

## Diploma Programme

Language ab initio

**Curriculum review report – update on progress**

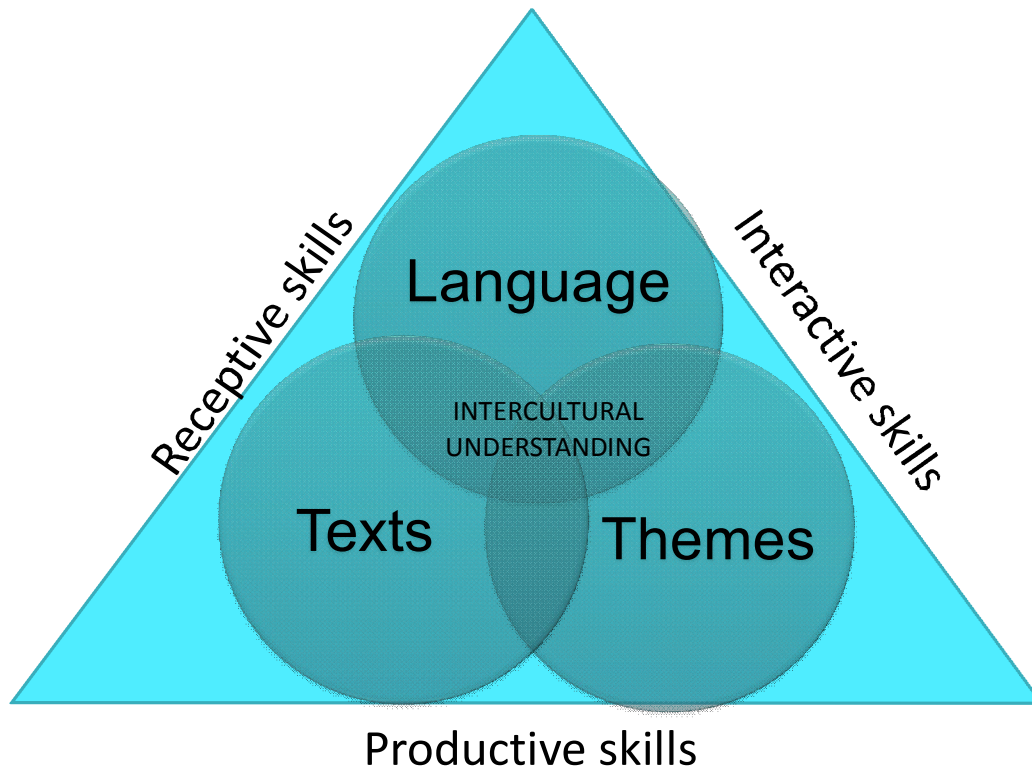
November 2009



This report provides an overview of the revised Language ab initio course, and gives information about the syllabus and assessment for the new course, including some extracts from the draft guide.

The changes to the Language ab initio course are the result of internal decisions informed by a series of meetings with teachers, examiners and consultants. Schools have also been consulted through questionnaires and the responses to these have been given careful consideration by participants in the meetings. Decisions taken throughout this process also reflect the need to ensure that the new course remains relevant throughout the next curriculum review cycle.

The first teaching year for the new course will be 2011 for May session schools and 2012 for November session schools.



The Language ab initio course is displayed 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 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.

Language, themes and texts provide the basis of the two year course. These three fundamental areas are interconnected and should be studied concurrently. Interactive, productive and receptive skills are of equal importance.

It is essential that teachers are allowed the prescribed minimum number of hours necessary to meet the requirements of the Language ab initio course. At SL, the minimum prescribed number of hours is 150.

# Language ab initio syllabus content

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

The Language ab initio 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 all language specific syllabi are that each contains, **vocabulary lists** under topic headings, a list of **prescribed grammar**, and a list of the **Paper 1 and Paper 2 instructions**.

## Language

Language acquisition will be achieved through the development of the **receptive, productive and interactive** skills and competences. 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 3 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 and appropriation of different text-types (listed in the external assessment details). Through the study of the three interrelated themes, students will develop the skills necessary to fulfil the assessment objectives of the Language ab initio course. 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.

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.

### Individual and Society

Personal details, appearance, character  
Daily routines  
Education  
Food and drink  
Physical health  
Relationships  
Shopping

### Leisure and Work

Employment  
Entertainment  
Holidays  
Media  
Transport  
Technology  
Sport

### Urban and Rural environment

Global Issues  
Environmental concerns  
Neighbourhood  
Physical geography  
Town and services  
Weather

## 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:

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

## Principles of course design

The IB recognises that, due to differences in language teaching traditions across countries, 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 range of pair and group activities, and 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, as well as utilise authentic materials for study that, although they may have been edited or simplified, have been originally produced for everyday users of the target language.

Teachers should also ensure that their course encourages students to practise receptive, interactive and productive skills and interact in the target language by participating actively 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 ought to be integrated. Language should be developed through the study of materials that reflect the culture(s) concerned.

## Transparency

Teachers should 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.

# Language ab initio assessment outline

First examinations 2013

Assessment component	Weighting
<p><b>External assessment</b></p> <p><b>Paper 1 (1 hour 30 minutes): Receptive skills</b></p> <p>Understanding of 4 written texts (40 marks) Text-handling exercises</p> <p><b>Paper 2 (1 hour): Productive skills</b></p> <p>Two compulsory writing exercises (25 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section A (7 marks): <b>One</b> question to be answered from a choice of two</li> <li>- Section B (18 marks): <b>One</b> question to be answered from a choice of three</li> </ul> <p><b>Written assignment: Receptive and productive skills</b></p> <p>200-300 word piece of writing in the <b>target language</b> carried out in class under teacher supervision (20 marks)</p>	<p><b>75%</b></p> <p><b>30%</b></p> <p><b>25%</b></p> <p><b>20%</b></p>
<p><b>Internal assessment: Interactive skills</b></p> <p>Individual oral 10 minutes (25 marks)</p> <p>3 part oral internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB towards the end of the course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part 1: Presentation of a visual stimulus (from a choice of two) by the student</li> <li>- Part 2: Follow-up questions on the visual stimulus</li> <li>- Part 3: General conversation <b>including at least two questions on the written assignment</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>25%</b></p>

**Note: All responses, written and oral, must be in the target language.**

# External assessment details— Language ab initio

## **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 texts are related to one of the three themes (see Language ab initio 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. The texts in Paper 1, for Language ab initio courses with vocabulary lists provided, 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 are 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 (all of which will require short responses), students will need to use a range of reading techniques such as skimming, scanning or reading for detail. They will also be expected to respond to a variety of text-handling exercises. 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 context, understand grammatical structures and functions in context, and 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 Language ab initio written production descriptors (see external assessment criteria section). 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 list of topics as prescribed in the syllabus content and are related to one of the three themes as described in the Language ab initio syllabus content section.

The tasks offered are varied and require students to answer using a specific text-type (see table below)

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 life-time of this syllabus. Teachers will be informed of additional text-types in the Coordinators' notes:

Section A	Section B
Advertisement / Flyer	Article
Blog	Blog
E-mail	Brochure
Entry/ post on social networking site	Diary
Invitation	E-mail
Lists	Entry/ post on social networking site
Menu	Essay (where appropriate)
Message / Note	Interview
Notice	Letters: formal/ informal
Postcard	Report
Poster	Review
	Speech

## **Written assignment: Receptive and productive skills**

**Weighting: 20%**

**The formal writing of the written assignment should not exceed 2 hours and should be conducted in a single session.**

The written assignment is externally assessed and must be the independent work of the student. The written assignment must be **hand-written** in the **target language** in class under the supervision of the teacher. 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 teacher guidance. The use of a bilingual or monolingual dictionary and reference material **is** permitted in the classroom.

During the Language ab initio course, the student will become familiar with the everyday life and culture(s) of the country/ies 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 which define and link us.

In the Language ab initio course, the student is expected to develop 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 culture(s) with which the student is familiar.
- To develop language competence.

### The assignment

The requirements are as follows:

Length	Sources for the written assignment	Communicative purposes
200 - 300 words	2-4 sources in the target language	Description, comparison and reflection

The written assignment should take the form of short written responses under three separate headings in the target language: A: Description, B: Comparison, C: Reflection.

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

The reflection (section C) 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 find unusual about this aspect in your culture?

Students who fail to write the minimum number of words or exceed the maximum will be deducted 2 points from Criterion E Language. If the word limit is exceeded, the assessment will be based on the first 300 words.

### Sources

2-4 sources in the target language are included as part of the written assignment. A source is any text linked to the topic which will enable the student to reflect on the culture(s) studied during the course. Sources may originate from the teacher and/ or the student. A copy of all sources in the **target language** must be listed in the bibliography and submitted with the written assignment. Students may consult sources in other languages. These should be listed in the bibliography but are not required to be submitted.

### Formal guidelines

The student must submit:

- a cover sheet completed by the student and signed by both student and teacher
- a copy of the source materials in the target language
- a bibliography of all sources used including references in languages other than the target language

Quotations can be included but **will not** be part of the overall word count. Quotations that are not appropriately referenced will be considered as plagiarism. Notes on source material may be made once the written assignment begins.

### The role of the teacher

The teacher must ensure that the written assignment is completed during the **second** year of the course and submitted by a date as stipulated by the IB. They must also ensure that a maximum of 2 hours in a single session is spent in the classroom under supervised conditions for the production of the written assignment as an integral part of the course, and that only non-annotated source material is allowed in the classroom.

It is also the teacher's responsibility to provide guidance to the student in his/ her choice of the topic and the source material, as well as provide them with a copy of the assessment criteria and the formal requirements.

# Internal assessment details – Language ab initio

## **Individual oral: Interactive skills**

**Duration:** 10 minutes (plus 15 minutes of preparation)

**Weighting:** 25%

The Language ab initio internal assessment consists of a compulsory oral examination that assesses interactive skills. The individual oral is a summative assessment conducted between the teacher and student in the centre by the date provided by the IB in the second year of the course. In order to better prepare students for this assessment, it is strongly advised that students be exposed to 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 which is a compulsory recorded activity worth 25% of the overall mark (the IB is seeking other mechanisms through which recordings can be conducted and reserves the right to change the mechanism during the life time of the course).

The individual oral is assessed using the internal assessment criteria.

The oral comprises 3 distinct parts:

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

### **Part One**

The student's presentation of the visual stimulus (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 of different genres (picture, photograph, cartoon, etc) provided by the teacher. They should also be relevant to the culture(s) of the country/ies 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 one to two minute presentation based on the visual stimulus. Once the interview has begun, the recording should not be interrupted or stopped. Teachers are advised to prepare stimuli according to the table below:

### **Part two**

The teacher's questions on the visual stimulus (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 and provoke discussion on the same topic area as the stimulus.

### **Part three**

A general conversation (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.

The intention is that these questions be open and are asked to give the student an opportunity to talk about his/ her chosen 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 interview:

- 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 with a comment such as:

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

**The individual oral must not be rehearsed.**

### **Conduct of the individual interview**

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. Recordings of the individual oral will be required for external moderation, and under no circumstances should they be stopped, interrupted or enhanced. The individual oral may take place in or out of the classroom context but care should be taken to ensure that high-quality recordings are sent for moderation.

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 individual oral should last 10 minutes in total.

### **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. To this end, it is important that the teacher familiarise him/ herself with the assessment criteria. The type of questions asked should be adapted to the student's ability, and the teacher is encouraged to interact with the student but should avoid dominating the oral. If a student fails to answer, repeating and/ or rephrasing the question is an acceptable option. The teacher should avoid correcting the student, and should allow sufficient time for the student to respond to questions.

## Assessment criteria: overview

Assessment criteria are used to assess Paper 2 which is divided into two sections, Section A and Section B, and are awarded a total of 25 marks. Section A is awarded 7 marks and Section B is awarded 18 marks.

### Paper 2 Section A

There are three assessment criteria:

Criterion A	Language	3 marks
Criterion B	Message	3 marks
Criterion C	Format	1 mark
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7 marks</b>

### Paper 2 Section B

There are three assessment criteria:

Criterion A	Language	8 marks
Criterion B	Message	8 marks
Criterion C	Format	2 marks
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18 marks</b>

### Written assignment

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

There are six assessment criteria:

Criterion A	Description	2 marks
Criterion B	Comparison	3 marks
Criterion C	Reflection	6 marks
Criterion D	Register	2 marks
Criterion E	Language	4 marks
Criterion F	Formal requirements	3 marks
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20 marks</b>

### Individual oral

Assessment criteria are used to assess the individual oral which is awarded a total of 25 marks. The internally assessed component totals 25% of the assessment model.

There are two assessment criteria:

Criterion A	Productive skills	10 marks
Criterion B	Interactive and receptive skills	15 marks
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25 marks</b>