



LANGUAGE POLICY

The policy is annually reviewed and revised – current version December 2022

International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) 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 programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.”

Pierce - The American College of Greece Mission Statement

“The mission of Pierce is to provide a holistic education to form intellectually independent, morally responsible, socially engaged global citizens. “Non ministrari sed ministrare” (“Not to be served but to serve”) defines our institutional character and our aspiration for our students.”

“If culture was a house, then language was the key to the front door, to all the rooms inside.” — Khaled Hosseini, Afghan-born American novelist and physician

This document is prepared in response to the requirement set out by the IB Organization for a revised and detailed policy that reflects the language philosophy of Pierce and provides information about the good practices implemented in our school.

LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY

Pierce ACG High School has always focused on the development of language as essential for cognitive growth and academic success. Until recently, students entered Pierce in year 7 and completed their high school studies in year 12. In September 2022 Pierce launched a new Pre-K, a Kindergarten, and a Primary school, all instilled with the same principles of language learning, now allowing for the development of language proficiency with continuous and consistent engagement from a younger age.

The English and the other language departments of our school have been working on creating a curriculum that is year group appropriate, interesting, and challenging to ensure continuous progress.

Pierce ACG falls under the supervision of the Greek Ministry of Education and Greek is the official language of instruction for all subjects. That said, Pierce also has a strong English language program that is exempt from the requirements and restrictions of the Ministry; students attend English class at least 6 periods per week and study language as well as literature from textbooks intended for native speakers of English in line with a skill building curriculum.

In the Pierce IBDP, over 90% of our student body comes from the Pierce High School and all courses, with the exception of Modern Greek A, are instructed and tested in English as per IB regulations.

Our mission is to educate bilingual learners who are ‘appreciative of the riches that diversity and equity bring,’ learners who will become ‘socially engaged global citizens.’¹

LANGUAGE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Apart from Greek A Literature, the language of instruction for all other subjects is English.

LANGUAGE OF COMMUNICATION

English is the language used for communication of assignments, projects, activities, and announcements to students through the ManageBac platform or email. The language used in correspondence between the coordinator and teachers and among teachers is English. Greek is used by some teachers for unofficial activities and counseling sessions outside the classroom.

¹ Profile of Pierce Learner

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND OF PIERCE IBDP STUDENTS

As mentioned above, the majority of IBDP students are Greek natives. A number of students are highly proficient in both English and Greek. All Pierce students who enter the IBDP have been taught a third language (German, French, Spanish or Italian) in years 7, 8 and 9. In the IBDP program there is currently one student whose native tongue is neither English nor Greek.

Below is a table with data relevant to the language profile of Pierce students for the academic year 2022-2023.

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN IBDP	98
Number of students who are bilingual in English and Greek	24
Number of students who are bilingual in English and another language	3
Number of students with another native language	1
Number of students whose native tongue is not Greek	1

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Pierce offers English A Language and Literature and English B in both levels. Teachers follow the guidelines of the IB program language courses with regard to aims, methodology, approaches to teaching and learning, and assessment. We aim to nurture confident, curious, highly proficient, and enthusiastic readers, writers, presenters, speakers, and listeners. We also aim to increase the amount of exposure of our students to different registers and contexts as this significantly correlates with language competence and helps develop effective communicators. These contexts vary, but often involve the use of real-life scenarios including group discussions, speeches, role-play, debates, court trials, interdisciplinary projects, and the use of a wide variety of text types.

Our IBDP program is integrated with the mainstream program of our school which allows our students to pursue their interests through participation in clubs and school-wide events, during or after school hours, a number of which are held in English. Clubs such as MUN, the different events of the Forensics Club (debate, duet-acting, oral interpretation of literature, oratory, impromptu speaking, group discussion), the English Drama Club, the European Youth Parliament Club, days and activities dedicated to English speaking countries (Wales, Australia, Ireland), the Holocaust Remembrance Day, Thanksgiving, Halloween, and the Literary Festival are organized by the English Department. The aim is to develop students' public speaking skills, familiarize them with different cultures and gain a better understanding of other perspectives and values. Also, Pierce publishes the *Sunny Days* school magazine yearly to which students in years 10, 11 and 12 contribute with articles, interviews, surveys and creative writing.

THE GREEK LANGUAGE FOR NATIVE SPEAKERS

Greek is the native language of all Pierce IBDP students except two. To meet the requirement for a course in Group 1 Language A, students take Modern Greek A Literature. One of the two students who is not a Greek national is fully bilingual and takes Greek; the other takes a French online course supported by Pierce.

Greek nationals wish for their IB diploma to be recognized as equivalent to a Greek High School Diploma (*Apolytirion*). According to the Greek legislation, the IB Diploma is equivalent to the *Apolytirion* when combined with the “Isotimia” courses of Greek language, Greek literature and history. Regarding Greek language and literature, we in Pierce believe that the legal requirement is met by all students who take Modern Greek A: Literature. For this reason, all Greek nationals are obliged to take this course. IBDP students are taught History once a week (2 teaching periods) and the textbooks used are the same as the ones used in Greek High School (*Lykeion*). Students are assessed at the end of the first and the second semester of each year on the basis of internal exams and are graded according to regulations set by the Greek Ministry of Education for the Greek *Lykeion*.

Through the close analysis of literary texts and class discussions, students become better acquainted with the Greek culture and belief systems. They acquire a deeper understanding of it; hence, they develop a stronger sense of identity and heritage. As they can express themselves more confidently in their native tongue, they further develop their communication and social skills.

As native speakers, they are in a favorable position when it comes to understanding figurative language in literature. They learn the creative use of language, and this is easier in one’s native language which is mastered to a great extent.

An added advantage of deepening their mother tongue mastery is that the development of higher order skills in Greek enables them to transfer such knowledge when learning a second language.

MODERN GREEK ACADEMY

The academy, offered once a week for 1.5 hours after school, is attended by High School and IBDP students. Its aim is to improve students’ language skills in order for them to convey their ideas with clarity and precision. More specifically, participants develop their linguistic skills and the ability to infer meanings of words from context. They write different types of texts, learn how to use appropriate language in certain communications and how to read effectively and critically. Moreover, they give presentations which enable them to practice all language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), and gain self-confidence.

SELECTION OF PIERCE IBDP LANGUAGE COURSES

The University counselors in collaboration with the IBDP coordinator guide students in their course selection. Students are presented with the requirements set out by University courses of study. The IBDP coordinator informs students about the school policies and regulations in accordance with the 2017 IBO publication and the Pierce Handbook of Policies and Procedures 2020-2021 (see Appendix).

All Greek nationals take Greek A Literature to obtain a degree equivalent to the Greek high school diploma (*Apolytirion*) and meet the requirement for a subject in Group 1. All Pierce IBDP students take an English course depending on their level of competence. Their proficiency level in English is determined by their English grade in Year 9 and the first term of Year 10. Students who do not meet the academic criteria, wish to apply for a scholarship or come from schools other than Pierce take an English language test.

Our aim is to support students who wish to pursue the IB diploma. For this reason, all prospective IB students are interviewed by a committee comprised of an English teacher, other subject teachers, a University counselor, a member of the administration and the IB coordinator. The questions asked in this interview help us identify issues of concern. As the interview is held in English, we are able to see how the candidate expresses themselves in this language and discuss whether they are suitable for a program in which English is the language of instruction.

Bilingual students are encouraged to take English A Language and Literature as a second Group 1 subject, especially if it is deemed beneficial for the major/discipline they want to study at university.

Students whose competence in the English language is lower than that required for a literature course, or who do not wish to obtain a humanities degree, are advised to take English B High Level.

PLANNING OF PIERCE IBDP LANGUAGE COURSES

Time is allocated to teacher collaboration, during which course planning takes place. Such planning includes the selection of books in view of the cohort's interests, timelines for covering materials and decisions regarding formative and summative assessment.

Greek and English teachers in Group 1 meet at the end of each academic year to discuss which literary works they are planning to work on the following year so as to cover a wide range of topics/themes and to avoid overlap. Moreover, they meet once a month during the academic year to share good practices and ways to support their students in their work towards their final assessment.

BELIEFS HELD ABOUT LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Each subject teacher is responsible for teaching the language, skills, tools, and methodology that are specific to their discipline. Hence, subject teachers are also language teachers; principles of scientific writing are taught by the respective subject teachers. Students need to familiarize themselves with the practices and terminology of various disciplines.

STUDENT SUPPORT LIBRARY, MEDIA RESOURCES, TUTORING

At the start of the first year of the IB diploma course, students are introduced to the Deree and Pierce libraries to aid their research for papers, projects, presentations, the Individual Oral, the Higher Level Essay and the Extended Essay.

An array of resources are available to students and teachers, including 35,000 Greek and English language books, 27 research databases containing more than 420,000 ebooks, and 38,000 e-journals, 75,000 online videos, 3,500 plays and audio plays, 20,000 viewpoints, and more. All resources are available both on and off campus.

Students and faculty have access to print resources of the John S. Bailey Library at Deree College and Alba Library through an interlibrary loan system. Document delivery services are also available through OCLC and the British Library.

The library offers tutorials on academic honesty, citation and note taking techniques to IBDP students as well as workshops on the use of the online catalog and electronic resources by using Extended Essays examples.

Students are encouraged to use the library for personal study or as a place to collaborate with their peers on a daily basis. They often use the library during their study sessions.

Students are also supported through tutoring sessions which are provided to students in IB1 and IB2. During these sessions, topics addressed include time management, stress management, study skills and work life balance. All sessions and activities are conducted further to class instruction and are held in English which helps them practice the language and develop their social skills in a different context.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Language teachers are encouraged to take part in professional development workshops or seminars offered by the school. Over the last two years, teachers have attended online seminars, conducted by such renowned organizations as Harvard University, Columbia University and NESAC on new methodologies and teaching practices. Internal professional development workshops are also offered to respond to current school needs.

All teachers are consulted on the choice of course books and online platforms to be used for the following year and such practices are also carried down to students where there is a 'voice and choice' policy taking into consideration student preferences in the selection of works to be read in class based on a number of criteria.

Finally, the school pays for subscription sites such as Thinkib and eNotes which offer valuable tips and resources.

SPELLING AND REFERENCING PROTOCOLS

Both American and British spelling are accepted for course work at Pierce IBDP, provided they are used consistently. Students format citations and bibliography in their research papers and presentations using a variety of referencing methods as long as they are consistent. English and Greek teachers recommend the MLA citing style as it is the one used for writing about language and literature.

LANGUAGE USE AT SCHOOL

English is the language of communication in class (except in Greek A and “Isotimia” classes). However, students can speak the language of their choice, when addressing peers and teachers, except for English teachers with whom they are required to use English.

ADMISSION AND ASSESSMENT

Enrollment to the Pierce IB DP is open to Pierce and non-Pierce Grade 10 students (A Lyceum). Students join the Pierce IBDP in year 11.

90% of the candidates come from Pierce High School (Lykeion) which is on the same campus.

As per Pierce IBDP Admissions Policy (see Appendix), there are certain criteria which candidates coming from Pierce must meet in order to be eligible for admission to the IB Diploma:

- a) they need to have obtained a minimum grade of 16/20 in English in year 9 and in the first semester of year 10.

- b) they need to demonstrate a satisfactory level of proficiency in English: their first semester exam in Year 10 is reviewed by IBDP language teachers who assess development of ideas, fluency, sentence structure, word choice, and organization.

Applicants who do not meet the above academic criteria, and still wish to apply for the Pierce IBDP, must write a well-structured response to a topic related to the IB DP themes and philosophy (30 minutes).

Applicants who meet the above academic criteria are interviewed by a committee comprised of teachers and administrators. As this stage, students are asked questions about their school and out of school experiences as well as their future plans to determine their commitment and suitability for the program.

Students who are accepted and wish to apply for a scholarship are also required to take an exam which further assesses their competence in English: they write a response to a topic related to the IBDP themes and philosophy (30 minutes).

Non-Pierce Candidates: They must fulfil the following criteria:

- a) They need to have obtained a minimum grade of 18/20 in English in Year 9 and the first semester of Year 10.
- b) Applicants who meet the above academic criteria are invited for an interview, just like Pierce students, with a panel comprised of members of the Pierce IBDP faculty, the administration, and the University counselors.

Non-Pierce candidates who are accepted to the Pierce IBDP and wish to apply for a scholarship are also required to take a) a Reading Comprehension exam (30 minutes) and b) a written response to a topic related to the IB themes and philosophy (30 minutes). These two exams further assess their English language skills.

After enrolling in the two-year course of study, students are formally assessed three times before the official exams at the end of the second year. The first-year students (IB1) are assessed twice (in January and May of the first year) and the seniors (IB2) are assessed in February of the second year (mock exams). IB teachers across subjects monitor progress through formative assessment tasks which help students better prepare for summative assessment. Students receive grades at the end of each term in first year and at the end of the third term in second year.

All formative and summative assessment tasks and papers are delivered or written in English except for the Greek courses. Instructions to students during formal assessment are given in English.

FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

The following issues have been discussed and are under consideration for implementation:

- a) The establishment of an English Language Support Center, where weaker students will be given further opportunity to work on the development of their receptive and productive language skills. Focus will also be given on the development of fluency and accuracy when writing for different purposes and audiences.
- b) The introduction of more interdisciplinary projects which contribute to language development across subjects.
- c) The inclusion of another language in Group 2, namely Spanish ab initio.

COMMUNICATING THE LANGUAGE POLICY TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

This language policy is a work in progress to be reviewed annually by language teachers. It is included in the handbook of procedures which is read by all interested parties of the school community.

We aim to make it available to all parties that are involved in the educational process, namely parents, students, the high school administration, and teachers. We are open to suggestions. We believe that through discussions among faculty members and meetings of the school governing council language development issues will be addressed.

*Sources: Guidelines for developing a school language policy Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme (IB publication)
Language Policy Updated February 2014 (IB publication)*