


RAHA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL KHALIFA CITY CAMPUS

POLICIES

Policy title	Language Policy
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Policy Version	1
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Approving Committee	Name	Signature
Principal	Peter Taylor	

Purpose

At Raha international School, Khalifa City campus, we offer an education that promotes intercultural understanding and recognise that language plays a key role in shaping students' educational experiences and their understanding of the world. We value multilingualism as a fact, a right and a resource.

Multilingualism as a fact:

At KCC, 1370 (out of 2003) students speak an additional language, other than the language of instruction, English.

Multilingualism as a right:

We encourage and promote the use of students' mother tongues through translanguaging practices that support home language development and access to learning. Teachers should exercise professional judgment to ensure this remains inclusive and purposeful. Translanguaging is most effective when used to summarise, rephrase, or support understanding. Teachers should review scaffolding strategies and visual supports to promote independence in the target language.

Multilingualism as a resource:

Recognising learners' literacy in their first language strengthens their academic development across languages, as supported by Cummins (2000). Allowing students to use their mother tongue facilitates the transfer of knowledge and supports deeper learning in their second language. Encouraging academic use of students' home languages not only enhances linguistic growth but also validates their identities and cultures, reinforcing a sense of belonging within the learning community.

Scope

This policy has been created by a steering committee consisting of the Head of Primary, Assistant Head of Primary and PYP Coordinator, Head of Secondary, Assistant Head of Secondary and MYP Coordinator, DP Coordinator, Primary and Secondary Deputy Heads of School, Head of Inclusion, and Head of Multilingualism.

Mother Tongue Support and Multilingualism

A note on terminology: the terms 'First Language', 'Best Language', 'Home Language' and 'Mother Tongue' are often used interchangeably, and all can be problematic for various reasons. We will use the term 'Mother Tongue' here to mean 'a proficient language other than English that a student is comfortable using, and that represents a cultural, identity or heritage connection that is meaningful to the individual.'

At KCC, we believe strongly in the power of multilingualism. Students who are encouraged, supported, and given protected time to maintain their Mother Tongue will develop strong connections to their culture and heritage, which will in turn have significant benefits for each student's sense of identity and belonging. Students who are encouraged and supported to learn, use, and achieve competency in additional languages will also strengthen their own abilities to be a respectful and open-minded global citizen. Mother Tongue language has many complex definitions and perspectives, but we use the term to describe the first language that a child learned. This is almost always the language spoken by at least one of the parents.

At KCC, language is:

- emphasized not only as an object of study, but also as a means of constructing and communicating our understanding of the world
- a means of understanding ourselves, others, diverse world views and cultures
- inextricably linked to identity and key to building positive relationships in the learning community.

As such, language permeates all the approaches to teaching, as well as intercultural understanding and global engagement. The utter inseparability of language and identity makes placement of languages delicate and profound (*IB PSPs realized*).

At KCC, we expect "Every teacher is a Language Teacher" and will facilitate regular professional learning to this end.

Working language of KCC

English is the language of instruction and the working language of KCC. All students are encouraged to use English in the classroom, corridors, and social spaces. By having a common language in the school, we try to ensure all students feel included in as many formal and informal situations as possible. However, we acknowledge the power of switching to other languages at times to deepen social connections, understanding of concepts in lessons, and maintain a sense of identity. Albert Costa (2020) acknowledges this switching and shows us that it is not always possible for students to be aware of or to control switches to other languages, thus we will not punish students for not speaking English around the school. Indeed, encouraging students to share their mother tongue as a way of developing intercultural awareness and to access learning through unique lenses will be a powerful tool.

Provision for Mother Tongue Support

Supporting the maintenance of Mother Tongue languages other than English and Arabic requires active effort on the part of the school with the following steps:

- Identify tools to assess and measure students' proficiency in their mother tongue
- Track students' progress overtime.
- Encourage students to take external assessment such as DELF in French or DELE in Spanish to track progress.
- Collect feedback from supervisors, students, and parents to identify strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement in mother tongue education.
- Foster relationships with parents to encourage active participation from community members in supporting mother tongue education initiatives.

The role of School-Supported Self-Taught (SSST) Literature A Coordinator (SSST Coordinator) was created to facilitate this at MYP and DP levels. This designated person has the responsibility to promote and manage the Mother Tongue Literature programme in the secondary school. They are provided with release time, and their responsibilities include:

- Identifying eligible students to target
- Promoting the Literature A SSST option with MYP students and parents and promoting uptake in the DP SSST course
- Using timetabled time in the week to meet with SSST students and mentor them through the Literature course, assessment, and learning procedures.
- Cultivating a network of language specialist tutors in Abu Dhabi and online, for student support in their Mother Tongue in current and future years
- Liaising with languages teachers in and out of KCC
- Keeping up to date and trained with the latest IB SSST Literature A principles, practices and procedures.

Pathways of learning – course placement

Appendix A contains visual course pathway information for languages. For reference, further details for each language branch are included below.

Equivalency between learning and assessment outcomes has been thoroughly researched, with MYP and IBDP entry and exit levels mapped to one another using two methodologies: CEFR competency levels and MYP phase grade/outcome descriptors.

New students joining a pathway, or the school will after a short time be allowed a correction if it becomes clear to the teacher upon assessment that they have been misplaced. All students may otherwise exit a pathway to move towards more challenging study, at the discretion of the teacher and/or Head of Department for the appropriate language. Aside from the above correction situation, students may not move to a less challenging pathway.

Arabic Pathways

Taaleem places the Arabic language at the heart of the learning experience. At KCC, our host country is the UAE, and therefore there is a strong respect for and commitment to making Arabic a core element of the curriculum at all ages.

In alignment with UAE law, **Arabic is now compulsory from Early Years onward** for all students. Arabic remains mandatory for all students up to MYP Year 4. UAE law determines the minimum standards of curriculum, attainment, and hours of study for students, depending on whether they hold an Arab country passport or not. Students are placed into the appropriate **Language Acquisition or Language and Literature** class based on their language proficiency at the point of entry into KCC Secondary School.

MYP Year 5 students take part in pre-DP (end of Grade 10) externally benchmarked assessments (ABT) as an additional data point to determine the most suitable DP course. For students holding an Arab country passport, and in accordance with UAE law, Arabic remains mandatory in MYP Year 5 at the appropriate Phase or Language and Literature level, and in the DP programme within either the Arabic A or Arabic B course, depending on their language proficiency.

Arabic Language & Literature Studies in MYP and DP

While Arabic A is not currently offered, the school is progressively increasing the level of challenge within the MYP to prepare for the future introduction of an Arabic Language and Literature class. This pathway will support students who aim to pursue Arabic Language and Literature at the DP level and achieve the bilingual Diploma.

Students who are able to communicate effectively in Arabic across a range of topics and unfamiliar contexts (CEFR B2+), appropriate to their age, will be placed in a **Language and Literature** class.

At the DP level, students will undertake the **Arabic A** course. KCC currently offers **Language and Literature**, with the option to introduce **Literature** if sufficient demand exists. Students may choose either **Higher Level (HL)** or **Standard Level (SL)**. **Students holding an Arabic passport are required to sit the UAE Ministry of Education Arabic exam in DP2** in order to be awarded **equivalency** by the Ministry of education.

A key priority is to equip students throughout the PYP and early MYP years with the skills and confidence needed to meet the demands of this pathway. Strengthening progression from PYP to MYP will ensure that students identified as 'Arabic A' by the UAE Ministry of Education are well prepared to enter the DP Arabic A course and pursue the bilingual Diploma.

Arabic Language Acquisition

Students acquiring the language at a beginner, emergent or capable level (CEFR A1 to B1/B2) are generally placed here, with the MYP phases applied.

Arabic Ab Initio

At DP, this is a course for absolute beginners of Arabic. Entry to the course is only for those with no (or very limited) previous exposure to the language. Any previous study precludes entry, as does exposure beyond the short term only. Currently we do not have any students who these criteria apply to and therefore do not offer this course. Should we later admit students directly into the DP who have no or very limited exposure to Arabic, we will review this offer.

English Pathways

Historically, KCC has required a high level of English proficiency in order to join the school. However, we accept our responsibility to ensure appropriate support is available for our many learners of English as a second or even third or fourth language. We embrace the challenge to diversify our student population, including encouraging diversity of language profile.

English is a mandatory component of the KCC curriculum at all ages.

English Language & Literature Studies

All students are placed into a class of Language & Literature study. At DP, students complete an English A course. KCC offers Language & Literature or Literature. Students have the choice of HL or SL.

English as an Additional Language

Many KCC students have acquired English as an additional language, after their Mother Tongue language. Students who present with a barrier to learning due to English proficiency level will be supported by the Student Support Team. Students on this pathway will additionally be offered specialist support, with the aim being to bring their English competency up to the standard of Language & Literature study as soon as is appropriate and exit the support programme once independent.

At DP, students are placed in an English A course, with the choice of HL or SL and Literature or Language & Literature. DP Courses students may opt out of English.

Additional Languages Pathways (MEL)

KCC encourages and supports the development of a third, and occasionally a fourth language of study. French and Spanish Language Acquisition are on offer from MYP 1, and students are asked to choose between them. The language chosen upon entry to the secondary school is generally the one they remain with throughout MYP.

SSST Literature can be chosen to replace MEL. The DP requires at least two languages be studied, with French/Spanish available at Language B level for continuing study. Ab Initio is also available in these languages to cater for students who want to start a new language rather than continue their MYP third language or Arabic. The appropriate pathway at each age stage is as follows:

MYP

Students acquiring the language at a beginner, emergent or capable level (CEFR A1 to B1/B2-) are generally placed here, with the MYP phases applied. Students for whom the language is their Mother Tongue may be better suited to a Language & Literature study in that language. KCC is open to exploring such courses as taught offers where demand arises, on a case-by-case basis.

DP

Students who have studied the language as a foreign language previously, with no other exposure to the language (e.g. home, Mother Tongue) will usually be placed in Language B and have the choice of HL or SL.

Students for whom the language is a Mother Tongue, or who have exceeded the proficiency requirements for Language B HL, will be placed in SSST A Literature. KCC are open to exploring taught Language A courses in a language where demand arises.

Students with no prior study, and no or very limited exposure to a language, may be placed in Ab Initio. It is not appropriate for students with previous study or use, including beginning a Language B course, to drop down to Ab Initio. For the purposes of ab initio placement, “very limited exposure” will mean not more than one year of study.

Determination, Reporting of Placement, Appeals

The correct placement for languages courses will be determined by proficiency. Evidence of proficiency can include:

- Previous school reports and attainment
- Externally accredited qualifications and grades
- Teacher assessment and observation – both formal and informal
- Admissions data.

Diagnostics & Assessment

Teachers will rely upon a range of assessment data to inform the initial placement of students, their support, and subsequent movement between phases and courses. Such assessment data will be one point of reference only, and teachers will be expected to rely upon the day-to-day evidence of proficiency demonstrated in lessons and through submitted work to fine tune the original placement.

Placement and data points can include:

- ABT – Arabic ability testing
- NGRT – English ability testing
- CAT4 – English ability testing
- PT – English progress check points
- MOE exams – Arabic ability testing

The ‘can-do’ statements for each MYP Language Acquisition Phase, the IB Language & Literature courses and CEFR benchmarks, will be used by teachers to standardise assessment of each student’s correct placement.

Language teachers for each student will frequently report progress, engagement and attainment as with any other subject. They will continually assess students and will pay particularly close attention to the suitability of placement for new joiners – including students joining the Secondary School from KCC Primary. Any cause for reviewing the placement will take place on a case-by-case basis within

the relevant language department, will include the LTL, and a recommendation to move a student – in either direction – will be made to the IB Programme Coordinator (Assistant Head). Changes within the Language Acquisition phases are not uncommon and will generally not involve the Assistant Head. Parents and students are welcome, and encouraged, to bring concerns over the level of challenge to the attention of the class teacher, but once a decision on placement is made by the academic team, an appeal on the decision will be considered only once, and any subsequent decision will be final.

Students will receive their placement for each eligible language at the point of choosing options for DP. Where languages can be selected by the student, KCC operates a policy of “Student chooses the language, school chooses the level.”

From time to time, it is necessary to adjust the placement level for a student after the options process is complete. Such changes will be communicated on an individual level, and students will be free to change their choice of language after the deadline in these cases if they do not wish to pursue the newly allocated level.

Policy Review Log

Date	Changes	Reviewed By
September 2025	Reviewed and approved by Principal	Peter Taylor

MYP		DP
MYP Language & Literature (CEFR B2+)	à	DP Language A
MYP Language Acquisition Phase 5 & 6 (CEFR B2+)		DP Language A
MYP Language Acquisition students who enter Phase 5 in the final semester of MYP		DP Language B HL
MYP Lang Acquisition Phase 4 (CEFR B1)		DP Language B HL, with SL allowed
MYP Lang Acquisition Phase 3 (CEFR A2)		DP Language B SL, with HL allowed under recommendation
MYP Lang Acquisition Phase 2 (CEFR A1+)		DP Language B SL, under recommendation
No prior learning or substantial exposure		Ab initio allowed

Appendix A: Pathways for Language Study