

Classical languages frequently asked questions

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IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

INQUIRERS

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

THINKERS

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

COMMUNICATORS

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

PRINCIPLED

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

OPEN-MINDED

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

CARING

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

RISK-TAKERS

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

BALANCED

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.

Curriculum model

1. Should I name and discuss the areas of exploration in lessons with my students, or are they intended as a tool solely for use by the teacher?

The areas of exploration were designed to make the different ways one can interrogate and arrive at an interpretation of a text visible. The guiding questions in the *Classical languages guide* (first assessment 2024) are examples of the types of questions that incisive readers consider, sometimes without realizing it.

Naming the areas of exploration, and linking inquiry questions to one or more of them, can be helpful in building students' capacity to inquire into, interpret, and make connections and distinctions across texts.

As students become increasingly familiar with the areas of exploration, and increasingly comfortable forming and following complex lines of inquiry into texts, naming areas of exploration (or isolating one from the others) may become unnecessary.

2. Why do the three areas of exploration have unequal allocations of teaching hours? The areas of exploration in language A (first assessment 2021) are equally allocated.

Classical languages is a course in the language acquisition subject group. That fact, coupled with the demands of reading unadapted classical literature, means that the course retains a strong focus on developing language proficiency and developing students' identities as confident, active users of the classical language. Many students will need scaffolding and support to be able to read the unadapted classical literature prescribed in the core and companion texts.

As the meaning, form, and language area of exploration lends itself readily to this type of study, this area of exploration represents the bulk of the teaching hours at both standard level (SL) and higher level (HL).

3. Is the allocation of teaching hours across the areas of exploration flexible? Do I need to keep close track of the hours I spend on each area of exploration?

The allocation of teaching hours across the areas of exploration is indicative, but has been chosen to ensure the nature of inquiry into texts aligns with the expectations of the course's formal assessments. (This is why there is a bias, for both SL and HL students, on meaning, form, and language.)

However, the nature and possible applications of the areas of exploration mean it will often not be possible to plan (or, after the fact, classify) classroom time as "belonging" to one area of exploration as opposed to another. Consequently, there is no need to time or track hours or amend course plans retroactively to account for how instructional time was used.

Similarly, the nature of students' inquiry into texts will be based on their own needs and interests, which might lead to relatively more or less time spent on certain areas of inquiry when compared with the guidance in the subject guide. Schools whose students have stronger language skills, for example, might be able to conduct slightly more inquiry based around text, author and audience, or time, space, and culture.

4. Can I use the areas of exploration with multimodal sources or those that do not include writing?

The areas of exploration can be used with a variety of text types. Some lines of inquiry will be impossible or more difficult to consider with texts that contain no or minimal written language. However, considerations of stylistic conventions, details of execution, intentions, audience reaction, context, and the information that can reasonably be drawn from them are relevant, vibrant avenues into the exploration of multimodal, visual and other sources with little or no writing.

Syllabus content

1. Does the International Baccalaureate (IB) publish the editions of the prescribed core and companion texts for use in teaching and learning and on examinations?

The global audience for the classical languages course means the IB cannot ensure that all schools can access an agreed, printed edition of the texts. The IB encourages schools to use materials that suit their students' needs and school context best.

The IB no longer publishes the text of the prescribed reading for schools to access, since newer, printed texts are under copyright, and the text of online editions change as errors are identified and corrected.

Generally, the IB uses open-source editions of texts for assessment (with those from the Perseus Digital Library, as published on the University of Chicago's PhiloLogic 4 website^[1], as a starting point), amending these as needed to ensure they are readable for students, or to reflect important contributions from recent scholarship.

As of July 2022, the IB is undergoing a check of the line numbers for the text citations in the lists of prescribed core and companion texts to align them with those used in the version published on the Perseus Digital Library website. The guide will be amended to note this approach.

2. How many lines or words do I need to include in my course for ongoing language development?

There is no prescribed number of lines or words for ongoing language development. Because schools will select a variety of texts and explore them in a variety of ways, and because some schools will use this time to practise speaking, listening or writing the classical language, the subject guide offers guidance on how schools should explore these texts in terms of hours and not quantity of text.

SL students should devote approximately the same amount of time to ongoing language development as they do to the two prescribed companion texts; HL students should devote about as much time as they do to one of the two prescribed core texts. (For both SL and HL students, this is likely to amount to about 20–30% of the course.)

Schools can choose to spend relatively more or less time on ongoing language development than the subject guide suggests, based on the school context and the needs and interests of their students.

3. Aren't my students also developing their language skills via the prescribed texts? Why do I need to integrate additional texts beyond the core and companion texts into my course?

Yes, they are. Ongoing language development, and the texts read for it, helps ensure students engage with a variety of text types and authors. Ongoing language development provides additional opportunities for comparison and contrast with other texts, and can act as inspiration for ideas that could be developed in a research dossier or HL composition. (Encouraging each student in a cohort to use different stimuli for research dossiers and HL compositions is one indirect way that teachers with larger cohorts can support practices that uphold academic integrity.)

In addition, ongoing language development can also serve a critical function for schools that perceive that some (or all) of their students would benefit from building their language skills to the point where they can more readily access unadapted classical literature. Space for language development is built into the curriculum with the aim of making the course more accessible to more students and schools.

Exposure to a variety of authors and texts supports students' confidence and skill development for paper 1, where they will encounter unseen texts from authors they may not have previously studied. The

[1] The ARTFL Project. . (2022). University of Chicago. Retrieved August 6, 2022 , from <https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/philologic4>.

“unfamiliarity” of texts read for ongoing language development may make such a task seem more ordinary and less intimidating to students.

4. As an SL teacher, my students could complete the examination papers on only prose or verse texts. Should I therefore only include one literary form in the syllabus content I teach?

Whether teachers of SL students include only prose or verse written texts in the syllabus content they teach is at their discretion. Students reading unadapted literature for the first time as part of the Diploma Programme (DP) classical languages course might benefit from the focus on the narrower range of linguistic and stylistic conventions that a focus on prose or verse would provide.

However, there are many reasons why a teacher of SL students would expose students to both verse and prose written texts. These might be pedagogical (so that students can explore the presentation of a cultural or historical issue from written texts in different literary forms) or logistical (where SL and HL students are present in the same class; to allow SL students to select from the options on paper 1, having been exposed to both literary forms).

Assessment

Paper 1

1. Which authors will appear in the extracts on paper 1?

Not restricting the authors that can appear on paper 1 allows the IB to find passages of a suitable level of difficulty that match the format of the examination. In particular, the requirement that the extracts in each option are thematically linked would be far more difficult to fulfil if the choice of passages was restricted to certain authors or works.

On paper 1, students will not be asked questions relevant to the context in which the texts were produced. In addition to introductions and glosses, and a summary (for the HL-only extract), students can use a translating dictionary on paper 1.

2. Will the section of the extract to be translated always be at the very end?

No, but it will always appear in the second half of the extract. This way, students can use the short-answer questions **before** the translation as scaffolds. It may be, though, that there are short-answer questions that target parts of the passage **after** the section for translation.

3. Why doesn't the examination paper indicate the 10 words/phrases being evaluated for the precision of their translation?

Not indicating the words and phrases being assessed for precision ensures students attempt to be as precise as possible throughout their response to the translation question.

4. How precise should students be in their translations?

The best translations will convey the meaning of the passage, use context-appropriate definitions of Latin or Classical Greek words, and convey the syntax and morphology of the original text as precisely as possible in the response language. Translations that do so can access the highest marks on the holistic judgement of the translation and are in the best position to score all 10 marks on the items marked for precision of the translation.

Where students feel they have a grasp of the meaning of the passage but are unsure about how to represent the syntax or morphology of the original text precisely, they might opt to amend their translations accordingly (for example, by conveying a sentence in the passive voice in the original in the active voice in the translation; by omitting a modifier whose referent they are unsure of; or by rendering the tense or aspect of a verb with less precision). By sacrificing precision, students may receive fewer marks for the precision of the translation, but by ensuring their translations make sense and communicate what the passage is saying, they preserve their chances of scoring as high a mark as possible for the holistic quality of their translation.

5. Why is there a summary of the second extract on the HL exam? Why not include a translation?

The questions that HL students answer on the second extract in the option are demanding; the summary of the second extract, in combination with glosses and the introduction, all support students' comprehension of the passage, so that they can write an effective guided analysis.

By authoring its own summaries, instead of using published translations of the text, the IB can adhere to copyright restrictions and ensure the same conditions for students taking the examinations in English and Spanish.

6. How many pieces of evidence do HL students need to include in their guided analysis to score well?

There is no absolute minimum for the number of pieces of evidence students must provide in their guided analysis. The focus should be on analysing the relationship between form and meaning (as opposed to

simply describing what is happening in the extract), providing specific evidence from the original text, and demonstrating their understanding of the passage. Many strong responses are likely to be built on several pieces of evidence, but the guidance in the markscheme in the specimen assessments should be taken as possible points of evidence and not an exhaustive list of what students must include to score in the highest markband.

Paper 2

1. How precisely should students cite the provided extract from the prescribed core text in their responses to the short-answer questions?

In the short-answer questions, evidence from the provided Latin/Classical Greek extract from the prescribed core text should be as specific as possible. In order to best demonstrate they understand the text, they should cite the specific words or phrases that support each part of their argument as they make it, rather than citing a larger piece of text (for example, an entire line of verse or clause/sentence) at the end of their argument.

Latin/Classical Greek text that does not directly address the argument in their response should be omitted.

2. What “other sources” can students reference in their extended response? Must they be Latin/Classical Greek sources?

In the extended-response question, students must reference a prescribed core text and at least one other source. This source may be a different prescribed core text, a prescribed companion text, a text read in the classical language for ongoing language development, a text read in translation, a post-classical or modern text, multimodal, visual or material sources, or commentaries and other secondary scholarship.

The assessment criteria, rather than prioritizing one type of source over another, ask for students to integrate evidence from these additional sources into their response meaningfully. There is, therefore, no **minimum** or **maximum** number of additional sources students must reference in their response to reach the top markbands.

3. Why do the published specimen papers use extracts from texts prescribed in the *Classical languages guide* (first examinations 2016)?

The specimen paper 2 published with the *Classical languages guide* (first assessment 2024) uses text from the syllabus last used for examinations in November 2023.

Specimen papers undergo the IB’s full, quality-controlled process for authoring, editing and production, which means that the authors and editors of our papers must produce an extra set of examinations alongside the work they do for live assessment sessions.

As those authors and editors are already working with the texts from the previous subject guide, and are taking on this work alongside other examination work, the IB asks them to produce the specimen papers based on the previous syllabus, and not the new one.

The live examination papers from May 2024 will use extracts from the prescribed core texts in the *Classical languages guide* (first assessment 2024).

Research dossier (internal assessment)

1. How different does the context of the starting point need to be from the context of the sources investigated in the dossier?

The starting point should represent a different linguistic, literary or cultural context from the source relevant to the student’s research question and line of inquiry. It need not be a vastly different context: an exploration of the treatment of a theme from Greek oratory and a theme from Greek epic would be suitable, as would the exploration of how an aspect of Roman culture exemplified in a starting point from a republican-era source developed in a different way during the empire.

2. A student failed to include a starting point, prediction and/or assessment in their dossier. Will their work be marked?

Yes. Their work will still be marked, but it cannot score marks against criterion D without having included a starting point, a prediction, and conclusions based on the outcomes of the dossier.

3. Must the sources used in the dossier be from antiquity?

The sources used in the dossier must either:

- a. come from Classical Greece and/or Rome; or
- b. include written text that was originally produced in the classical language.

With regard to point b, the *Classical languages guide* (first assessment 2024) differs from the previous subject guide. Research dossiers submitted for May 2024 onwards may use post-classical, textual sources, provided they were originally produced in Latin or Classical Greek. Post-classical sources that are translations of texts from other languages into Latin or Classical Greek do not meet the requirements of the task; including them will have an impact on a student's marks for their dossier.

4. Can a student studying Latin write a dossier on a Greek topic (or vice versa)?

A research dossier submitted for the Latin subject should be on a question about the Latin language, its literature, or Roman culture. Likewise, dossiers for Classical Greek should be on Greek-related lines of inquiry. A dossier's research question, sources and annotations as a whole should point to a focus on the appropriate language, literature or culture of the subject being studied.

Given the interaction of Roman and Greek culture in certain periods, and the widespread use of Classical Greek in the Roman world, it is possible (and acceptable) that this distinction will be blurred in some dossiers; moderators will treat these dossiers accordingly. For example, the following would be accepted.

- The use of translated extracts from Polybius as sources in a dossier on the second-century Roman republic would be acceptable for a Latin student.
- The use of a source from Greek New Comedy illustrating the use of stock characters in a dossier on Roman comedy, which **primarily** includes sources from Plautus and Terence, would be acceptable. In this instance, a student might incorporate research into Greek New Comedy into the **annotations** of the primary sources and cite those secondary sources in a bibliography page, thereby keeping the focus of the primary sources on those originally written in Latin.

An entire dossier on the use of Homeric epithets would not be acceptable for submission for a student studying Latin.

To ensure there is a clear focus on the correct linguistic/cultural context, research questions that would be best addressed by a balanced selection of Latin and Greek sources (for example, "How is Aeneas described differently by Homer than by Virgil?") might be avoided for the research dossier, despite being suitable lines of inquiry in different academic contexts.

HL composition task

1. How can I support my students (and how can students support each other) in ways that uphold a commitment to academic integrity?

In the context of assessment tasks like the HL composition that are derived from extended, authentic learning experiences, teachers understandably want to know what, when and how much guidance they can provide to students or that students can provide to each other.

As a general guide, the closer a student is to their final submission, the less the feedback should deal with specific words, phraseology and points, and the more it should be phrased in questions about issues to be addressed, rather than specific advice about how to address those issues.

It is reasonable that teachers will use class time to practise composition or the writing of rationale entries. In these contexts, where neither student nor teacher is sure that the material used in class will be part of the final submission, feedback is best framed as an opportunity to point out areas for improvement, accompanied by a question (for example, after underlining a part of the text, asking, "How could you express this idea more clearly and concisely?").

Once students have identified intentions, and/or have drafted (parts of) their composition or written rationale entries, feedback should not identify exactly what needs to be corrected, and how, but rather

should prompt students to reflect on how well particular aspects of their work respond to the demands of the task and assessment criteria.

Teachers can review one draft of a complete submission and provide this type of general feedback, but cannot make edits or offer specific corrections to their draft.

2. Does the language of the composition need to be perfect to achieve top marks in criterion B?

No. Examiners are not expecting that students write error-free Latin or Classical Greek to receive top marks in criterion B. The focus is on whether meaning is effectively conveyed and the extent to which the errors that are present detract from this.

The exemplar assessments provided in the teacher support material (TSM) demonstrate the level of language that is likely to score well in criterion B.

3. Is it better for students to write a simpler composition with fewer errors or aspire to a more complex composition at the risk of making more errors?

This will be an individual decision, based on the student's language skills, appetite for risk and preferred approach to the rationale.

Generally, though, students' approach to the task should reflect the level of language, inquiry and research skills they have demonstrated throughout the course. As a teacher, you will likely have a sense of whether (or in what parts of their work) students are being far too ambitious or cautious, and can encourage them to reflect on their approach to the task. Practically, it may be easier to develop simpler work into something more complex or dynamic than it is to edit and constrain work that is overly ambitious.

From the perspective of assessment, errors in the language that impede communication or fulfilment of objectives may impact the score in criterion B, whereas language choices that are overly simple may not provide enough material for an explanation sufficiently detailed or supported to achieve the highest marks in criterion D. Students should remember that perfection is not demanded to achieve top marks in criterion B. In addition, students can use the rationale to explain instances in which the composition does not successfully achieve the intentions, or instances in which a student took a linguistic "risk" to try to achieve the intentions and did not succeed.

4. For the HL composition task, how many sources does a student need to engage with?

There is no stated minimum or maximum number of sources—either those in the classical language or otherwise—that a student's work must engage with. Criterion C, on the use of sources, demands in the top markband that students demonstrate deep or broad engagement with sources and a thorough understanding of them.

The wording of the descriptor recognizes that some compositions and rationales will more appropriately engage with a narrower set of sources than others. A student writing in the form of a letter might reasonably draw on a variety of ancient exemplars, whereas a student whose intent is to communicate the emotional turmoil of Catullus' speakers in the Lesbia poems will naturally draw from a smaller set of sources in the classical language.

Sources not in the classical language (for example, reference sources, commentaries, linguistic aids such as dictionaries and grammars) will be useful to all students in generating their intentions, compositions and rationales; again, the number and variety of sources with immediate relevance will vary from submission to submission.

In the interests of academic integrity, though, students should cite sources throughout their work, using a style of their choosing, and in a bibliography page.

5. Must a student use all 1,000 words in the rationale? And all 100/120 words in the composition?

The task has been designed so that the top markbands in all criteria can be achieved in the word limits provided.

While students do not need to exhaust the 1,000-word limit in the rationale, submissions that are significantly shorter may not be able to demonstrate engagement with the sources (the focus of criterion C) and explain the entries in detail (the focus of criterion D). (The exemplar HL composition tasks in the TSM contain examples of rationales too short to meet the expectations of criteria C and D.)

Likewise, compositions significantly shorter than 100 (Latin)/120 (Classical Greek) words may not be able to achieve the stated intentions effectively.

Given the variety of ways to structure and label the **entries** in the rationale, students should worry less about identifying exactly 10 entries than the content of the explanations in those entries.

6. A student failed to submit the HL composition task in the format outlined in the subject guide. Will the work still be marked?

Yes. The IB will mark work that does not conform to the guidelines in the subject guide; however, submissions that make it difficult to identify the intentions and to link explanations of choices that aim to achieve the intentions to specific parts of the composition risk scoring lower against the criteria.

The desired structure for student submissions outlined in the subject guide is meant to highlight as clearly as possible for examiners how students have tried to fulfil the requirements of the task and the demands of the criteria. Students are therefore strongly encouraged to follow this structure.

The exemplar HL composition tasks in the TSM contain an example in which the submission does not follow the submission guidelines. The corresponding examiner marks show how that has had a negative impact on the evaluation of the work.