

Language ab initio teacher support material

First assessment 2020



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Diploma Programme

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IB mission statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.



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.

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Purpose of this document

Language ab initio teacher support material

This publication is intended to provide teachers with additional guidance in the teaching of the Diploma Programme (DP) language ab initio course from September 2018. It should be read in conjunction with the *Language ab initio guide* (first assessment 2020) and the language-specific syllabuses (LSS). It has been developed in collaboration with IB teachers and examiners. The *Language ab initio guide* provides a description of the nature of the subject, the assessment objectives, and the syllabus and assessment details.

The purpose of this teacher support material (TSM) is to help both teachers new to the language ab initio course and those who are currently teaching the language ab initio course to understand the syllabus. Also included is guidance in designing the course; in building receptive, productive and interactive skills through conceptual understandings; and in incorporating such elements as the DP core and approaches to teaching and learning (ATL).

The intended audience for this document is teachers. However, the information is directly relevant to the students; teachers are therefore encouraged to share this document with them, as appropriate.

The strategies, ideas, course outlines and resources included in this document are provided as examples only. These materials are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. Teachers are encouraged to create and adapt these to their school, community and environment, addressing the needs of their own students while keeping in mind the curriculum presented in the subject guide.

Aims

The aims of this publication are to:

- help teachers plan the course
- help teachers understand the requirements of the course
- give advice on how to approach each assessment component
- provide teachers with teaching support materials
- help teachers understand the achievement level expected of students.

First teaching 2018

Below is an overview of certain items that are included in the language ab initio curriculum for first teaching 2018. The full description of each item can be found in the *Language ab initio guide* (first assessment 2020). Developments that may occur during the life cycle of this curriculum will be announced in the Diploma Programme *Coordinator's notes* and posted on the programme resource centre.

Writing will be externally assessed as a productive skill in paper 1. Teachers should ensure that students have ample opportunity to practise writing different types of texts and receive appropriate and constructive feedback on their writing. In their writing, students should take into consideration the conceptual understandings of audience, context, purpose, meaning and variation.

Listening comprehension and **reading comprehension** will both be externally assessed as distinct receptive skills in the two separate parts of paper 2.

[Supporting listening comprehension \(PDF\)](#)

The course is structured around the **five prescribed themes** of identities, experiences, human ingenuity, social organization and sharing the planet. Additionally, the language ab initio syllabus prescribes four topics for each of the five prescribed themes. In total, there are 20 topics that must be addressed in the language ab initio course. The **conceptual understandings** (audience, context, purpose, meaning, variation) are to be kept in mind when connecting the themes and topics to receptive, productive and interactive skills development.

Attention should be paid to the **assessment criteria** for language ab initio. The criteria are written with a view to cohesion within and across the three modern language acquisition courses. Teachers who teach more than one course will notice consistency in the terminology used in the descriptors. All teachers are reminded that a “best-fit” model is used to evaluate student work on the assessments.

The transition to **on-screen assessment** for all language acquisition courses is anticipated to be complete by 2025. In order that their practice may be informed by the developments in methods of assessing student work, teachers will be informed well in advance of updates in the assessment practices. Developments regarding this transition will be published and announced via the official channels (for example, programme resource centre news items, DP *Coordinator's notes*, and so on).

Course preparation

When designing a language ab initio course, the teacher must take into account the context of the school, diversity, student interests, access to the target language, languages of instruction, as well as languages used by the students and any local or national additional requirements. These may well dictate the pace of instruction, the breadth of the course and, to a certain extent (along with the LSS), the course content.

Course features

Teachers must keep in mind the following features of DP language acquisition courses, each of which is discussed in further detail in the sections that follow.

- Target audience—the students
- Assessment objectives
- Syllabus content
- IB Diploma Programme features
- Principles of course design
- Best practices in language acquisition instruction
- Practicalities

Target audience—the students

Ideally, the students have chosen to study a language that appeals to their curiosity and interests at a level that provides an appropriate challenge. In designing the course, teachers should strive to provide intellectually stimulating material that is age- and level-appropriate and to balance the requirements of the course with the needs and interests (to the extent that this is possible) of the students.

The language ab initio course is intended for students with no previous experience of, or very little exposure to, the target language. More information on placement of students into the appropriate language acquisition course can be found in the “Frequently asked questions” section of this TSM, as well as in the document [Guidance for studies in language and literature and language acquisition courses](#).

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives are detailed in the *Language ab initio guide* (first assessment 2020). Students will be assessed on their ability to:

1. communicate clearly and effectively in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes
2. understand and use language appropriate to a range of interpersonal and/or intercultural contexts and audiences
3. understand and use language to express and respond to a range of ideas with fluency and accuracy
4. identify, organize and present ideas on a range of topics
5. understand, analyse and reflect upon a range of written, audio, visual and audio-visual texts.

In planning the course, the means to achieve these objectives should be clearly identified and integrated into the syllabus content.

Assessment objectives in practice

Assessment objective	Which component addresses this assessment objective?	How is the assessment objective addressed?
1. Communicate clearly and effectively in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes.	Paper 1—writing	Students demonstrate their conceptual understanding by responding appropriately in written tasks using a variety of text types.
	Internal assessment	Students orally react to a visual stimulus, respond to questions and engage in a general conversation.
2. Understand and use language appropriate to a range of interpersonal and/or intercultural contexts and audiences.	Paper 1—writing	Students demonstrate their conceptual understanding by responding appropriately in written tasks using a variety of text types.
	Paper 2—listening and reading	Students produce responses that demonstrate an understanding of written and audio texts.
	Internal assessment	Students interact with the teacher using a range of language structures and registers appropriate to the context and audience.
3. Understand and use language to express and respond to a range of ideas with fluency and accuracy.	Paper 1—writing	Students respond to written tasks using appropriate language, register and format.
	Paper 2—listening and reading	Students demonstrate an understanding of written and audio texts.
	Internal assessment	Students interact orally with the teacher using appropriate language, register and format.
4. Identify, organize and present ideas on a range of topics.	Paper 1—writing	Students develop a coherent and organized response on a range of topics.
	Internal assessment	Students understand the topic of discussion and present an organized response, whether planned or spontaneous.
5. Understand, analyse and reflect upon a range of written, audio, visual and audio-visual texts.	Paper 2—listening and reading	Students respond appropriately to authentic texts.
	Internal assessment	Students demonstrate the ability to interact verbally in the target language in response to a visual stimulus.

Syllabus content

The language ab initio syllabus comprises three interconnected areas: language, themes and texts.

Language

Teachers must ensure that students have the opportunity to develop the ability to communicate successfully in the target language. Communication is evidenced through receptive, productive and interactive communicative skills across a range of contexts and purposes. Linguistic requirements are detailed in the “Grammatical syllabus” in the LSS.

Themes

There are five prescribed themes that are to be addressed equally over the two years of the language ab initio course. The table below illustrates the prescribed themes, the prescribed topics within each theme and suggests possible questions that can be used to explore each theme.

Theme	Guiding principle	Prescribed topics	Possible questions
Identities	Explore the nature of the self and how we express who we are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal attributes Personal relationships Eating and drinking Physical well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do I present myself to others? How do I express my identity? How do I achieve a balanced and healthy lifestyle?
Experiences	Explore and tell the stories of the events, experiences and journeys that shape our lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily routine Leisure Holidays Festivals and celebrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does travel broaden our horizons? How would my life be different if I lived in another culture? What are the challenges of being a teenager? How are customs and traditions similar or different across cultures?
Human ingenuity	Explore the ways in which human creativity and innovation affect our world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport Entertainment Media Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do science and technology affect my life? How do I use media in my daily life? What can I learn about a culture through entertainment?

Theme	Guiding principle	Prescribed topics	Possible questions
Social organization	Explore the ways in which groups of people organize themselves, or are organized, through common systems or interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood • Education • The workplace • Social issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What purpose do rules and regulations have in society? • What is my role in society? • What options do I have in the world of work?
Sharing the planet	Explore the challenges and opportunities faced by individuals and communities in the modern world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate • Physical geography • The environment • Global issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can I do to help the environment? • How do my surroundings affect the way I live? • What can I do to make the world a better place?

When planning the language ab initio course, these prescribed themes and topics provide a framework for language acquisition. While all themes and topics are compulsory, the manner in which they are addressed will vary according to the needs and interests of the students.

An example of how the topic of “the environment”, as part of the theme of “**sharing the planet**”, might be explored would be for the students to:

- view/analyse an infographic on the impacts of climate change
- develop vocabulary lists of environmental/climate terms
- visit and gather information from environmental websites
- read the Paris Agreement documents from the 2015 Paris climate conference (in the target language)
- listen to/view reports (radio/TV/podcast) on climate change (with listening comprehension activities)
- create slogans/awareness posters about the (local and global) effects of climate change in the target language
- organize information drawn from a number of target language articles into a presentation.

Texts

Students must be able to understand and produce a variety of text types. The following list of text types can also be found in the Language ab initio guide (first assessment 2020). The text types shown are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. Language-specific lists of the texts that may feature on the paper 1 writing assessment are available in [Text types for Paper 1 task options \(first assessment 2020\)](#), which can be found in the “Assessment” section on the “Language ab initio” page of the programme resource centre.

Personal texts	Professional texts	Mass media texts
Blog	Blog	Advertisement
Diary	Brochure	Article (newspaper, magazine)
Email	Catalogue	Blog
Invitation	Email	Brochure
Journal	Essay	Film
List	Formal letter	Flyer
Personal letter	Interview	Interview
Postcard	Invitation	Leaflet
Social media posting/chat room	Literature (short story, novel, poem, graphic novel)	Literature
Text message	Maps/diagrams	News report
Timetable	Menu	Newsletter
	Online forum	Opinion column/editorial
	Personal statement/CV	Pamphlet
	Proposal	Podcast
	Questionnaire	Poster
	Recipe	Public commentary (editorial/ readers' letters)
	Report	Radio programme
	Set of instructions/guidelines	Review
	Supporting letter	Social media posting
	Survey	Speech
	Timetable	Travel guide
		TV/drama/music
		Web page

The following are examples of how a “set of instructions” text or texts might be used in skill development.

- The student can hear instructions for the use of a certain product or procedure in the target language and follow those instructions to successful completion (receptive).
- The student could create a set of instructions for a product or procedure of his/her own choosing and deliver the instructions in written or oral form (productive).
- A pair, or small group, of students could be given incomplete instructions (with certain steps missing) and, using the target language, develop the missing steps—relying on input from the partner or group (receptive, productive, interactive).
- A pair, or small group, of students could be given the steps from a series of instructions—not in order—and work together to organize them into a logical sequence to be able to use the product/complete the procedure (interactive).

IB Diploma Programme features

The flexibility of IB course design allows teachers to build a course within which are interwoven the foundational features of the DP and these features should, therefore, be an intrinsic component in the design of the language acquisition course. Five of these features are the IB learner profile, international-mindedness, conceptual understanding, approaches to teaching and learning (ATL) and theory of knowledge (TOK).

The IB learner profile

The ability to be an effective **communicator** is one of the learner profile traits—and it can also be closely tied to several of the other traits. Spontaneous interaction in the target language involves a significant degree of **risk-taking**, as do other aspects of learning an additional language. The study of cultures in which the target language is used can foster **open-mindedness** as students attempt to reconcile values and beliefs that may differ from those of others. Many aspects of language acquisition are linked to curiosity about the target language, the people who use it, the places where it is used for communication and the culture(s) with which it is inseparable. Consequently, language acquisition students are continually developing as **inquirers**, using critical-thinking and analysis skills that lead to them becoming **thinkers** and **knowledgeable**, both about the target language itself and how a larger part of the world is opening for them as a result of learning another language.

International-mindedness

A goal of IB language acquisition courses is to foster intercultural understanding and global engagement. The flexibility of course design allows the teacher to incorporate ideas and resources that encourage the development of international-mindedness. Students should be encouraged to build upon their development of the learner profile traits as they encounter aspects of the target language and culture. The design of the course should foster the ability to make non-judgmental comparisons and allow students to see that there are multiple perspectives from which issues may be viewed.

Conceptual understanding

Conceptual understanding is interwoven throughout the DP language acquisition curriculum. These understandings tie language acquisition to ATL, the DP core and international-mindedness. More specifically within the language acquisition courses, conceptual understandings (audience, context, purpose, meaning and variation) are manifested as students develop into effective and knowledgeable communicators.

Approaches to teaching and learning

The use of ATL strategies creates rich and powerful conditions for the development of inquisitive, self-directed lifelong learners. By providing opportunities for inquiry and collaboration in an environment that incorporates the conceptual understandings discussed and exemplified, teachers can guide the development of the students' learning skills. Teachers must also address the needs of all learners and use both formal and informal assessments to inform their instruction.

Theory of knowledge

TOK is critical in the development of metacognitive skills and helps students to see the interrelatedness of languages, the other subject areas and the DP core.

Principles of course design

In designing the language ab initio course, teachers should pay particular attention to the following directives.

- Use the aims and objectives of the course and of the assessments to guide course design.
- Incorporate the five themes equally into the two-year course with attention to each of the prescribed topics for each theme.
- Build in opportunities for students to become autonomous learners.
- Develop student receptive, productive and interactive skills.
- Incorporate student interests.
- Provide variety.

Best practices in language acquisition instruction

Course design must be informed by current and research-based best practices in language acquisition. These include:

- use of authentic stimuli
- use of unabridged/non-simplified, age- and level-appropriate literary texts
- providing an immersive target language environment
- incorporating inquiry, exploration and problem-solving
- use of technology
- inseparability of language and culture
- use of student self-assessment
- use of telecollaboration.

Practicalities

Because teaching conditions vary greatly, both locally and globally, the course unit examples included in this document are not offered as anything other than suggestions of how the course may be planned. The length of class periods, the number of weeks in a school term, class sizes and teaching contact hours per week must all be taken into consideration.

For language ab initio, the recommended number of teaching hours is 150 hours over the two years of the course. Language ab initio is **not** available at higher level (HL) **or** as an anticipated subject.

In the first year of the course, the communicative purpose will be primarily to describe and to inform. In the second year, the student will have the linguistic tools that will enable higher-order skills such as comparison and reflection in the target language.

There is no prescribed order in which to teach the prescribed themes and topics of the course, nor is there a required text. Although most teachers will use a textbook or manual in instructing the course, the inclusion of supplementary texts and materials provides for flexibility and currency.

Teachers are encouraged to structure their courses to take advantage of the interrelated nature of the themes rather than teaching each theme in isolation. For example, the topic of "holidays" (within the theme of "experiences") might be linked to the topic of "eating and drinking" (within the theme of "identities"). This element of design has great benefits for language acquisition, not least of which is vocabulary reinforcement.

The following approaches are among those that might be considered in planning the course. The options described for each one suggest ways in which the course may be structured. The various approaches to language acquisition course development each have their benefits and limitations. It is up to the teacher,

in collaboration with their language acquisition colleagues or supervisors, to decide upon an approach that best fits their particular course context.

[Course design approaches \(PDF\)](#)

Cyclical approach

Using the cyclical approach, all five themes are addressed in each year.

- Possible option 1: During the first year of the course, all five required themes are addressed, as well as two of the four required topics for each theme. During the second year, the remaining two required topics for each theme are addressed.
- Possible option 2: During the first year of the course all five required themes are addressed, as well as touching upon all four required topics for each theme. During the second year, all four required topics for each theme are revisited in greater depth.

Linear/sequential approach

Using the linear/sequential approach, the teacher plans the course by deciding in which order the five themes will be addressed.

- Possible option 1: Three themes (12 topics) in year 1 with the remaining two themes (8 topics) in year 2.
- Possible option 2: Two and one half themes (4 topics from two themes and 2 topics from one theme = 10 topics in total) in year 1 with the remaining two and one half themes (2 remaining topics from one of the year 1 themes and 4 topics from the two remaining themes = 10 topics in total) in year 2.

Opportunities to develop receptive, productive and interactive skills should be incorporated into each theme and topic. Likewise, it is important for students to encounter and produce a range of text types. Although the study of literature is **not** compulsory in language ab initio courses, the use of literary works is encouraged at all levels of language acquisition instruction. Teachers should select texts that are appropriate for the level of the course and ensure that these are authentic and non-simplified. It is important to expose students to texts from a variety of target language cultural experiences and areas where the target language is used.

Transparency is important, and students should be aware of the aims and objectives of the course and the assessment. Students should be provided with regular, meaningful and formative feedback, and should be adequately prepared for the components of the internal and external examinations. This preparation includes full knowledge of the assessment criteria, familiarity with the instructions for the examination papers and opportunities to practise the assessed components within the allocated times for each paper.

In planning for the individual oral internal assessment, care should be taken to minimize overlap with internal assessments in other subject areas. While all teachers want their students to have as much time as possible to prepare for the internal assessments, additional stress on students as a result of having multiple subjects' internal assessments at the same time may prove to be as (or more) detrimental to the students' performances as having the individual oral assessment take place earlier. Horizontal planning by subject area teachers as part of the regular collaboration process is beneficial as well as required by the IB. For more information about collaborative planning, please refer to the publication *Diploma Programme: From principles into practice*.

As it is anticipated that all IB courses will transition to on-screen assessments during the life cycle of this curriculum, it is important that the students be prepared for this method of testing.

Sample unit plan

Samples included in the TSM are not meant to be prescriptive in nature. Given the variety and diversity of IB World Schools offering the DP, each teacher must develop plans that work within their particular context. The sample unit plan entitled “My home area” that is included in each language’s LSS illustrates in detail the manner in which an integrative unit plan may be developed to include the DP core elements, conceptual understandings and approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill development

Receptive skills

Reading and hearing authentic texts in the target language should be introduced as early as possible. The following is a selection of strategies that contribute to receptive skills development.

- Use authentic texts.
 - Readings may need to include a lexicon to support comprehension.
 - Listening texts may need to be presented multiple times or be supported by visuals.
- Teach students comprehension strategies.
 - Determine the text type.
 - Use visuals (if provided).
 - Use the lexicon (if provided).
 - Derive meaning from cognates and prior knowledge.
 - Where appropriate, encourage students to draw on conceptual understandings to support comprehension.
- When exposing students to more challenging texts, in order to build their confidence:
 - teach students how to read and listen for gist or essential meaning
 - ask students straightforward questions.
- Set a variety of question types that reflect those the students will encounter in the examination.
 - Explicitly teach the vocabulary of instructions and question prompts so that students understand the type of response required.

Productive skills

Introduce writing in the target language as early as possible in the course. Writing in a language other than the target language and then translating text into the target language should be avoided as this may lead to first-language negative interference on target language acquisition. Early in their target language study, students can be directed to:

- use vocabulary and grammatical structures in the target language with which they are becoming familiar and to avoid the use of complex first-language structures
- use target language idioms rather than literal word-for-word first-language translations
- not be discouraged at their limited target language production in the early stages of language acquisition. Students can sometimes feel frustration that they are not able to express themselves as eloquently in the target language as they are able to do in their first language.

The following suggestions could be used to help develop writing skills.

- Expose students to a wide variety of text types and use these to scaffold student production of those text types that are appropriate for their ability level. Examples of these text types include:
 - emails
 - advertisements
 - dialogues.
- Demonstrate to students the appropriate use of register (keeping in mind that register may vary depending on the specific target language). It is important that students be aware of any such language-specific register differences. Examples of where these differences may occur include:
 - email between peers/email between a student and a professional/elder
 - request for information from a peer/request for information from a professional/elder
 - interview with a celebrity or sports figure/peer-to-peer interview (in a school newspaper).
- Encourage self-assessment by having the students keep their own record of the topics addressed and the text types they have written or presented. A checklist that includes dates and marks is a good way to record progress and identify challenges or areas needing improvement. This can also serve as a guide for the student in reviewing for summative assessments. The chart below is an example of one such checklist.

Description of task	Theme/topic	Date	Mark	Comments

Interactive skills

Interaction in the target language both inside and (if possible) outside of the classroom is key in the development of skills that will contribute to, and enhance, target language communication. Interactive techniques that build student confidence in the target language could include:

- using set phrases and classroom instructions
- engaging in activities to increase fluency, requiring answers spontaneously and/or at speed
- providing students with scaffolding to support role plays
- providing students with real-world reasons to interact (task to complete, problem to solve, and so on)
- providing students with opportunities for interactive work with actual audiences for actual purposes (not artificial ones)
- using a listening exercise to stimulate a class discussion or debate
- presenting students with a variety of stimuli based on student interest to which they can respond and interact.

Providing students with opportunities to interact with native speakers of the target language can encourage the development of interactive skills. Many of the following suggestions can be used or adapted in locations where the target language is not widely spoken.

- Invite speakers of the target language to the lesson (for example, parents, other students, members of cultural organizations, university students, and so on).
- Arrange virtual opportunities online to make contact with speakers of the target language. These opportunities should be effected with the use of pre-arranged and appropriate online services (such as ePals or the Mixxer) or through “sister-school” arrangements between schools.
- Make use of opportunities outside the classroom to explore the target language culture(s)—there may be cultural institutions, businesses or neighbourhoods that, by arrangement, would welcome the students and agree to speak with them only in the target language.
- If possible, a language assistant may be employed and available for interactions with the students.

It is important to remember that a fine balance must be struck between the use of the target language in the classroom and explanations in the students’/school’s language of instruction. For example, in explaining grammatical points and complex concepts, there are times when remaining in the target language may not be the most efficient use of instructional time and may also lead to embedded misunderstandings, confusion or frustration.

Research skills

Research is one of the approaches to learning and fuels the inquiry-based pedagogy that is so important to student growth. Tapping into students’ natural curiosity about the people, places and cultures by whom—and where—the target language is spoken is a natural starting point for inquiry and research in language ab initio courses. Students are often also curious about structural and connotative differences between their mother tongue and the target language that can be explored. The following are a few techniques that can help to foster the development of research skills in language acquisition.

- Use images and advertisements (many are available on the internet) as the basis for simple presentations; many of these contain easily comprehensible target language text or sound bites.
- Encourage students to use search engines in the target language; this will expose them to authentic texts and help to build vocabulary.
- Develop or co-construct a research project for individual or group research.
 - Students can “adopt” a town in a country where the target language is spoken, find out about it and then present their findings (climate, transportation, foods, customs, and so on) to the class.
 - Students can research news items on global issues that originate in the target language and compare the reporting of these to those originating in their first language.
- Students can compile their own portfolio of target language materials on a topic or topics of their own interest (a sport, a hobby, a musical style or group) and this can serve as the basis for interactive activities.
- Teachers can build a bank of resources that can be used in subsequent years.

Assessment skills

Specific details regarding the language ab initio internal and external assessments are provided in the *Language ab initio guide*. Students should be made aware of the assessment objectives, criteria and requirements early in, and throughout, the course. Additionally, ongoing formative and summative assessment needs to be built into the course. It is strongly advised that teachers:

- set regular vocabulary and grammar quizzes/tests
- set short writing assignments from the start of the course
- assess interactive skills (for example, simple dialogue exchanges, group oral activities)
- provide full and detailed feedback
- ensure that peer- and self-assessment comprise an integral part of the course
- build in opportunities for timed practice on the internal assessment and on the components of the external assessments (past papers can be used for this and are available for purchase from the IB).

Progress should be monitored by both the teacher and the student. Marks should reflect the current achievement level rather than the final predicted mark.

Assessment details

About the external assessment—paper 1

Paper 1 is externally set and externally assessed. There are three assessment criteria with markbands. Detailed marking notes are used by the examiners in assessing the task

Paper 1 assesses the candidate's written productive skills. It is designed to determine to what extent the candidate is able to demonstrate conceptual understanding by responding appropriately in written tasks using a variety of text types, appropriate language, register and format. The candidate is also assessed on the ability to develop a coherent and organized response.

Factual knowledge is not assessed on this assessment, but it can be used to support ideas presented by the candidate.

Paper 1 has two required sections: A and B. Each section presents the candidate with a choice from three tasks. The candidate selects one of these to which to respond, using one of the three text types offered in the box below each task. The responses should be 70–150 words each. The final mark on paper 1 is achieved by adding the scores for both tasks.

Advice to teachers

Teachers must ensure that students are able to:

- convey straightforward information clearly
- convey some straightforward concepts clearly
- organize key points into a basic overall plan
- provide some supporting detail for the key points
- indicate personal attitude (preferences, feelings, beliefs, and so on) competently, if required to do so by the nature of the task
- use language that generally reflects the elements of conceptual understanding (audience, context, purpose, meaning, variation)
- appropriately vary vocabulary and grammatical structures
- use paragraphs and linking words.

It is recommended that students:

- read the task directions carefully
- plan their responses to ensure all relevant points are included
- on completion of the task, check their responses for language accuracy, appropriate content, format and register.

About the external assessment—paper 2

Paper 2 assesses the candidate's receptive skills and comprise two distinct parts: listening comprehension and reading comprehension. These two parts are assessed separately

Paper 2 is externally set and externally assessed. The responses are assessed according to paper-specific and component-specific (listening comprehension or reading comprehension) markschemes. The candidates are assessed on comprehension of the texts, not on language skills. However, if the language used impairs the communication and makes the answer incomprehensible or ambiguous, no mark can be gained for that answer.

For the listening comprehension part, candidates will be presented with three audio passages covering topics drawn from the five themes. For the reading comprehension part, candidates will be presented with three written passages covering topics drawn from the five themes.

Both the listening and reading comprehension parts of paper 2 feature crossover texts—identical texts accompanied by course- and level-specific questions. The third text for language ab initio is the same as the first text for language B standard level (SL) and the third text for language B SL is the same as the first text for language B HL.

Texts

The types of texts used can include articles from magazines or newspapers, adverts, leaflets, interviews, poems, songs, reports, speeches, surveys, recipes or any other text type that addresses issues of contemporary concern that students may encounter in everyday life. They are relevant to the culture of the language studied.

The texts are generally drawn from contemporary, authentic sources originating from a variety of countries where the target language is spoken. They are often adapted to suit the ab initio level, with glossaries or explanations embedded in the text.

For language ab initio courses with vocabulary lists provided in the LSS (Japanese, for example), the texts in paper 2 will contain some vocabulary that does not appear in the LSS. Students will not be tested on these words unless their meaning can be derived from the context.

Text-handling exercises

All the instructions and questions are in the target language and all the questions must be answered in the target language. The use of dictionaries and reference material is not permitted in the examination.

Candidates will be expected to respond to a variety of text-handling exercises. The document [Diploma Programme language acquisition: examination question types and rubrics \(for first examinations 2020\)](#) provides the types of questions that can appear in the listening comprehension and reading comprehension parts of paper 2, examples of each question type and language-specific instructions that can appear in the examination. This document is available from the "Language ab initio" page of the programme resource centre under the "Cross-session resources" heading of the "Assessment" section.

Advice to teachers

Teachers must ensure that students are able to:

- understand straightforward information that is explicitly stated
- extract key points from straightforward texts
- distinguish between key points and supporting detail in straightforward texts

- understand some details of the text
- understand some ideas implicit in the argument
- develop ways of coping with unfamiliar language and situations
- identify basic elements of conceptual understanding (audience, context, purpose, meaning, variation)
- understand the vocabulary of the instructions in examination questions
- understand and use a variety of tenses, interrogative words and pronouns.

It is recommended that students:

- practise answering a variety of question types (students should be aware, for example, that true or false questions requiring justification need a two-part answer to gain a point)
- learn to manage their time effectively in the examination
- read all the questions carefully and answer them concisely.

About the internal assessment—individual oral assessment

The individual oral assessment is internally set and internally assessed but externally moderated. Assessment criteria are used to assess the individual oral assessment, and a “best-fit” model is used to determine the mark awarded for each of the criteria.

The individual oral assessment assesses the candidate’s interactive skills. It is designed to determine to what extent the candidate is able to verbally interact in the target language with appropriate language, structures and register. The candidate is also assessed on the ability to present an organized response to a stimulus. The individual oral assessment comprises four stages: timed preparation; part 1—presentation; part 2—discussion of the stimulus; part 3—general discussion.

[Individual oral assessment \(PDF\)](#)

Visual stimuli

An effective visual stimulus is one that:

- is clearly relevant to one of the five themes in the course
- is sufficiently culturally relevant to the target language to allow the candidate to make links to the target culture(s) during the presentation
- offers opportunities for the candidate to demonstrate international-mindedness
- offers sufficient visual text for the candidate to describe a scene or situation
- allows the candidate to offer a personal interpretation
- enables the teacher to lead the candidate in a wider conversation
- is relevant and of interest to the candidate’s age group.

Managing the individual oral assessment

The candidate will choose one visual stimulus that they are shown from those that the teacher has prepared (drawn from the five themes of the course). For the purposes of the individual oral, a “visual stimulus” may be a photo, a poster, an illustration **or** an advertisement. Any language that naturally appears on the image

should be minimal and must be in the target language. It must not provide vocabulary and structures that would give a candidate an unfair advantage.

The number of stimuli prepared for the individual oral assessment is dependent upon the number of candidates sitting the examination; detailed information about the selection and preparation of visual stimuli can be found in the *Language ab initio guide* (first assessment 2020). It is imperative that the candidate does **not** see the visual stimuli prior to the individual oral assessment.

[Management of the individual oral assessment](#) (PDF) contains additional support for the individual oral assessment and is divided into sections specific to language ab initio, language B SL and language B HL.

Overview

In order to meet the expectations of our stakeholders, we have provided examples to illustrate the assessment components of the language acquisition courses for first assessment in 2020.

The examples included are authentic student work and are presented in their original styles, which may include spelling, grammatical and any other errors. These examples have been anonymized where necessary (names may have been changed or deleted) and some may have been retyped to make them easier to read.

Please note that the paper 1 examples are those that were collected prior to first assessment. New examples will not be available until after the first examination of the paper 1 component.

Example	Type of task	Title	Criteria
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1	Written productive	Paper 1 SL	A, B, C
Example 2	Written productive	Paper 1 SL	A, B, C
Example 3—Not yet available	Written productive	Paper 1 SL	A, B, C
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Oral interactive	Individual oral assessment	A, B1, B2, C
Example 5	Oral interactive	Individual oral assessment	A, B1, B2, C
Example 6	Oral interactive	Individual oral assessment	A, B1, B2, C

For examples of assessed student work in additional languages, please see the appendices located at the end of this document.

Example 1: External assessment—paper 1

[Stimulus material \(PDF\)](#)

[Student work—written \(PDF\)](#)

[Assessment \(PDF\)](#)

Please note that the paper 1 examples are those that were collected prior to first assessment. New examples will not be available until after the first examination of the paper 1 component.

Example 2: External assessment—paper 1

[Stimulus material \(PDF\)](#)

[Student work—written \(PDF\)](#)

[Assessment \(PDF\)](#)

Please note that the paper 1 examples are those that were collected prior to first assessment. New examples will not be available until after the first examination of the paper 1 component.

Example 3: External assessment—paper 1

Example not yet available.

Please note that the paper 1 examples are those that were collected prior to first assessment. New examples will not be available until after the first examination of the paper 1 component.

Example 4: Internal assessment—individual oral assessment

[Student work—oral \(MP3\)](#)

[Assessment \(PDF\)](#)

[Stimulus material \(PDF\)](#)

Example 5: Internal assessment—individual oral assessment

[Student work—oral \(MP3\)](#)

[Assessment \(PDF\)](#)

[Stimulus material \(PDF\)](#)

Example 6: Internal assessment—individual oral assessment

[Student work—oral \(MP3\)](#)

[Assessment \(PDF\)](#)

[Stimulus material \(PDF\)](#)

Frequently asked questions

For which DP language course should a student be registered?

The document *Guidance for studies in language and literature and language acquisition courses* provides information about DP language courses that can help in placing a student into the appropriate language course.

Students who are already able to read, analyse and respond to complex literary and non-literary texts in a given language must be placed in a studies in language and literature course for that language. If a student can already communicate successfully in the language on a range of topics in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts, then a DP language A course (studies in language and literature) must be considered the appropriate placement.

The language ab initio and language B courses are language acquisition courses that are designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop in a language in addition to their home/personal/best language(s). They are not designed for students entering the course who already have the ability to communicate confidently and proficiently in that specific language.

Language ab initio is designed for students with no prior experience of the target language, or for those students with very limited previous exposure. Students will be introduced to the conceptual understandings that underlie language acquisition and begin to develop receptive, productive and interactive skills.

Providing a language B student with an appropriate degree of challenge is the primary consideration for placement into either language B SL or language B HL; however, student and school context may also factor into the decision for a specific student.

Language B SL is designed for students with some previous experience in the target language who already have the ability to communicate in the language in familiar contexts; during the course, they will further develop this ability. Students will explore the conceptual understandings that underlie language acquisition and begin to use higher-level thinking in the development of receptive, productive and interactive skills.

Language B HL is designed for students with previous experience in the target language who have the ability to communicate in that language in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. As the study of two literary works originally written in the target language is compulsory in language B HL, entering the course with these communication skills would allow the student to begin the study of works of literature originally written in the target language. During the course, students are expected to use higher-order thinking skills in the development of their receptive, productive and interactive skills.

Can a student write an extended essay in the language studied at ab initio level?

Writing an extended essay in the language studied at ab initio level is not allowed.

Can a student take the language ab initio examination at the end of the first year of the course as an anticipated subject?

No, this is not allowed.

Is there a prescribed textbook for language ab initio?

No, it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that any texts or resources are suitable for the course of study and allow students to achieve the aims of the language ab initio course. It is expected that the instructional

resources used will be current, accurate and take into consideration the IB mission of intercultural understanding and respect.

How much time should be spent on teaching the topics, and to what depth/level of detail?

It is up to the teacher to determine both the length of time spent on any particular topic and the degree of depth. Student interest and familiarity with the topic, as well as availability of resources, are among the factors that may be considered when making these decisions. Although there are four prescribed topics specific to each of the five prescribed themes of the course, teachers are free to include additional topics as desired. Teachers are reminded that the five themes are to be addressed equally over the two years of the course. Some examples of how to structure the course around these themes are contained in the “Practicalities” section of this document.

Regardless of the structure of the course, it should be noted that the themes and topics should be addressed within the context of the target culture(s), and the conceptual understandings that are required for effective communication must be taken into account.

In the event that more than one teacher at a school is teaching the same language ab initio course, the structure selected should be consistent so that in the event that teachers do not “loop” with the students (teaching the same group in both years 1 and 2), the students will have studied each theme and each topic by the end of year 2.

How much grammar should be taught in class?

Linguistic expectations are detailed in the “Grammatical syllabus” section of the ab initio language-specific syllabuses (LSS) which can be accessed via the links in the appendices.

Should students be familiar with the assessment criteria for each component?

Yes, it is imperative that students be familiar with, and understand, the assessment expectations. Additionally, students should receive appropriate and timely feedback on their progress throughout the course.

Why was listening comprehension added as a discretely assessed section?

Although listening comprehension had long been assessed as an interactive skill during the individual oral assessment, it was not being assessed as a purely receptive skill. It was determined very early in the curriculum review cycle that the lack of assessment of this skill was not providing a complete picture of the abilities of the language acquisition students. The addition of a discrete listening comprehension assessment section highlights not only the importance of proficiency in this skill for everyday communicative situations, but also the importance of exposing learners to the wide variety that exists in oral texts.

Does a photograph have to be used as the visual stimulus for the individual oral assessment?

No, the visual stimulus may be a photo, a poster, an illustration or an advertisement providing any text that appears on the stimulus is minimal and in the target language. The candidate should not have seen the stimulus prior to the individual oral assessment.

Can more than one candidate use the same visual stimulus?

Yes, this is allowed so long as the student does not know which stimuli will be presented to them. The chart in the *Language ab initio guide* (first assessment 2020) illustrates how the teacher may choose to do this.

Can the visual stimulus be given a caption?

No, the visual stimulus must simply be labelled in the target language only with the name of the theme to which it belongs.

If a candidate's presentation in the individual oral assessment is shorter than 1 minute, what do I do?

In order to adhere to the overall timing of the activity, ensure that the second part (the discussion regarding the stimulus) is longer.

What if the candidate's presentation is longer than 2 minutes?

The teacher must have control of the timing. It is important that the individual oral complies with the timing stipulated in the guide. Should the candidate begin to exceed 2 minutes in part 1 of the oral, it is up to the teacher to interrupt and indicate that part 2 must begin.

Language-specific syllabuses

Refer to [*Language-specific syllabuses for language ab initio*](#).

Assessed student work in additional languages

Arabic	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Danish	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Dutch	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)

Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
English	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
French	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
German	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)

Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Indonesian	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Italian	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)

Japanese	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Mandarin	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Russian	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)

Spanish	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Swahili	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Swedish	Student work	Assessment	Stimulus material
External assessment—paper 1			
Example 1—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 2—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 3—Not yet available	Student work—written (PDF)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)

Internal assessment—individual oral assessment			
Example 4—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 5—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)
Example 6—Not yet available	Student work—oral (MP3)	Assessment (PDF)	Stimulus material (PDF)