



Al Faris International School Language Policy

IB Continuum (PYP – MYP – DP)

Updated September 2025

Revision Process

This policy was first developed during the school year 2013/14 by the DP coordinator, in collaboration with language teachers at Al Faris International School. The IB coordinators, HOSs, and subject coordinators reviewed the policy, and then it was communicated to teachers during in-school service training sessions. This policy is published on the school website, and its practices are communicated to parents in the handbook and during Open House meetings and other events planned to develop their understanding of the school vision and language practices. Besides, this policy is frequently updated and revised by the PLT and all teachers, taking into account parents' feedback and learners' achievement in communicative skills and language development.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to articulate Al Faris International School's commitment to multilingualism, inclusive language practices, and language development across the IB continuum (PYP, MYP, DP). The policy aligns with the IB Standards and Practices (2023) and ensures that language learning supports conceptual understanding, student agency, international-mindedness, and equitable access to learning.

Philosophy

At Al Faris International School, language is central to identity, culture, learning, and communication. We recognize multilingualism as an asset that enriches both the individual and the learning community. The development of the mother tongue is valued as foundational to cognitive growth and personal identity, while additional languages expand intercultural understanding and global engagement.

In alignment with IB philosophy, inclusion in language learning is a shared responsibility. Learner variability is recognized as a natural part of human diversity, and learning environments are adapted to ensure equitable access. All teachers are language teachers, and all students are supported in developing the communication skills necessary for academic success and meaningful participation in the school community.

Students are encouraged to take ownership of their language development by setting goals, reflecting on progress, and actively engaging in communication across contexts.



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FIS believes in the importance of supporting the mother tongue and acquiring other language skills to help students

- Communicate confidently
- Respect and value other cultures
- Prepare students to be effective global citizens

Language and Inclusion

FIS recognizes that in a transdisciplinary programme, PYP, language is essential to Language development, which is closely aligned with the school's Inclusion and Learning Support Policy. Support for language learners may occur within the classroom through differentiated instruction and collaborative planning, or through targeted small-group intervention when needed. Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), where appropriate, are co-constructed by students, families, counsellors, and teachers to identify strengths, address barriers, and establish strategies for growth.

Language support decisions are reviewed regularly and communicated transparently with parents to ensure clarity of expectations and shared responsibility.

Student Agency in Language Learning

Students at FIS actively participate in their language development. They reflect on communication strategies, set personal goals, and engage in feedback cycles that support growth. Multilingual expression is encouraged, and students are supported in maintaining and valuing their home language while developing additional languages.

Language Across the IB Continuum

In the PYP, language learning is embedded within inquiry and supports conceptual understanding across Units of Inquiry. Students communicate ideas through multiple modes and develop confidence as communicators.

In the MYP, language acquisition follows a phase-based model that supports progressive skill development. Criterion-related assessment provides structured feedback that promotes growth in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing.

In the DP, students engage in rigorous language study that promotes analytical thinking, intercultural awareness, and academic integrity. Where required, access arrangements are implemented in accordance with IB regulations to ensure equitable assessment conditions.

Alignment with IB Standards and Practices (2020)

This Language Policy reflects the IB commitment to inclusive education, learner agency, coherent curriculum design, and responsive teaching practices. Language learning at FIS supports conceptual development, interdisciplinary understanding, and fair access to assessment. The school ensures that language instruction and support systems are consistent with IB expectations across all programmes.

Inquiry-based learning and the construction of knowledge are relevant and authentic. Its meaningful contexts, social interaction, and connection to prior knowledge are all essential components to effective language; therefore, FIS believes that:

- The acquisition of more than one language and the maintenance of the mother tongue (*first language*) enrich personal growth and help facilitate international-mindedness and understanding.
- A person's mother tongue is a direct link to their culture, identity, and heritage.
- The development of the mother tongue is crucial to maintaining cultural identity; thus, we encourage the use of the mother tongue as a tool for understanding and sharing knowledge.
- The acquisition of additional languages allows students to further reflect on and explore different cultural perspectives.
- Learning a language is integral to the development of students' identity and to making sense of the world around them.
- Arabic with equal importance to the foreign languages; thus, the first language of Arab students is to be supported.
- The development of language is fundamental to the instinctive need to communicate.
- The development of essential language skills – reading and writing, listening and speaking, viewing and presenting – is an important part of a student's development.
- The learning process involves learning language, learning about the language, and learning through the language. (Halliday's Model)
- Language provides an intellectual framework that supports students' conceptual development and critical thinking.
- Language is an important connecting element across the curriculum.
- Both the form and the functionality of language should be encouraged and appreciated.
- All teachers are language teachers with responsibilities in using language as a tool to facilitate communication.
- The language development of students is a shared responsibility of all community members: teachers, students, and parents.

In brief, language learning provides the students with an opportunity to expand their view of the world, encourage critical reflection on the relation between language and culture and language and thought, help to build practical skills that may be used in other disciplines, and foster their understanding of the interrelation between language and human nature.

Students who are non-native speakers of English and have been identified as needing additional English language support are immersed in regular classroom activities for as long as possible. In some cases, students attend reading classes to enhance their English proficiency.

School Language Profile

The students at FIS are placed according to these categories:

- Students in the DP study English A: Language and Literature (Group 1). Arabic is offered in Group 2 as Arabic B or Arabic ab initio, depending on the student's proficiency and pathway.
- English-speaking students with prior Language Acquisition skills will study Language and Literature in English and Language Acquisition in Arabic or French.
- The student in MYP Language Acquisition will move from one phase to another if he/she fulfilled the requirements.
- Non-English speaking students will be provided with the ELL program.

Language of Instruction

The language of instruction is English, except for our French and Arabic classes, which are delivered in the target language. Arabic is offered during Arabic, Islamic, and History & Geography of the Kingdom (per the Ministry of Education requirements), whereas French is offered during French classes.

Language of Communication

Language in the PYP is grounded in the belief that language is a social practice, essential for transdisciplinary inquiry learning and identity construction. Learning and teaching start with the learner's and their needs, interests, and experiences, making their unique language repertoires central to the learning process. This extends beyond the subject of language, enabling learners to make sense and meaning of all learning within and across subjects.

To support the design of language learning and teaching, the PYP provides a set of subject continuums that organize language into four strands. These are oral **language—listening and speaking**, visual **language—viewing and presenting**, written **language—reading** and written **language—writing**.

The four language continuums as per the Subject Continuums: Language, have been organized into four developmental phases, with each phase building upon and complementing the previous one.

The continuums make explicit the conceptual understandings that need to be developed at each phase. Evidence of these understandings is described in the behaviors or learning outcomes associated with each phase.

Languages Offered

FIS offers the following languages across the IB continuum:

PYP

- English is taught as a language of instruction and literacy development.

- Arabic is taught as Language A, supporting mother-tongue development, literacy, and cultural identity.
- French is taught as an additional language (Language B) to promote multilingualism and intercultural understanding.

Language learning in the PYP emphasizes communication skills, conceptual understanding, and the development of confidence as multilingual communicators.

MYP

- Language and Literature: English and Arabic
- Language Acquisition: French (phase-based) and English language support (ELL) are provided when needed to support access to the language of instruction.

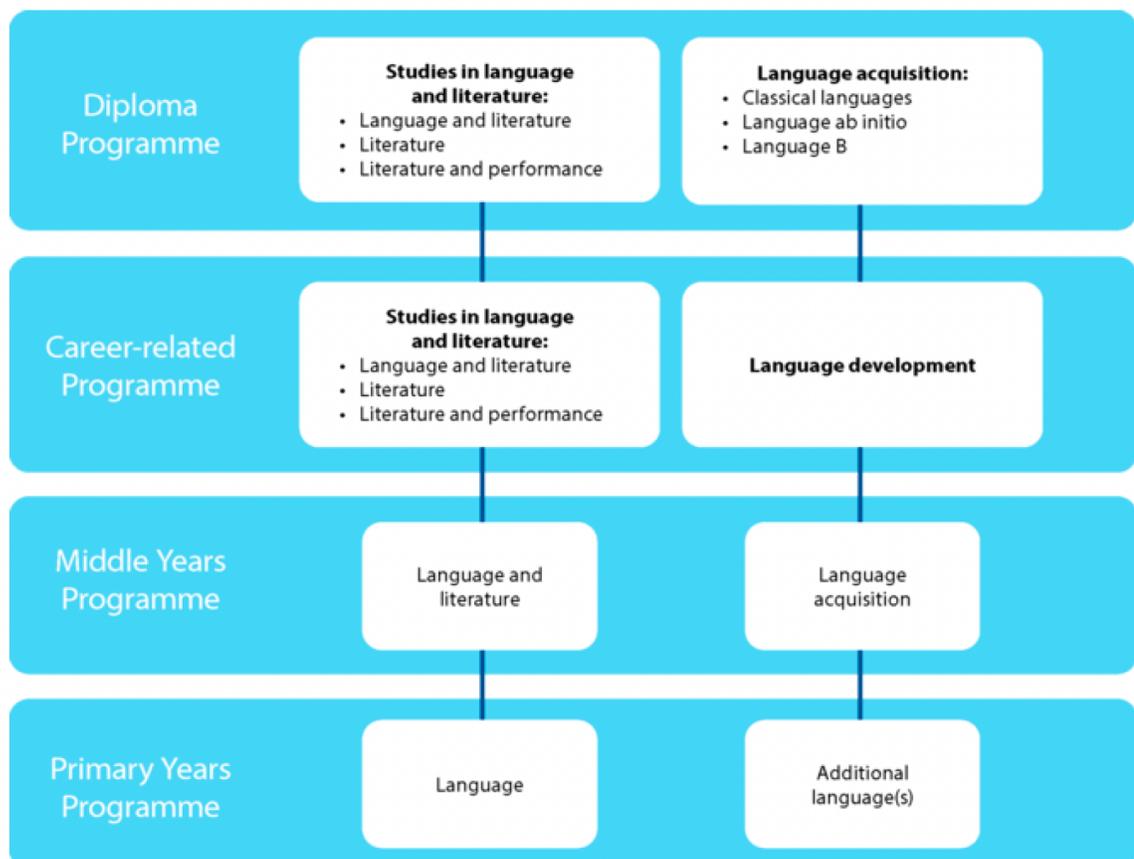
DP

- Group 1: Studies in Language and Literature: English A: Language and Literature
- Group 2: Language Acquisition: Arabic B, Arabic ab initio, & French ab initio

Language placement decisions are guided by diagnostic information and student readiness. Where needed, additional support is provided to help students access the curriculum and develop confidence as communicators.

Figure 3

Language across the IB continuum



Language Practices-Language and Literature

- All teachers will use a wider range of strategies to balance students' first language with the second language of instruction.
- Students will be allowed to appreciate language as a tool, so emergent writing is to be encouraged.
- Conventional writing will not be emphasized in preschool. It will be emphasized gradually, starting with the 6-7-year age group.
- The early emphasis will be on the sounds of the letters. Students will then move from relating sounds to letters to conventional language.
- Conversations will be emphasized, so students are given opportunities to build their vocabulary and become good readers and communicators. Students will be encouraged to ask their own genuine questions.
- Students will be encouraged to express themselves in various forms of communication, whether oral or written.
- Students will be encouraged to comprehend language through listening, reading, and viewing, and to express language through speaking, writing, and presenting. Since all these language areas go hand in hand, the school promotes integrated language development.
- Language is integrated into the program of inquiry. Students use language throughout the units of inquiry by asking questions, researching, presenting research findings, etc.
- Students engage in inquiry-based, authentic language-learning engagements. Thus, language experiences are relevant, challenging, significant, and engaging.
- Random code-switching while communicating with students is not allowed.
- Bilingual labels will be used while designing learning environments.
- Preschool and elementary publications and notices to parents will be written in Standard Arabic, English or French.

In the MYP, students in language acquisition are grouped into phases. In Language acquisition, emphasis is placed on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Formative and summative assessments are used to enhance teaching and evaluate student progress. Students will take a placement test to determine which phase of language acquisition they will continue in the PYP (once applicable). These phases are divided into:

1. Phases 1-2, which are considered emergent
2. Phases 3-4, which are considered capable
3. Phases 5-6, which is considered proficient (for more information, *please refer to the MYP Language acquisition guide, 2014*)

Class distribution will depend on the number of students and the timetable constraints. Students' progress from the MYP is based on the language acquisition phase, and they are then placed in the appropriate language acquisition phase in the DP.



DP students starting at the ab initio level have the option to change to the standard level at any time during the two years of the DP if sufficient progress is observed. Students will study Arabic subjects (*the ministry requires completion of the required credit hours to graduate*), and non-Arab speakers will take special Arabic/Arabic ab initio courses that cover the same ministry's requirements, but in English.

For more information on Assessment in the IB programs, please refer to the Assessment policy and Inclusion policy.

Language Admissions and Placement

Language placement decisions are based on diagnostic assessments, review of previous academic records, teacher observations, and consultation with parents. Students are placed according to demonstrated proficiency rather than grade level alone.

Placement and phase progression are reviewed periodically to ensure alignment between student readiness and academic expectations. Parents are informed of placement decisions and progress through formal reporting cycles and scheduled conferences.

Students will have to sit a language diagnostic test at the end of the first term. At the beginning of the year, their proficiency will be assessed, and they will be admitted to the appropriate phase. If needed, an English language acquisition class will be offered in the MYP.

Students who are non-native speakers of English and have been identified as needing additional English language support are immersed in regular classroom activities for as long as possible. In some cases, students attend Reading classes for additional English language support to enhance their English proficiency.

Students are encouraged to maintain their cultural identity and native language while celebrating other countries that share the language.

- **Support for first language**

Students are encouraged to use the library, which contains multiple resources for their first language. In addition, FIS established an agreement with the King Fahad Public Library. Students are welcome to visit and use its resources.

Additionally, parents are invited into the classroom and to school events whenever possible to share their language and culture. We are committed to providing a school environment that supports students in their first language.

During their first years at preschool, students are encouraged to use their mother tongue and colloquial language to communicate with peers and adults. The mother tongue colloquial language is the starting point for building students' literacy. Students are encouraged to feel at ease with the language, so they can easily express themselves and communicate with their teachers and peers. Students will begin to be exposed to Standard English and Arabic.



Standard Arabic and English will be used in ordinary discussions, reading stories, writing, etc. As students move from one phase to another, there will be more stress on Standard languages than on colloquial ones.

- **Support for students who are not yet proficient in the language of instruction**

FIS provides English support classes for students from Years 1 to 5 in the PYP. These classes will ensure that students have the appropriate English skills to meet the Language and Literature class objectives. These classes will continue to ensure that students reach the required proficiency level.

The school will provide multiple resources to assist with finding tutors during school hours and, if needed, after school hours. Students with different mother tongues can take a self-taught course in the DP.

- **English Language Learning (ELL)**

Students who require additional English language development receive structured support within a mainstream learning environment. Instruction emphasizes literacy development, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension strategies, and academic communication skills. Support is responsive and gradually reduced as proficiency increases, ensuring that students transition confidently into independent learning.

References

PYP: From principles into practice (2014)

Making the PYP Happen (2009)

MYP: From principles into practice (2014), "Implementation policies"

DP: From principles into practice (2014)

Coordinator Support Material (2016)

PYP: Subject continuums: Language