

Language A: literature school-supported self-taught support material Guidance for schools

Administering the course

This document provides support for administrators and supervisors to enable them to effectively carry out the school-supported self-taught (SSST) student course.

Schools will need to make a number of decisions themselves about how best to manage the SSST option. Outlined in this section are some of the situations that may require schools to make these decisions along with the parameters they need to consider. SSST students may be:

- placed in a language A SL class of the school's language of instruction
- offered support outside the school timetable
- offered the course as a one-year anticipated SSST course
- offered the course as a two-year course.

SSST students must be given assistance with specific aspects of their studies. One of the ways in which this must be done is by having a weekly scheduled class for self-taught students led by the SSST supervisor. SSST students must additionally have the support of an SSST tutor in the language A they are studying.

Implementing an SSST course

SSST language A: literature courses should be offered in cases in which a student wishes to study a language A which is not offered in the school. School policy and specific circumstances will determine whether a language A: literature course which is not offered by a school will be implemented as a taught course or as an SSST course. This will depend on the number of students requiring an additional language A: literature course to be offered in a language other than the languages offered by the school, and on the availability of an experienced DP language A: literature teacher in that language.

The IB does not prescribe a maximum number of SSST students for one individual language. The number of SSST students registered for one same language may go up to nine students, for example, if the school policy sets a minimum of ten students for a taught course to be offered and if no trained language A teacher is available.

It is important to understand that SSST courses should be recognizably different from taught courses in two ways.

- The amount of support offered by schools (the addition of tutor support and the scheduled class with SSST students of other languages) may range from 100 hours to 130 hours throughout the two years. How these hours are distributed between language-specific tutor support and generic supervisor support may vary according to different contexts and individual student needs.
- There should be significantly more autonomous learning than that carried out by a taught student.

Other scenarios

Courses in special request languages

Special request language courses allow students to undertake a Diploma Programme (DP) course in their first and best language when that language is not automatically available. In a special request language there is no *Prescribed reading list* from which the school can select texts that it will use as the focus of study for the course. This means that it is the responsibility of the school to construct a course of study that conforms to the requirements of the language A: literature course in terms of literary form, author, period and place. These texts must be available at an appropriate level of complexity and provide sufficient challenge.

Where there is little or no printed literature, texts of oral literature may be included, provided that the works chosen are of merit and reliable transcriptions are available.

Guidance in constructing the course of study can be obtained from the IB Global Centre Cardiff where previously-used book lists may be available. Additionally, the students and their community or tutors may be able to provide assistance in this regard.

In certain instances it is not possible for schools to select their own book list because of lack of time for approval by the examiner responsible—for example, students taking the language as “anticipated” candidates. In this case, schools are required to follow a course that uses a book list supplied by the IB Assessment Centre in Cardiff.

It is the responsibility of schools to apply for authorization to study the special request language by the deadlines set out in the *Diploma Programme Assessment procedures* for the DP in the “Language A: literature” section. Once this application has been submitted to the IB Global Centre Cardiff, the process of ensuring that an examiner is available begins.

While it is possible to source examiners for nearly every special request language, schools need to be aware that finding an appropriately-qualified examiner who can set and mark the papers can never be guaranteed, especially when it is for a language that has not been offered previously.

Therefore, where an examiner has not been confirmed, it is important that schools begin with works in translation or general work on the critical study of texts. This ensures that in the unlikely event that an examiner cannot be appointed, the student will be able to transfer to another language A. It should be stressed that it is rare that an examiner cannot be found.

In every other way, special request languages proceed as any language A: literature SL course and offer the same range of challenge and rigorous assessment.

Anticipated courses

Schools may consider that, for all or some of their students, taking the SSST course as an anticipated course is a desirable option. The “anticipated (A)” category is for DP candidates completing one or two standard level subjects after the first year of the programme. An anticipated session normally counts as one of the three possible sessions in which to achieve the diploma. Factors that may influence this decision include:

- students from two different year levels being able to study the literature of their first and best language together, especially in schools where specific linguistic communities are very small
- the potential and relative “loss” of fluency over two years in the first and best language for students who live in an environment where their language is not spoken at all.

All assessment and submission dates for anticipated students are exactly the same as for students completing the course over two years.

Coordinators are advised to liaise with university guidance counsellors to ensure that national requirements are met.

Supervising an SSST course

Schools are encouraged to manage the course in a way that suits their particular circumstances and resources. It is crucial, however, that the school ensures that the student is supported, that the course is delivered accurately, and that all work meets the IB’s standards of academic honesty.

All schools offering the SSST course must appoint a supervisor who must be teacher of DP language A. In-school support is essential for administrative, supervisory and communication purposes. The SSST supervisor must be acquainted with the special demands and requirements of school-supported self-taught study and must be able to guide the students through their course. Additionally, SSST students must have the support of a tutor in the language A they are studying. This tutor, either working with the school in the community or online, must be able to provide the first and best language support that the school cannot provide. Ideally, the tutor will have DP language A experience, but this cannot always be guaranteed. The

frequency and scope of the tutor's work with the student may vary depending on different contexts and on different student needs.

The following division of tasks and responsibilities is suggested.

Responsibilities of the school

The school should take responsibility for the following aspects of an SSST course.

- Raising awareness of the self-taught course within the school.
- Ensuring the first and best language provision features prominently in the school's language policy.
- Appointing an SSST supervisor who is an experienced IB DP language A teacher.
- Selecting, hiring and/or recruiting well-qualified tutors for the various languages.
- Dealing with administrative matters (IB forms, requests, and so on).
- Communicating with the IB.
- Ensuring that text choices are accurate and challenging, and that they follow regulations.
- Providing information, guidelines and resources to students, tutors and supervisor.
- Providing access to the documentation in the programme resource centre for the student and the tutor.
- Timetabling weekly generic language A self-taught classes in the school's language of instruction led by the SSST supervisor and examinations (including orals).
- Making budgetary requests (for resources and tutors), unless parents are asked to pay for these services.
- Consulting with the students and tutors to set up a reasonable schedule for the course of study.
- Following students' progress during the course of study.
- Ensuring that all internal and IB deadlines are met.
- Ensuring that all IB assessment tasks are completed, and submitted correctly and on time.
- Evaluating the course and its delivery on an ongoing basis.

Responsibilities of the tutor

The tutor, whether they work with the school in the community or remotely, is mainly responsible for providing the student with first and best language guidance (discussion of content, language, conventions, structure, and so on) for the various parts of the course of study and for setting mock or practice examinations, including oral assessments, and providing feedback on the student's performance. The extent of the support the tutor provides will depend on individual student needs.

Additionally, it may be necessary for the tutor to support the student in the following aspects of the course.

- Assisting the student in setting up a course of study (especially selecting works in the first and best language).
- Providing suggestions for works of literary value (in the case of special request languages where no *Prescribed reading list* is available).
- Providing the student with resources related to the works.

The tutor must maintain frequent contact with the supervisor and regularly provide information on the student's progress.

When selecting, hiring and/or recruiting tutors, schools must make sure they comply with all local, regional and national legislation, particularly regarding child protection issues. This legislation varies from country to country. In today's online environment, it may be difficult to do this fully, but schools must make every reasonable effort to ensure that their students are in the care of reliable professionals. Networking with other schools also offering self-taught courses may be one way of getting access to experienced tutors.

Support available outside the school

In addition to the support provided by the school, self-taught students can get support from the following sources.

IB Answers

Schools can contact IB Answers at any time to ask for support or for clarification of issues regarding courses of study, deadlines or assessment procedures.

The programme resource centre

On the programme resource centre, there is the *School-supported self-taught guide*, which is dedicated to the SSST course. Supervisors can share this guide with SSST tutors and students.

In the *School-supported self-taught guide* supervisors tutors and students can find information on how to construct a course and on the various requirements that need to be met.

The DP Communities

There are two facilities available in the DP Communities.

- The School-supported self-taught community itself deals with general topics of course administration, terminology, curriculum review and examinations.
- The forum Special request languages A features new languages added as and when they are approved by the IB.

Supervisors are encouraged to share successful ways of administering courses. By sharing their experiences online, supervisors can fine-tune their respective courses, exchange information on successful practice and provide appropriate details on tutors.

Other online support

In today's age of information technology and global communication, students and teachers can easily set up online discussion groups to exchange resources, opinions, experiences and examples of good practice. Regardless of where they are in the world, students sharing a common first and best language are able to communicate online, in real time, and can collaborate with one another. Where sharing between students occurs, supervisors and tutors will need to be aware of potential plagiarism or breaches of copyright in assessment tasks.

Former students of self-taught languages

Inevitably, the list of former IB students of self-taught languages is growing. The school could enable current students to access experienced former students who may be able to give support.