**Kuopion Lyseon lukio**

**IB Diploma Program Language Policy**

The most recent review in spring 2023

**Introduction**

This document outlines the IB DP language policy in our school. This is a working document in our school, and it is made available to all stakeholders: students, teachers, the members of the school community, parents and administrators. Our student profile varies annually. We keep in mind IB philosophy and the aims of the Language policy. Teachers, the IB coordinator, head of school, parents and the student discuss language profile together in case it is something else than a normal Finnish student with Comprehensive school background (1-3 students).

**Philosophy and aims**

At Kuopion Lyseon lukio we understand that language is central and essential for all learning. The philosophy of our policy highlights the following:

* All teachers are language teachers. In our case, this means that all teachers are responsible for teaching the core concepts and means of addressing issues in their respective fields.
* Learning languages is a life-long process.
* There is a transfer effect in learning languages: we believe that the more languages one learns, the easier it becomes to learn a variety of languages.
* Languages necessarily have an intimate link with cultural understanding; learning languages has great potential in fostering international-mindedness, which is a key aspect of the IBO mission statement.
* Solid command of languages is a key aspect in further studies as well as in life-long learning.
* Being able to communicate in more than one language is important to us; this is directly related to the Communicators aspect in the IB learner profile.

We aim to help our students to:

* use languages effectively, appropriately, accurately and confidently
* develop students’ oral and written communication
* develop students’ listening skills
* equip students with language skills with a variety of contexts and purposes (this is particularly important in interpreting literature and the nuances in linguistic expressions)
* appreciate literature in their mother-tongue (in most cases Finnish) and in other languages; this implies that we regard multilingualism as a right and resource
* understand and value other cultures and their representatives
* use correct terms and concepts within each subject
* foster the Open-minded aspect in the IB learner profile
* enhance Social and Communication skills as addressed in the ATL.

**Language Profile and Circumstances in Kuopion Lyseon lukio**

Our school has about 500 students altogether (situation in August 2023). Of these 500 there are 32 students taking their preparatory IB studies (pre-DP) and 36 students participating in the IB DP Programme. Hence, the majority of the students in Kuopion Lyseon lukio follow the Finnish National Syllabus in Finnish. Moreover, the majority of pre-DP and IB students are native Finnish speakers as well. Almost all students at Kuopion Lyseon lukio have started studying English at the age of 9. This means that practically all the students, whether in the IB or not, know English well. Furthermore, all IB students have sufficient (even excellent) command of English language. It is noteworthy that we have some applicants from abroad for the IB Programme, their native language is not English.

Finnish and Swedish are the official languages in Finland. All students following the Finnish National Syllabus study Finnish and Swedish at comprehensive school: Finnish starts at the age of 7 and Swedish at the age of 12. In our school, the pre-DP students from the Finnish comprehensive school take six study points in Swedish, six study points in Finnish and six study points in English (one study point is equal to 10 lessons of teaching, each lesson lasts 75 min). In addition, students are free to choose additional languages: German, French, Russian, Italian, Spanish, and Latin. Students can choose language studies also from other upper secondary schools in the City of Kuopio (there are four of them altogether). We offer a possibility for the DP students to continue studying an extra language outside the DP Programme, should they choose to do so.

Teaching in natural sciences, history, economics and mathematics takes place through the medium of English in the pre-DP. We are confident that this prepares students very well for the rigors of the DP studies. Moreover, this is an important way of providing access to the IB Programme for all learners in our school as they almost always study in a language (in our case English) other than their home or native language. The maintenance of the native language for students who are not Finns is guaranteed by our requirement that no international student is accepted without at least one guardian who lives in the City of Kuopio (or near-by) and is willing to take care of the student. The maintenance of the native language for Finnish students is self-evident.

Naturally, teaching in the IB Programme takes place in English in subjects belonging to the groups 2–5 as well as in CAS and TOK. All reports, written work and diaries are required in English in all the aforementioned subjects. In informal situations, students may use whatever language they prefer; we see this as an enriching aspect of school life. Usually this means that the students communicate in Finnish with the school staff and other members of the school community. However, those students who do not speak Finnish, use English in all their dealings in the school community.

**Language A**

We offer Finnish A (Literature, SL and HL) and English A (Language and Literature, HL, SL) as language A. A student can choose both of these A languages. A student with a best language other than Finnish or English, may choose to do self-taught Language A. The school provides the SSST supervisor and may help to find a tutor, but the school does not pay for a tutor.

**Language B**

We offer Swedish B SL for all IB students. Swedish is important for DP students who plan to study in a Finnish (or Swedish) university as some command of Swedish is required in our universities.

**Self-taught and ab initio languages**

We have nominated a teacher of Finnish language as a responsible person in self-taught languages. French and German are offered as ab initio languages which are studied with the Finnish National Syllabus students. In some cases, it is possible to study an ab initio language through IB Online Courses (offered by Pamoja Education). The school does not pay for Pamoja studies.

Ab initio languages are taught partly in national language groups. Ab initio teachers give extra lessons to IB students to clarify IB requirements and IB philosophy in ab initio languages.

We require that non-Finnish pre-DP students study Finnish as a foreign language. This is important as they do live in the Finnish speaking City of Kuopio. Studies in Finnish as a foreign language are offered by the school and by a local community college which operates quite near to the school premises. Learning Finnish at least in a rudimentary level is important in order to be able to understand and respect the wider community of the City of Kuopio and the Finnish culture in general.

**Special needs**

We understand that a student may have difficulties with learning languages. In most cases, these difficulties are related to dyslexia. There is a special education teacher in our school who can offer professional help in these cases. All students are tested for dyslexia in the pre-DP year.

**Admission and Language Policy**

We do not accept applicants who do not have an adequate command of English. At the end of the pre-DP year, candidates for the IB Programme are reviewed to make sure that they have relevant skills and knowledge base – both in terms of English and in terms of subjects they are going to take – to enter the Programme.

**Professional Development**

Our language A and B teachers – as do all the other teachers as well – participate in IB approved workshops (online or otherwise) to make sure that they have an up-to-date knowledge on the syllabus.

We have collaboration with other IB schools in Finland through national meetings and personal contacts between teachers. In addition, teachers are encouraged to follow *My IB* discussion forums. We believe that these activities foster professional development in general as well as the command of English language in a professional context. The latter is especially relevant as we do not have native English speakers among the staff at the moment.

**Library and Language Laboratory**

Our school library offers books in Finnish, English, Swedish, German, Russian and French. In addition, students can use the City Library of Kuopio which has books in all the aforementioned languages as well as in many other languages.

There is a language laboratory in our school which is used for listening comprehension, pronunciation, peer and group work in languages.

**Communicating the Language Policy**

The language policy is available on the school webpage. Naturally, all the teachers are familiar with the language policy since they have participated in the planning process, and they will be part of the regular review process.

The essential features of the language policy will be communicated to parents of the IB students in parental meetings. In addition, it will be used in marketing and advertising the IB Programme.

**Review Process**

The language policy will be regularly reviewed and updated.