

Clarifications for language acquisition written assignments (first examinations 2015)

Updated November 2014

This document replaces the sections on the language B and language ab initio written assignments in the document *Clarifications for the groups 1 and 2 courses (first examinations 2013)* and the videos *Introducing group 2, Language B* and *Introducing group 2, Language ab initio*. It is to be read in conjunction with the *Language B guide (first examinations 2015)* and the *Language ab initio guide (first examinations 2015)* and serves to provide clarification only: there are no alterations to the contents of the courses or to the conduct of assessments as outlined in the guides for first examinations 2015.

Layout and presentation

Candidates must word-process their written assignment in a font and layout that is appropriate to the task and that ensures ease of reading for the examiner. This may mean, for example, bolding a sub-heading in a newspaper article, using a scripted font for a name on the end of a letter or using text boxes for elements of a blog. While such aspects of presentation should assist in demonstrating a clear understanding of text types, it is important to note that there are no marks allocated for artistic merit. Therefore, the use of font, layout, images and so forth should support the content, rather than compete with it or distract from it.

Conduct of the written assignment

In the new format of the written assignment, the teacher takes on the role of supervisor rather than invigilator.

There is no longer any requirement to conduct the written assignment in class time. However, if a school does choose to do this, they cannot specify a limited number of hours for its completion as this would disadvantage their students in comparison with others who have been allowed to complete the task entirely in their own time.

As candidates are now able to complete the written assignment at home in their own time, there is no longer any restriction regarding reference materials. For this reason, it is all the more important that teachers have discussions with their students regarding their intentions, in order to reasonably be able to identify any work handed in that is clearly not that of the student concerned. This is no more and no less than is already expected for coursework in other IB Diploma Programme (DP) subjects.

Given the new emphasis on independent learning for the written assignment, and in line with the IB's emphasis on Approaches to teaching and learning (ATL), candidates should be encouraged to start thinking and reading well before the written assignment is introduced in class. However, the actual production of the written assignment must take place in the final year of the course.

Supervision of the written assignment

For language ab initio SL and language B SL, in their role as supervisor, the teacher is an adviser who guides the student through the process. The teacher must advise initially on the choice of subject, as well as on the execution of the written assignment. This includes the right to advise a student that a topic or source is inappropriate, too difficult or of unsuitable length, that the sources selected are too similar in style or content, or even to advise a student that their choice of text type is inappropriate to the topic chosen in the case of language B.

For language B HL, "the teacher is an adviser who guides the student through the process ... the teacher must advise on the choice of literary text(s) and the choice of text type." (Diploma Programme *Language B guide (first examinations 2015)*, p 42). Candidates must take one or both of the literary texts studied in class as the stimulus for their written assignment. Teachers are expected to advise candidates as to the appropriateness of their intended tasks and text types. This includes disallowing, if necessary, the choice of text type, or disallowing a format that reflects literary criticism.

Teachers should ask candidates about their intentions for the written assignment before the planning and drafting process starts, advising against any ideas that are outside the remit for the written assignment or are simply

unsuitable to the assessment process. After completion of the draft, teachers should provide verbal feedback once only to identify ways in which the work could be improved.

It is acceptable for teachers of scripted languages to provide support (eg furigana, hara kaat, pinyin) for occasional words. However, if this level of support would be needed for the student to understand the majority of the source, teachers should instead advise candidates to select an alternative source that is easier to understand.

In line with the principles of ATL, language B candidates need to work independently to find sources for their written assignments, so, for language B, reusing articles already studied in class or texts from past examination papers is not acceptable. However, for language ab initio, “[s]ources from the classroom may be included as part of the research process, as can externally generated sources” (*Language ab initio guide (first examinations 2015)*, p 30).

Referencing

As the IB does not stipulate the use of any specific referencing systems, it is sufficient to select any of the commonly used, easily recognized formats. Regardless of the system used, it is important for candidates to be consistent.

The bibliography at the end of the written assignment is not included in the word count as it is intended for the examiner’s reference only.

Language ab initio

The formal requirements of the written assignment are as follows:

1. The written assignment is word processed in the target language.
2. The sources in the target language are included for submission with the assignment.
3. A bibliography in standard format is included with references to all sources in all languages.

Language B SL and language B HL

It is not necessary to include in-text referencing when a phrase or idea is taken from one of the source texts (or literary work(s) at language B HL), as the written assignment is not considered to be an academic research document. It is sufficient to include a bibliography at the end of the task, to provide references for the source texts or literary work(s). Candidates should be reminded that they are expected to produce an original piece of work using their own words and that it is not acceptable to copy large sections of source texts.

Submission

There will be a new cover sheet for the new version of the written assignment. The cover sheet will be available when the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme 2015* is published. This document will also contain instructions for the submission of written assignments.

The deadline for submission remains the same as in past years, 15 March for the May session and 15 September for the November session, and can be verified in the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme 2015* when it is published.

As candidates are required to send a bibliography of the materials they have used, there is no requirement to send a copy of the materials in addition to the written assignments, nor is there any requirement to send the candidates’ drafts or other rough work.

Further clarifications

Language B SL

It is the teacher's responsibility to be aware of the source texts that each candidate is planning to use, to ensure that they are suitable for the language level of the student and will support the student's intended text type and task. The texts should also provide an appropriate challenge, so language B candidates are expected to identify new source texts for their written assignment rather than reusing materials previously studied in class. To this end, it is the teacher's right to disallow any text and task that they believe to be inappropriate as a written assignment, or that has already been used by other candidates. This will also assist teachers in their duty to ensure, to the best of their professional ability, that there is no plagiarism or collusion.

Teachers are advised to model the process for candidates – for example, take a topic that the class has been discussing recently, show a few examples of source texts from suitable websites and other resources that would be appropriate for a written assignment on a given aspect of the topic. Teachers should discuss these examples in class and, in the case of language B, get ideas from the candidates as to the different text types that they might use to create a written assignment based on the source texts. Next, candidates can be asked to search for source texts—on the same topic or another of their own interest—and class time can be dedicated to sharing and evaluating these texts, so that everyone (candidates and the teacher) can develop a sense of the range, length and complexity of texts that are appropriate to work with for the written assignment. Teachers are expected to exercise their professional judgment in deciding whether a student's choice of text is of a suitable length and level of complexity. As a guide, it may be worthwhile to look back at past examination paper 1 sources and the nature of the texts that a school has chosen in the past for the written assignment.

Schools are reminded that the aim of all Language acquisition courses is to focus on the development of language skills and explore the culture(s) associated with the language studied. Therefore, teachers and candidates must check that source texts relate to the target country or regions of the language being studied. Language B text choices also need to reflect the topics of the Core.

Language B HL

Schools are reminded that an essay in the form of literary criticism is not acceptable for this task. The written assignment in language B HL is a creative response to a literary text.

The only requirement for the choice of texts to be studied at HL, and therefore to be potential stimuli for the written assignment, is that they were originally written in the target language and are literary in nature. This may include the study of graphic novels, provided that such works are fundamentally literary in nature and will allow candidates to broaden their vocabulary, develop fluent reading skills and at the same time promote interpretative and inferential language competencies.

References

Diploma Programme. *Language B guide* (first examinations 2015).

Diploma Programme. *Language ab initio guide* (first examinations 2015).