

# **United Nations International School**

## **Language Policy**

**May 2019**

**(Amended 2021)**

**Edition: 3**

# Table of Contents

[Purpose of the Language Policy](#)

[Vision Statement](#)

[Language Instruction at UNIS](#)

[Language Offerings](#)

[Language A Programs](#)

[Placement of New Students](#)

[Doubling a language](#)

[International Baccalaureate Language Offerings](#)

[Ab initio Courses](#)

[International Baccalaureate Self-taught Languages](#)

[External Standardized Testing](#)

[English Language Learning \(ELL\)](#)

[Implementation and revision of this document](#)

# Purpose of the Language Policy

This Language Policy stipulates the overarching educational, social and pedagogical goals concerning Language A and Language Acquisition, and practice of the curricular languages offered at the school in addition to English: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Russian and English for English Language Learners (ELL).

## Vision Statement

UNIS endorses a model of enriched language education in which all students acquire proficiency in two languages in addition to English and their home language(s).

UNIS aims to provide authentic language learning experiences that have age appropriate global significance and that give students the opportunity to explore the similarities shared by people of the diverse cultures of the United Nations International School community.

UNIS challenges students through intensive language learning to become responsible global citizens by their involvement in dynamic cultural experiences. Language learning in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, written interaction and production and speaking interaction and production are the driving forces that connect all curriculum areas.

At UNIS we:

- Value and respect each family's cultural background, their home language(s), and the contribution of their culture to their child's education and to society.
- Believe that the learning of languages plays an important role in the formation of genuine mutual understanding and global citizenship.
- Believe that learning other languages and cultures enhances the appreciation of one's own culture(s).
- Believe that the ability to communicate in any language is a lifelong skill for education, employment, leisure and social interaction.
- Believe that language proficiency is developed when meaningful and relevant experiences are provided in reading, listening, writing, and speaking.
- Believe that the skills learnt in acquiring a language lay the foundation for the acquisition of other languages.
- Value the immersion in the host country's culture and language as an effective means for the development of language acquisition skills and cultural appreciation.
- Provide a balance of learning experiences that are underpinned by the school's [Teaching and Learning principles](#) and the [IB standards for Teaching and learning](#).
- Expect all teachers to be language teachers who are actively and continuously seeking out professional development opportunities in language pedagogy.

# Language Instruction at UNIS

UNIS has adopted the [Common European Framework of Reference For Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment](#) (Council of Europe, 2001) as the model for language acquisition instruction.

The approach adopted is an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action.

Language B - Language Acquisition IB courses in Grades 11 and 12 are designed to provide students with the necessary skills and intercultural understanding to enable them to communicate successfully in an environment where the language studied is spoken. This process allows the learner to go beyond the confines of the classroom, expanding their awareness of the world and fostering respect for cultural diversity.

As for Language A IB courses in Grades 11 and 12, students are expected to develop their proficiency, fluency and linguistic range, and in particular to acquire the vocabulary appropriate to the analysis of texts. They will also deepen their understanding of a wide variety of concepts explored through literary and non-literary texts in order to interpret, analyse, evaluate and then communicate this understanding in clear, organized and developed products. The study of literary, non-literary, visual and performance texts provides a focus for understanding how meaning is constructed within belief or value systems, and how it is negotiated across multiple perspectives generated by single or multiple readers. Thinking critically about texts, as well as responding to, producing or performing them, leads to an understanding of how language sustains or challenges ways of thinking and being. The study additionally builds an awareness that all texts may be understood in relation to their form, content, purpose, audience and their associated contexts, such as social, historical and cultural circumstances.

## Language Offerings

At UNIS, English is the language of instruction from Pre-K through Grade 12.

At Manhattan campus, students must take French or Spanish from Pre-K to Grade 10 as their second language, except for ELL and Learning Support students. From Grade 7 to 10, students must add an additional language, different to the one they are taking as their second language, to be chosen among the following curricular languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian or Spanish.

At Queens campus, students must take French or Spanish from Pre-K to Grade 8 as their second language. For Grade 7 to 8, students must add an additional language, which will be the one they had not taken as their second language.

Each language is offered in different levels of proficiency according to the nomenclature of the Common European Framework and ranging from Pre-A1.1 to B2.2.

M3 and M4 classes or T1 and T2 classes may be grouped together by language and level.

Annual meetings will be held to share UNIS's Language Program in order to guide families planning their children's language profile and development. Special focus should be put on guiding families to make informed decisions about the Third Language Program for rising M3 students and about IB language courses for rising T3 students. For this purpose, specific meetings will be held every year in February.

The Third Language chosen in M3 is a four-year commitment. A change in the Third Language Program will only be approved under extenuating circumstances. The Director of Modern Languages and the corresponding Principal will review and approve the requests.

## Language A Programs

UNIS recognises that maintenance of the Language A is central to students' cognitive and cultural development and identity. A high level of proficiency and well developed cognitive and literacy skills in the Language A enhance the effective learning of additional languages. Developing and using additional languages enriches our intellectual development, social growth and global perspectives.

All eight curricular languages are offered at a Language A level, with the following specificities:

- Arabic: Language A program on offer from Middle 3 to Tut 2.
- Chinese: Language A program on offer from Middle 3 to Tut 2.
- French: The Language A program is on offer from JA to Tut 2. In the Junior School, the program requires the study of Mathematics and Humanities in French, as well as some subjects in the After-School program.  
In the Middle School and Tut House, the program requires the study of Humanities in French too. Only under extenuating circumstances such as ELL, Learning Lab or other circumstances deemed appropriate by the Principal and the Director of Modern Languages would Mathematics and Humanities be dropped. Simultaneous enrollment in the French and Spanish programs is not possible due to schedule constraints.  
The Francophone Section is accredited by the French Government from J2 to M1.
- German: Language A program on offer from Middle 3 to Tut 2.
- Italian: Language A program on offer from Middle 3 to Tut 2.
- Japanese: Language A program on offer from Middle 3 to Tut 2.
- Spanish: the Language A program is on offer from JA to Tut 2. From Junior School to Tut 2, the program requires the study of Humanities in Spanish too. Only under extenuating circumstances, such as ELL, Learning Lab or other circumstances deemed appropriate by the Principal and the Director of Modern Languages, would Humanities be dropped. Simultaneous enrollment in the Spanish and French programs is not possible due to schedule constraints.  
The Spanish International Section is accredited by the Spanish Government from M1 to Tut 2.
- Russian: Language A program on offer from Middle 3 to Tut 2.

## Placement of New Students

New students at UNIS with prior knowledge of the language will be administered a Placement Test to determine their level of proficiency in the language. The test will have a common structure for the eight languages and will assess students' ability to communicate orally and in writing.

Enrollment in the Language A Programs is subject to a placement test, too.

## Doubling a Language

As stated in this Language Policy, all students at UNIS are required to study two languages in addition to English. Only under extenuating circumstances may students double a language, for any of the following reasons:

- Students who join UNIS in Tutorial House without prior knowledge of foreign languages.
- Students exiting ELL or Learning Lab.
- Situations deemed appropriate by the Learning and Support specialists.

The Director of Modern Languages and the corresponding Principal will review and approve the requests.

## International Baccalaureate Language Offerings

UNIS offers all eight curricular languages as IB Courses (Language A and Language B) for student's second language in the IB Program. Based on enrollment and scheduling purposes, the school will determine which courses are opened each school year.

IB students have the option to choose a 3rd language in their IB Program. These are offered as Group 6 language classes (French B SL/HL and/or Spanish B SL/HL) and will be opened based on enrollment. A minimum of 4 students per language course is required to open a class.

Students who are already able to read, analyse and respond to complex literary and non-literary texts in a given language must be placed in a studies in Language and Literature course for that language. 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.

Language B Standard Level is designed for students with some previous experience in the target language who already have the ability to communicate in the language in familiar contexts. Students who have achieved an A2.1 CEFR proficiency level before the start of the IB course will be eligible to take Language B Standard Level courses at a minimum, [as referenced by the IB in the benchmarking of the IB diploma courses to the CEFR](#).

Language B Higher Level is designed for students with previous experience in the target language who have the ability to communicate in that language in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. Students who have achieved a B1 CEFR proficiency level or above before the start of the IB course will be eligible to take Language B Higher Level courses at a minimum, [as referenced by the IB in the benchmarking of the IB diploma courses to the CEFR.](#)

Heritage students who do not master their reading and writing skills may be allowed to take a Language B Higher Level course instead of a Language A course. The Director of Modern Languages or the Tut House Principal will review and approve these requests.

The following tables provide guidance in placing students in an appropriate language course. The “If a student can...” statements have been developed from course Grade descriptors. A student who exhibits a majority of the statements shown under the receptive, productive and interactive skills headings would likely be able to handle the course whilst being appropriately challenged.

If a student can...	the recommended course is...
<b>Receptive Skills</b>	<b>Language A: Literature</b>  or  <b>Language A: language and literature</b>  or  <b>Literature and performance</b>
...demonstrate a good understanding of the meaning and purpose of written texts, including literary texts; ...demonstrate a good understanding of the meaning and purpose of oral texts; ...recognize some subtleties of specific language use and their effects.	
<b>Productive skills</b>	
...speak mostly clearly and fluently and use a varied range of language mostly accurately; ...write fairly detailed texts demonstrating a good command of vocabulary with a good level of grammatical accuracy; ...show a reasonable ability to adapt their writing to suit the intended audience and purpose; ...express ideas and organize work coherently.	
<b>Interactive skills</b>	
...handle ideas mostly effectively with generally full interaction; ...exhibit some difficulties with more difficult questions.	

If a student can...	the recommended course is...
<b>Receptive Skills</b>	<b>Language B HL</b>

<p>...demonstrate a good understanding of the meaning and purpose of written texts;  ...demonstrate a good understanding of the meaning and purpose of oral texts.</p>	
<b>Productive skills</b>	
<p>...speak generally clearly;  ...respond appropriately to most questions but struggle with responding to difficult questions;  ...demonstrate an adequate command of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy;  ...use basic and some complex language correctly;  ...show a reasonable ability to adapt writing to suit the intended audience and purpose;  ...express ideas and organize work appropriately.</p>	
<b>Interactive skills</b>	
<p>...respond appropriately and demonstrate comprehension;  ...use pronunciation and intonation which facilitate the understanding of the message;  ...make independent contributions;  ... produce clear messages.</p>	

If a student can...	the recommended course is...
<b>Receptive Skills</b>	<b>Language B SL</b>
<p>...demonstrate adequate understanding of the meaning and purpose of written texts;  ...demonstrate adequate understanding of the meaning and purpose of oral texts.</p>	
<b>Productive skills</b>	
<p>...develop some ideas using a logical structure;  ...use a range of basic cohesive devices;  ...use basic grammatical structures accurately;  ...use a range of basic vocabulary and appropriate register.</p>	
<b>Interactive skills</b>	
<p>...respond appropriately and generally demonstrate comprehension;  ...use pronunciation and intonation which often facilitate the understanding of the message;  ...make some independent contributions;</p>	



...produce mostly clear messages.	
-----------------------------------	--

## Ab initio Courses

Language ab initio is designed for students with no prior experience of the target language, or for those students with very limited previous exposure.

In the case German, French, Italian, Russian and Spanish, only students with a maximum of two, or less than two years of experience of the language will be able to join Language ab initio (Standard Level) courses.

In the case of Arabic, Chinese and Japanese, only students with a maximum of three, or less than three years of experience of the language will be able to join Language ab initio (Standard Level) courses.

Based on enrollment, the school will determine which Language ab initio (SL) courses are opened each school year.

The following table provides guidance in placing students in an appropriate language course:

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

## International Baccalaureate Self-taught Languages

Students wishing to take a Language A course not taught by the school may choose to take a self-taught course in Language A Literature Standard Level as part of their International Baccalaureate Diploma Program.

\*\*When IB Group 6 language classes (French B SL/HL and/or Spanish B SL/HL) are not opened, students may take a Language A Literature SL Self-Taught among the 8 languages offered at UNIS.

## External Standardized Testing

External Language tests are administered to monitor student performance, to evaluate and refine UNIS language program to meet proficiency targets, to guide students and teachers in course placement and to provide students with an official certificate on language proficiency with international recognition.

These are the external tests administered at UNIS:

- DSD I and II for students of German in Grade 10.
- DELF for students of French in Grade 8.
- DELE for students of Spanish in Grade 8.
- CELI for students of Italian in Grade 10.
- TOEFL ITP for IB English Language Learners to be taken at the end of Grade 11.

## English Language Learning (ELL)

The goal of the ELL program is to ensure successful integration of ELL students into the UNIS community both academically and socially.

Upon entering UNIS, students who speak or write a language other than English at home, or are not fluent in English, are assessed by the ELL teachers. Evaluation results place a student in beginner, intermediate or advanced ELL classes, or in a full mainstream program.

For the complete ELL beginner, the focus is on verbal communication skills to enable the student to function in their new environment. Reading and writing are used to reinforce grammatical structures and vocabulary. The intermediate ELL student works on expanding vocabulary, increasing reading comprehension, and refining writing skills, enabling participation in mainstream classes. The advanced ELL student moves towards fluency in spoken and written English to approximate grade level competency. Full integration into the UNIS mainstream curriculum takes place when a student masters the advanced level ELL materials for the appropriate grade level and can comprehend content material used in the mainstream classroom.

## Implementation and revision of this document

The implementation of this policy will take effect as of September 1st 2019 in place of the Language Policy document currently in use.

The present document will be reviewed annually.