which is usually their best language and which is designed for students who intend to continue post high school studies in that language. It is also usually their native language. Language on offer at ASAD in group one will vary year to year. At present, ASAD offers Literature option.

At DP level, Language A: Literature focuses developing an understanding of the literary criticism techniques including teaching students how to make independent literary judgments. It is intended as a course which provides for continued mother tongue development.

Students may also study a Language in Group 2. This may be taken as language B or ab initio. These courses are designed to provide students with the 'necessary skills and intercultural competence that will enable them to communicate successfully in an environment where the language studied is spoken' (ibid, p.3). The ab initio course is designed for students who have little or no experience of the language, whilst Language B is intended for students with prior learning of the language.

7.1 Language Curriculum Continuum

English   **Arabic**   **French**

| English   Art   PE   Maths   Science   IT | **Reception-** **Grade 5** → | Arabic Social Studies Religion |

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| English A/B   Maths PE Science   Humanities Arts   CT   PSHE Commerce | **Grade 6-10** ← | Arabic A Religion | Arabic B | French B |

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| English: Language and Literature/ B   Maths Physics Biology Chemistry Visual Arts   History Computer Science Business and Management   TOK | **Grades 11-12** ← | Arabic: Language and Literature | Arabic B/ Arabic ab initio * | French B/ ab initio* |

(* ab initio is offered to students with one year or less of study)

8.1 Assessment

Teachers regularly use diagnostic, formative and summative assessment, self and peer assessment to assist in the teaching and learning. Assessment takes place in accordance with ASAD's Assessment Policy and policies and practices that are consistent with the IBO's policies. Student work is assessed using rubrics and/or pre-established criteria/descriptors/objectives according to grade level. Students and parents will be kept informed of student progress through informal parent teacher meetings, scheduled Parent /Teacher consultations, Progress Reports and Portfolios. Each or any of these are according to grade level.

9.1 Language Use Around School

ASAD is aware of the power of language and words, and acknowledges that what individuals say, and how individuals say things, directly affects people's perceptions of our intentions, goals and values. ASAD therefore encourages all its community members to develop positive means of communication that foster a sense of community. For this reason, ASAD students and teachers should, when in group situations, use the language that is common to that group. This also means avoiding the use of words that denigrate, degrade or alienate others.

10.1 School Documentation

ASAD uses Australian spelling for English language documents and standard Arabic for all documents produced in Arabic. As a general rule, school documents will be produced in English.

11.1 Professional Development

In order to better provide for staff language acquisition, ASAD will regularly provide in school professional development on language acquisition and language teaching methodology. All Faculties are expected to participate and are encouraged to deliver and adopt proven strategies. As lifelong learners, Faculty will also be encouraged to develop their own language skills.

Review Date: January 2016

Appendix A

Definitions

ab initio
This is the study of a language at beginner level for students who have no previous experience in it.

Differentiation
The adaptation of teaching strategies and content to help students access the curriculum

Language of instruction
This is the language by which the school curriculum is delivered

Mother tongue
This is the also known as 'first language', 'native language', language of culture and/or 'best language'

Second language
This is the language that a student acquires after their first language. It is also usually used when describing the language of instruction when it is not the student's first language.

Language A
This may be the student's mother tongue; but not necessarily so. It is the student's best language and is usually the language of their future education. At DP level this is offered as Language or Language and Literature.

Language B
This is usually the language that a student has some previous experience either through study or exposure. It is usually expected that a student will use this language to a fairly sophisticated level.

School Community
This is defined as students, parents, teachers, administrators and other staff who work within the school facility.

Appendix B

International Baccalaureate Language Definitions (for Secondary level only)

Ab initio (Standard Level)	The language ab initio course is a language acquisition course for students with little or no experience of the language. (1)
Language B	Language B SL and HL are language acquisition courses for students with some background in the target language. While learning this additional language, students also explore the culture(s) connected to it. (2)
Language A Language A: Literature Language A: Language and Literature	These are designed as courses to support future academic study by developing high levels of language competence and communication skills as well as social, aesthetic and cultural literacy. Literature has a central role in these courses. Language A courses are suitable for students who have experience of using the language in an academic context.(3) Language A: Literature develops understanding of the techniques involved in literary criticism and promotes the ability to form independent literary judgments. It supports the Mother Tongue entitlement at DP level. (4) The Language A: Language and Literature course develops skills of textual analysis. A study of the formal structures of a text is combined with an exploration of the way the use of formal elements and our understanding of their meaning is affected by reading practices that are culturally defined. (5)

1. IBO 'Guidance for Language Provision in Groups 1 and 2' (2009) p. 9

2. Ibid, p. 8

3. Ibid, p. 2

4. Ibid, p. 3

5. Ibid, p. 5

Appendix C

Language B Placement

Arabic at ASAD

Upon entry into ASAD, each student is placed into Arabic A or B as appropriate for their background and ability level. This decision is made by the Arabic teacher/s, the Head of Department (Middle/Secondary), the MYP/DP Coordinator (Secondary) and the Curriculum Director after consideration of the student's prior history with Arabic and their linguistic abilities.

Arabic A

ASAD believes that development of Arabic language abilities is of great importance for all students with Arabic cultural heritage. For this reason, students with clear Arabic cultural heritage are required to take Arabic A in all grades. Exceptions are made only after careful consideration on an individual basis.

Students who study Arabic A are students:

- who are Emirati (Primary, Middle and Secondary) and are required by the Ministry to study Arabic
- who are already fluent or close to fluent in Arabic
- with Arabic cultural heritage.
- with citizenship in an Arabic country, whether or not they also hold citizenship in a second non-Arabic country, as well as students with one or more Arab parent(s).

All exceptions must be recommended by the student's teacher and approved by the Head of Department (Middle/Secondary), Principal (Primary/Middle/Secondary), MYP/DP Coordinator (Secondary) and the Curriculum Director. If an exception is made, the student is required to study Arabic B.

Students who are identified as Learning Support (SEN) will not normally be put into Arabic A and will receive additional support as appropriate and decided by ASAD.

Arabic for Non-Arabs

The Arabic for Non-Arabs course is mainly designed for international students who are working towards fluency. The goal for Arabic for Non-Arabs students is to have functional fluency.

Students who study Arabic for Non-Arabs are:

- students who can provide evidence that they went to an English speaking school in a non Arabic speaking country and/or have therefore had very little academic Arabic experience before entry to ASAD
- international students who are working towards fluency.
- students who have less than 4 years exposure to the language (Middle/Secondary only)

Students who are **NOT** Arabic for Non-Arabs are:

- students who are in Language A and their skills in Arabic are weak because of their effort or motivation
- students who are special needs
- students who have had more than 5 years exposure to the language (Middle/Secondary only)

Arabic at ASAD (Grades 11 and 12)

ASAD annually reviews its language offered at IB DP level. The decision to offer any other courses (eg ab initio) is reviewed annually and a decision is made based on the cultural/linguistic make up of and needs of international and local students in Grade 10.

ASAD follows the recommendations for placement of students into Arabic as outlined in the IB Diploma Language Guides.

Review Date: 2nd of October, 2011