

Purpose

The QACI Language Policy is designed to be consistent with the stipulated practices and principles of the International Baccalaureate and aligned to the Department of Education philosophy, and current language trends. It is a working document developed by staff and the Leadership Committee outlining QACI's linguistic and academic goals, and defines the programme to enable students to attain these goals. This policy is intended to provide an overview and the guiding principles for language learning at QACI which permeates the entire school curriculum through authentic contexts in a culturally rich and diverse environment.

Aims

Language is core to learning and QACI has, as a core philosophy, the belief expressed by Wittgenstein, that *"the limits of my language are the limits of my world."* Therefore, we support the centrality of language learning as essential to our students gaining and maintaining an internationalist perspective of their world.

The IBO publication, *Learning in a Language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*, states that:

"Language stands at the centre of the many interdependent cognitive, affective and social factors that shape learning." (p.1).

Our Language Policy at QACI, asserts that:

- Language "sustain[s] personal development, cultural identity and intercultural understanding". We believe that language learning (mother tongue, A1 – if different, and Group 2 language) sustains cognitive growth.
- QACI's vision is to move well away from a monocultural and monolingual environment, thus making it truly reflective of its cohort, of modern Australia, and of a country which perceives the value of a *global* perspective.
- We support the definition of "mother tongue" as that given by the IBO (to include language learned first, language identified as "native", language known best, or language used most).
- We acknowledge the linguistic and cultural complexity of our student cohort. Our language policy aims to celebrate this, and to "exploit" this diversity for the enhancement of the language skills of all of our students.
- QACI acknowledges the contribution of language learning made to academic development of our students, and therefore seeks to make sure that the IB DP language offerings truly reflect "best practice" and "best offerings" for our given clientele. To this effect, the efficacy of languages offered at QACI is continually reviewed.
- We believe multilingualism establishes cognitive patterns of language acquisition that can be drawn upon in the learning of additional languages and We aim to nurture an appreciation of the richness and diversity of languages.
- We acknowledge that the cognitive academic language proficiency of some of our students is affected by their main academic language (English for the Diploma Program) NOT being their "mother tongue". Support in class and external to classes is a vital component of our support of mother tongue students.
- Learning about language is an essential component of our Theory of Knowledge program, and this is reflected in subject work programs, subject work units and in the classroom environment.
- All teachers are language teachers and are therefore responsible for specifically teaching and enunciating the vocabulary and genres appropriate to the subject area in which they teach.

Our language policy aspires to fulfil each aspect of the QACI's core principles as follows:

Clever

Our vision to be internationally recognised for academic excellence applies in full to our focus on language learning. We aim for our students to be world class in their mother tongue (usually English), and to be outstanding learners of other languages. The language policy recognises the transfer of cognitive skills from mother tongue to English and vice versa and the acquisition of other languages. This process encourages the acquisition of higher order thinking skills and development of multiple perspectives. The policy also recognises the importance of all teachers differentiating instruction for students at different levels of language acquisition. These approaches also link well to our QACI pedagogy framework, including the concept that we need to explore how knowledge is formed and to test knowledge claims.

Creative

Learning a foreign language requires us to construct and negotiate the unique architecture in which it consists. QACI's language policy recognises the creativity needed in making these connections and defines creativity as a participant's capacity for what is known as "divergent thinking" in four key areas: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

Global

QACI values a core philosophy, the belief expressed by Wittgenstein, that "the limits of my language are the limits of my world." The centrality of language learning is essential to our students gaining and maintaining an internationalist perspective of their world. QACI's language policy reflects the three aspects of multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement essential to the development of international mindedness, a central aspect to an IB education. The policy embraces understanding and respect for all cultures and validates the equal status of all languages. It endorses proficiency of English as the "international language", as well as proficiency in other languages (including mother tongue of students whose first or family language is not English) and meets the demands of Queensland and Australian imperatives for our students to be internationally focused.

Language Program Overview

As language teachers, pedagogical attributes will ensure all students have equal access to the curriculum by

- (i) activating prior knowledge,
- (ii) differentiating through scaffolding
- (iii) affirming the student's identity.

Activating Prior Understanding

- Our students are selected from a range of school backgrounds and therefore come to QACI with a wide variety of skills and experiences. Teachers must take this into account in their planning, and it is important that the language skills of the students be taken into consideration in class.
- Where a student is less proficient in English than in their mother tongue, appropriate support needs to be provided. Consideration needs to be given to specific tutorial support in language development, as well as in focus on content and skills.

Differentiating (Scaffolding and Extension)

- Lessons and units are planned accordingly to incorporate tasks and activities that are differentiated, where appropriate, to support language needs for all. All three areas of differentiation of IB units are addressed, namely Gifted and Talented / ESL / Differentiation. Some strategies include, but not exclusively, using visual aids, graphic organisers, demonstrations, dramatisations, collaborative group work (including groups of same mother tongue, where appropriate).
- The use of IT and education platforms provide scope to develop individual programmes to cater for individual needs and allow student to work at a pace commensurate to their ability.
- All student profiles should, where appropriate, indicate planning support for future learning.
- The use of a mother tongue is encouraged to carry out research if it would be impossible in another language. QACI supports appropriate multilingual approaches in classroom environments which aid learning through language.

- All aspects of language are taught (including clarity, pitch, written summaries, avoiding colloquial expressions where appropriate, metalanguage—discussion of cultural dimensions to language, especially English; celebration of the other languages used at QACI).
- All four communicative language skills are practised and assessed regularly (reading, writing, speaking and listening).
- Independence of language learning is fostered as a priority.
- Practice of a wide range of written genres is to be encouraged, and appropriate scaffolding is essential.

Affirm Identity

- QACI believes the development of one's mother tongue can accelerate the rate of language acquisition, support achievement in all subject areas, increase self-esteem and enhance intercultural understanding and international-mindedness.
- QACI supports additive bilingualism (where another language and culture enhance their mother tongue and culture).
- Classroom and whole-school environments celebrate diversity of cultures by incorporating authentic lesson materials representative of target language, participating in national competitions and school events which affirm identity.
- The International Community at QACI is supported by an international support teacher, with students having access to an International Lounge to help foster connection and community.

Group 1 – Studies in Language and Literature

English Language & Literature

School supported and special request language A (SSST)

To fulfil the requirement of the IB Diploma Programme, all students are required to study a literature and language course. English is the A1 language at QACI, being both the national language of Australia and the language in which all students are currently proficient (to a greater or lesser degree). Predominantly all students currently study English at a Higher Level as their A1.

In line with our aim to support multilingualism, the provision for an individual to study an A1 in a language other than English has been introduced. Students have the opportunity to select 2 Group 1 subjects, each in a different language. Students who choose this pathway are offered this course as a school supported self-taught programme (SSST) and provisions are made to assist self-taught students with specific aspects of their studies.

Fluency in English is an expectation at QACI and appropriate language support is essential to ensure that all students are sufficiently competent to use English for academic (tertiary) purposes and to successfully complete their IB Diploma.

International students (under EQI policies and guidelines), are provided with appropriate second language support in English. This takes a variety of forms, including in-class support, withdrawal from classes etc.

Group 2 – Language Acquisition

Studying a second language is a requirement for all IB Diploma students. Students at QACI have the choice between 3 mainstream languages or as a non-mainstream language. By offering the acquisition of more than one language, we aim to foster in students the ability to think, express themselves with precision, clarity, confidence and imagination. In line with the International Baccalaureate's commitment in supporting multilingualism as fundamental to increasing intercultural understanding and international-mindedness, this policy is equally committed to extending access to an IB education for students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Mainstream Languages:

QACI offers the opportunity for students to study the following mainstream languages:

- French ab initio, standard level, higher level
- Spanish ab initio, standard level, higher level
- Mandarin ab initio, standard level, higher level

Non-mainstream Languages:

One way in which we support multilingualism is offering students the opportunity to choose a non-mainstream language at a Standard or Higher Level. Non-mainstream languages are those not offered at QACI but available in the IB curriculum offerings. The following criteria are considered via application to study a non-mainstream language:

- A student can demonstrate a high degree of proficiency in the language
- A student can speak the language to a high degree of fluently
- A student's reading and writing competency is evident

Review Process

QACI's Language Policy supports the following:

- Maintenance of all the above languages to ensure that any student, who begins a course in one language, has the ability to study at the highest appropriate level through to IB Diploma.
- The Senior Leadership Team reviews this policy regularly as part of the curriculum review cycle and as part of the whole school improvement plan.
- The offerings made by QACI take into account the ongoing viability of a particular language, and reflect changes as they occur in the composition of the student cohort and their language needs and backgrounds.
- Reviews also consider the efficacy of certain second languages in terms of their "usefulness" for future study patterns of students.
- The policy is communicated to the community through multiple mediums including staff meetings, P&C / School Council meetings, Parent Teacher meetings, QACI website and newsletters.
- All QACI stakeholders are cognisant and supportive of QACI's language policy. This includes involving staff in professional development in the fields of language learning, where appropriate.

References

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