



Language Policy

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Salzburg International School (SALIS) is an Austrian state-funded school (Gymnasium) which follows the Austrian curriculum. During *Unterstufe* (Years 1-4, ages 10 to 14) students receive a bilingual education in German and English. The students in *Oberstufe* (Years 5-8 ages 15 to 19) are taught in English, except in language classes such as French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish.

At SALIS, we believe that language learning is always cultural learning, thus a key to fostering intercultural understanding and respect.

First and foremost, it exposes learners to unfamiliar ways of thinking, communicating, behaving and learning – introducing them to entirely new worldviews. Through this process, curiosity can be sparked, encouraging students to explore diverse cultural and social backgrounds more deeply. The composition of SALIS classes with students of multiple cultural and language backgrounds provides a rich and authentic learning environment.

Secondly, as learners begin to understand different perspectives, their open-mindedness and empathy are nurtured. This fosters international-mindedness and a genuine respect for others.

Thirdly, by recognizing our shared humanity, learners are encouraged to become aware and reflect critically on their own cultural and social identities. This not only contributes to their personal development but also lays the foundation for lifelong learning.

At SALIS, language learning is therefore a cornerstone in achieving the IB's mission to develop: "inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect¹".

Since communication is such a vital part of everyday life, at SALIS we offer a free German conversation class for the parents of our students—highlighting the important role that language plays in building connections within our school community and beyond.

Our school library has an extensive collection of books and magazines in English, German, French, Italian, and Spanish, as well as graded readers in German and English to help students learn the language. The close proximity to the Salzburg Library, ([Stadtbibliothek Salzburg](#)) the [English Centre](#), [Salzburg Global Seminar](#), and the Robert Jungk Library ([Robert-Jungk-Bibliothek für Zukunftsfragen](#)) also provides our students with additional opportunities to practice their language skills. Students starting their IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) in Year 7 receive an introduction and are enrolled at the University libraries.

Moreover, students are encouraged to attend several local cinemas showing films in their original language, and there are theatres offering performances for schools in various languages, further enriching the language learning experience.

¹ [Our mission - International Baccalaureate®](#) <https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/mission/>

Language Profile

In the *Unterstufe* the percentage of international and bilingual students is on average 30%, whereas in the *Oberstufe* the percentage is around 50%. SALIS currently accommodates students of around 55 different nationalities. As of 2025, about 50% of all our SALIS students speak German as a first language, about 30% speak English as a first language, and 20% other languages.

Other first languages include, amongst many others, Afrikaans, Chinese, Finnish, French, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Indonesian, Mongolian, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, and Ukrainian.

Teachers in our International Programme are either:

- Teachers whose first language is German with a university degree in English or a high level of language proficiency in English.
- Teachers whose first language is German with a university degree in German. Language and Literature for German A courses, many of whom also hold a degree in English.
- Teachers whose first language is English with a university degree in English.
- Teachers whose first language is English with a university degree in other subjects.
- Foreign language teachers (French, Spanish, Italian) with a university degree in the respective language with a good command of both English and German.
- Assistant teachers with a university degree and an English-speaking background.

Most of our administrative staff and teaching staff at SALIS is fluent in spoken and written English.

Pedagogy of bilingual education

In all content subjects, SALIS teachers strive to facilitate language learning and improve communication skills. In the *Unterstufe*, this is done by creating a bilingual environment where both German and English speakers benefit from each other's linguistic and cultural background. In the first year, SALIS also offers Active English lessons where German and English or other language speaking students learn together. This encourages German speaking students to accelerate their progress in English. At the same time, English speaking students benefit from being immersed in a German-speaking environment, which supports their acquisition of German. Students sit exams in both languages twice per semester, which is a requirement of the Austrian curriculum and ensures balanced language development.

The degree to which bilingualism is used in the classroom depends on the respective situation of the class and is at the discretion of the content subject teacher.

All aspects of teaching and learning (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening) may occur in German and English, and students are invited to actively participate in both languages.

Methods for creating a bilingual environment include Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), partial immersion teaching, and integration of English-speaking assistants in

all aspects of teaching. Language-sensitive teaching is a key component in all bilingual classes.

In the *Oberstufe*, all classes are taught in English (English as a medium of instruction, EMI) and less emphasis is placed on bilingualism, as this presents an increased challenge for teachers and students alike. English language assistants continue to support the teachers of the *Oberstufe* in all aspects of teaching.

Foreign Language Assistants (French, Italian, Spanish), school trips (such as Ireland, England, Switzerland, Italy) and exchanges within the ERASMUS+ Programme ensure that our students get the best amount of immersion possible.

Academic Language - Language A: German and/or English

At SALIS, students who have German as their Language A will sit both the *Matura* (Austrian school leaving certificate) and the IB Diploma. Students who have English as their academic language will sit the IB Diploma. Some students also have two academic languages (i.e. English and German). These students will also sit both the *Matura* and the IB Diploma (IBDP).

Students with a different first language, such as Mandarin, Serbian or Ukrainian, may choose to study this language as a self-taught language. In order to sit the IBDP Language A Self-Taught examination, SALIS students must attend external tuition in their first language throughout the entire SALIS *Oberstufe*. SALIS can assist in coordinating these courses, which are to be funded by the parents. During the final two years of IBDP, the Language A Self-Taught procedures under the supervision of the school will apply.

Language A - English

For the students whose strongest academic language is English, we offer English as a First Language. The curriculum closely parallels the Austrian national requirements for German, focussing on the competencies needed for success in the IBDP English A courses.

Students joining SALIS during the *Unterstufe* and whose academic English is not yet at the level required for the IBDP English A course will need to receive external tuition in English. The school assists families in finding appropriate support. The cost of this additional instruction is covered by the parents.

In the *Oberstufe* all subjects are taught in English except for German A and B and other foreign language classes. By this stage, students demonstrate an excellent command of English, enabling them to engage fully with the curriculum and prepare for international, academic and professional contexts.

Language A - German

This class is for students whose first language is German or who have gained an excellent level of language proficiency in spoken and written German. All four years of the *Oberstufe* prepare the students for the *Matura* and therefore follow the Austrian curriculum. The final

two years of the course incorporate the curriculum of the IBDP German A course in preparation for the IBDP German A examination.

Language B

As a bilingual school SALIS strongly promotes the value of speaking more than one language. For the German A students English is their Language B and for the English A students German is their Language B. A small number of bilingual students have two A Languages – German and English.

In the *Unterstufe* all subjects – except Languages A and B - are taught bilingually. The overall goal by the end of the *Unterstufe* is for all students to achieve proficiency in both German and English in the four skills: speaking, reading, listening, and writing.

Students who joined SALIS at a later stage in the *Oberstufe* may take German Ab initio as their group 2 language.

In addition or alternatively to German B or ab initio or English B as their foreign language students can also choose to take French B, Italian B, or Mandarin B (or Mandarin ab initio) based on their language levels and according to their overall choice of IB subject groups.

In Year 3 students choose between Latin and French. We recommend that English A students take French. In Year 5 students who chose Latin in Year 3 can choose between Spanish or Italian and those who chose French will learn Latin.

This follows the regulations of the Austrian state curriculum for *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schulen (AHS)*. In addition, SALIS also offers Mandarin courses as an additional subject which is not part of the Austrian curriculum.

Table A – Language Teaching and Learning in SALIS *Unterstufe*

Year 1 (age 10-11)	Year 2 (age 11-12)	Year 3 (age 12-13)	Year 4 (age 13-14)
Languages of instruction			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> German English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> German English <p>Amount of English increasing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> German English <p>English outweighing German</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> German English <p>English predominantly</p>
Foreign languages			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st year of English or German (<i>Deutsch als Fremdsprache, DaF</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd year of English or German (<i>DaF</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3rd year of English or German (<i>DaF</i>) 1st year of 6-year French or Latin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4th year of English or German (<i>DaF</i>) 2nd year of 6-year French or Latin

Table B – Language Teaching SALIS *Oberstufe*

Year 5 (age 14-15)	Year 6 (age 15-16)	Year 7 (age 16-17)	Year 8 (age 17-18)
Language of instruction			
▪ English	▪ English	▪ English	▪ English
Foreign languages			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5th year of English or German (<i>DaF</i>) ▪ 3rd year of 6-year French or Latin^{2*} ▪ 1st year of 3-year Latin, Spanish, or Italian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6th year of English or German (<i>DaF</i>) ▪ 4th year of 6-year French or Latin ▪ 2nd year of 3-year Latin, Spanish, or Italian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7th year of English or German (<i>DaF</i>) ▪ 5th year of 6-year French or Latin ▪ 3rd year of 3-year Latin, Spanish, or Italian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 8th year of English or German (<i>DaF</i>) ▪ 6th year of 6-year French or Latin
Additional possibility to choose optional language subjects in years 6 – 8 (Electives/ <i>Wahlpflichtfächer</i>) within the Austrian curriculum			
		IB Diploma Programme (IBDP)	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ German A LIT ○ English A LANG/LIT ○ Self-Taught A and ▪ One of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ German B ○ English B ○ German Ab Initio ○ French B ○ Mandarin B ○ Mandarin Ab Initio ○ Italian B 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ German A LIT ○ English A LANG/LIT ○ Self-Taught A and ▪ One of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ German B ○ English B ○ German Ab Initio ○ French B ○ Mandarin B ○ Mandarin Ab Initio ○ Italian B
		Matura & IB Exams	

² Incoming international students who are not planning to graduate with the Austrian Matura can be exempt from 6-year French or Latin but have to start 3-year Spanish, Italian or Latin (Latin Short Form/*Latein Kurz*) beginners' course.