

Language Policy

1. The school and language context of UWC Dilijan

UWC Dilijan recognises that, as part of a programme of cultural inclusivity and academic excellence that incorporates strong commitment to social and personal development in the context of an ethic of service, proficiency in more than one language makes a major contribution to success in the 21st century. Accordingly, the language programmes of UWC Dilijan will incorporate a language-education approach (introduced on an appropriate time-scale) to encourage and develop proficiency in at least two languages. In many cases students will also have some level of competence and proficiency in more languages.

Modern states and cultures rightly value their mother tongues, but effective communication in much of the modern world is greatly enhanced by mastery of English. These realities make the development of any school language policy challenging. These issues are perhaps especially acute, and certainly very evident, in Armenia, where the second language is almost always Russian and competence in English is relatively rare.

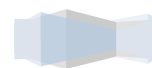
- It is perceived as being socially and economically desirable and advantageous to be bilingual or multilingual.
- The importance of other world languages – such as Russian, German, Spanish and French – will be promoted to the students and faculty.
- *Code-switching* – both random and deliberate – is extremely common in cultures accommodating both mother tongues and international languages such as English; this can help and hinder the acquisition of high-level proficiency in learners, and will be handled sensitively.
- The importance of supporting the mother tongue will be promoted to the wider community as fluency in one's first language is seen as vital to linguistic and cognitive development.
- UWC Dilijan will not knowingly break IB guidelines about choices of language level by, for example, allowing students with experience in a language to study an *ab initio* course, or students with extensive experience of a language to study a language B course.

2. Educational aims and graduate outcomes

Within UWC Dilijan the aim is to produce and develop exceptional students who have successfully completed the IB diploma, and where possible the IB bilingual diploma.

The students will be:

- self-reliant and confident;
- secure in their identities and possessing a pluralistic outlook and spirit;
- critical and creative thinkers who approach learning with rigour and self-discipline;



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- able to express themselves well orally and in writing, and through visual and performing arts;
- *multilingual* and highly proficient in English, which may require special provision for those less familiar with English because it is the primary language of instruction;
- capable of employing language to a sufficient extent to support and permit complex reasoning and the development of a clear ethical framework;
- able and willing to foster mutual understanding between different societies and civilisations.

3. Statement of Language Philosophy.

Within the UWC Dilijan community many languages will coexist and all will be valued equally. UWC Dilijan acknowledges each individual's linguistic rights and is committed to the development of all language skills, not merely in academic subjects, but as an essential tool for creating and preserving a sense of identity and meaning in all contexts. UWC Dilijan recognises the importance of the role that all teachers play in the acquisition of language. Furthermore the importance of mother tongues and being sensitive to the local linguistic context are taken into account; UWC Dilijan endeavours to support mother tongues where practicable. One of the aims of UWC Dilijan is to promote a language-culture that fosters *international-mindedness* and *intercultural understanding*, and this will be achieved by the provision of high quality teaching and resources for learning. This policy will lead to the personal, social, and cultural development of the individual, as well as the promotion, maintenance and celebration of Armenian cultures seen within the context of world cultures.

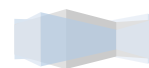
A person who is interculturally competent captures and understands, in interaction with people from foreign cultures, their specific concepts in perception, thinking, feeling, believing and acting. Encounters with other cultures that benefit from competence in the language of the culture lead previous experiences to be reconsidered and early impressions to be re-evaluated. Deeper linguistic competence promotes greater understanding and an interest and motivation to continue learning. This is a key value underpinning and shaping IB programmes.

In support of this language philosophy we will gradually accumulate **library resources** that reflect the mother-tongues of students and support those who need help with the development of English and other languages.

4. Admissions and student support

a. Student language profiling at the main entry points (years 8 and 11)

English language proficiency is not a requirement for entry to UWC Dilijan, but a level of English or a capacity quickly to acquire advanced competence in English sufficient to allow effective and adequate access to the curriculum is a pre-requisite of admission. With this caveat, the talent-identification process used by UWC National Committees does not discriminate between English and non-English speakers because it seeks to identify latent potential rather than previous



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achievement. Nevertheless, attention will be given to their ability to access the curriculum.

The admissions process reflects our commitment to mother-tongue support. Students whose first language is not English are invited to use their preferred language as a means of communication during the oral and written components. Where practicable other languages are also used to explain assessment tasks to students.

b. Conditions for admission mid-programme

There is no mid-programme admission into the IBDP at UWC Dilijan; all students must join the IBDP programme at the start of DP1.

c. Bridging programmes

We plan for appropriate transition into UWC Dilijan for our students, who join us from many different educational backgrounds; some may not have used English as a medium of instruction before. Transition strategies may include summer camps, online courses such as those provided by the British Council, and ongoing language support from ESL-qualified teachers.

d. Intervention for individual students (diagnostic assessment and support)

Intervention is based on a personalised approach to language support that uses teachers' knowledge of students' proficiency as a tool for improvement in language use. There are different levels of intervention that respond to different levels of additional support and intervention. Initially, class teachers identify students' needs for additional language support. This results in individual diagnostic assessment, the outcome of which is an individual education plan to support that student's language development. Teachers can support this in class by being aware of particular students' language needs and planning their teaching and adjusting their vocabulary upwards or downwards accordingly.

Where a student's language needs pose a greater obstacle to learning, individualised support is arranged in order to enable more time to be devoted to language acquisition. Where possible, this addresses the same learning outcomes as the mainstream curriculum and may be delivered within the mainstream classroom or outside it. This support is intended to be remedial and therefore temporary: as students acquire greater proficiency they are able to reduce their reliance on individualised support in order to access the curriculum.

5. Relationships with parents

a. Information for parents:

Since travel to Dilijan will be difficult for many parents, information will be provided on the school website. The aim will be to provide information, thus allaying any



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potential anxieties that parents may have, and so create and develop parent advocates who support the programme.

b. Language(s) of administrative services for parents:

Parents are made to feel welcome through UWC Dilijan's attention to their first language as far as possible. Although English remains the official language for documentation within UWC Dilijan, we will endeavour to provide information in mother-tongues where possible. Urgent communications to parents may occur via SMS followed by a phone call in a mutually intelligible language.

6. Implications for staff

a. Staff appointments:

Recruitment of staff reflects the socio-linguistic interests of the community. The high value that UWC Dilijan places on individual *multilingualism* is made explicit throughout the recruitment process, during induction, and as a key item for professional development. UWC Dilijan takes careful note of the languages spoken by staff, and utilises them where possible to increase inclusivity for students and parents.

b. Professional development:

Support of language development for all staff is provided according to the needs of their function. All staff are encouraged to develop further language skills and this will be facilitated by UWC Dilijan where possible. Professional development for teaching staff includes teaching and learning in a multilingual classroom, as well as dealing with issues surrounding assessment. Staff will be helped to learn Armenian, and the most linguistically ambitious may also learn Russian.

c. Expectations of staff:

There is an expectation that all staff and members of the community will support and value the place of languages at UWC Dilijan, and language-learning in general. Language-learning is seen as fundamental to all teaching and learning situations.

d. Relationships with ancillary staff:

Respect for the languages of all ancillary and support staff is expected of all members of UWC Dilijan community, and UWC Dilijan will make every effort to ensure that within the confines of mutually understood languages, good and supportive relationships are established between all colleagues, maintaining the principles of sensitivity and inclusivity in the use of language.

7. Other language implications for UWC Dilijan

a. Visible bilingualism in UWC Dilijan (signs, documents, marketing):

There is an on-going process of visibly promoting multilingualism in UWC Dilijan which includes bilingual (Armenian and English) signage, displays of students' work, library resources, a consideration of reporting for parents (e.g. reports for Armenian



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A, French A, German A, Spanish A and Russian A, but not *ab initio* or B languages, may be written in those languages), and some documentation. We are conscious that these areas will require further and continuous monitoring and expansion as UWC Dilijan grows.

b. Language(s) of outreach programmes:

Outreach programmes and activities will target areas of priority according to strategic decisions and the resources available. Initially this will involve working with the Dilijan authorities to assist in the development of a city training programme for English.

8. Revision Dates

We propose to revise this document in September/October 2016; 2018; 2020 and to republish it as required.

John Puddefoot, *Head of College*, September 2014

Notes from IB documentation:

- ✓ We are to “describe how the language of the host country is to be promoted”.
- ✓ The language policy should be based on a language philosophy.
- ✓ Need to consider – in particular – resources for mother-tongues in the library.

Useful IB documents:

- *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes* (2008)
- *Guidelines for developing a school language policy* (2008)
- *Guidelines for school self-reflection on its language policy* (2012)
- *Language and learning in IB programmes* (2012)

