



Guidelines for Quality Languages Education

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Foreword

Languages education shapes the way in which individuals, communities and cultures perceive and interpret the world, by growing broad transferable skills which support literacy, cognitive development and critical thinking. Our students are growing up in a world where learning a second language is vital to our global future; therefore, the value of providing an effective, cohesive and quality Languages program across Victorian Catholic schools is essential.

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) *Guidelines for Quality Languages Education* are provided to support leaders and teachers in primary and secondary Catholic schools to consider their role in creating the optimal conditions for language acquisition. In addition, these guidelines will assist schools to reflect on the benefits of language learning for the individual, the community and for social cohesion. They contain key messages for the learning community about the importance of Languages learning and what it takes to ensure quality provision of Languages.

The guidelines provide teachers and leaders with the opportunity to reflect on:

- program structures and organisational enablers
- learning and teaching practices, modes of delivery and program sustainability
- academic and cognitive challenge, evidence of student progress, student voice data and community engagement.

In addition, schools are encouraged to engage with CECV Languages staff to consider some of the following questions that indicate quality learning and teaching:

- What evidence do we have of growth and progress for all students?
- How rigorous are our assessment practices and how meaningful is our reporting?
- How is our program intentionally enhancing literacies through building transferable skills for communication?
- How are we collaborating in school and across schools to strengthen teacher practice?
- How do our organisational structures enable continuity and transition into secondary school?

The CECV *Guidelines for Quality Languages Education* further outline the improvement measures and diocesan support available to Victorian Catholic schools as they plan for strengthening their current program provision, professional learning opportunities, and flexible modes of delivery and assessment practices to reflect quality practice in Languages education.

For Catholic schools to lead Languages learning across Victoria, we all need to play a role in creating an optimal learning environment to empower our students to fully flourish. I encourage you to engage the whole school community in a conversation about how to strengthen the provision of Languages education in your school.

With best wishes



Jim Miles
Acting Executive Director

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1. Rationale

Studying Languages is considered highly valuable when entering into critical dialogue with the Catholic faith tradition and for deepening students' humanity. Languages learning contributes to the Church's mission, and underpins and enables participation in a globalised Church.

In an increasingly multicultural, multifaith and multilingual world, it is essential that every young person has access to quality Languages learning as a core component of their education. It is widely recognised that the study of Languages is an integral part of a broad and balanced education for all learners. It offers students cultural, linguistic and intellectual advantages and the opportunity to gain important cognitive skills. More broadly, sociocultural understandings developed through the study of Languages promote positive cross-cultural relationships and contribute to the development within each student of the potential for full participation in a global society.

Pope Francis (as cited in Congregation for Catholic Education 2017) has urged educators to practise a 'grammar of dialogue' and allow the multiplicity of voices and perspectives to 'find answers to the challenges of our time'. Dialogue, the Pope suggests, is constructive when it takes place in an authentic atmosphere of respect, esteem, sincere listening, without the need to blur or mitigate one's identity.

Under the [*Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017*](#), Languages is one of the eight learning areas which must be substantially addressed. The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) is committed to supporting a quality Languages program for every student. This is evident through the 2017–19 F–12 strategy for Victorian Catholic schools detailed in *Languages – Speak Up!* (CECV 2017). These new guidelines support dioceses and schools in their decision-making and discernment to provide a quality Languages program.



2. Guiding Principles

These guiding principles are key drivers to inform policy, planning and implementation of a quality Languages program in Catholic schools. Schools are encouraged to engage with the support and expertise of staff in Languages at their diocesan office to implement practices which are consistent with the guiding principles:

Entitlement: All students are entitled to access frequent, coherent and sustainable quality Languages education from Foundation to Year 12.

Quality learning and teaching: All schools strive to provide quality Languages programs in alignment with the Victorian Curriculum. Languages programs need to be reflective of contemporary approaches to learning and teaching to ensure student progress and growth in learning outcomes. Continuity and frequency of Languages learning contribute significantly to a student gaining communication skills in the language.

Value and status of Languages: School communities value Languages and have high expectations consistent with all learning areas.

Partnerships: Collaboration within and across schools, transition pathways from primary to secondary schools, as well as communities and diocesan networks are essential to ensure the sustainability of quality Languages provision.

3. Aims

The following aims have been developed by the CECV to inform Catholic schools across Victoria:

- For students to **understand the importance** of Languages in influencing intercultural relationships, experiences, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in diverse social contexts.
- To leverage the **literacy of Languages** learning to enable students to apply these skills across the curriculum.
- To use **evidence-informed practice** to ensure student progress in Languages learning.
- To foster and nurture respectful understanding of **linguistic and cultural diversity** within school communities.
- To support and promote opportunities for students to thrive and engage as **global citizens**.





4. Implementing the Guiding Principles

4.1 Entitlement

4.1.1 Program provision

All schools are expected to provide a comprehensive, sequentially developed Languages program for *all students* from Foundation to Year 12. Schools are advised to use the achievement standards of the Victorian Curriculum F–10 and the senior secondary initiatives (Years 11 and 12) when planning, implementing and evaluating a Languages program.

Victorian Catholic schools are funded through their global budget to provide **substantial** programs in the eight learning areas, which include Languages.

4.1.2 Equity and access

Students are entitled to frequent, regular, ongoing access to Languages learning in Foundation to Year 10 across the *full school year*. Schools also have a responsibility to ensure equitable access for students seeking Languages pathways beyond the compulsory provision of Languages.

4.1.3 Meeting the minimum standards

Schools should consider the following in their planning to meet the [minimum standards for school registration](#):

- Schools registered in Victoria must have a curriculum framework in place to ensure that the eight learning areas are substantially addressed.
- The Victorian Curriculum F–10 is the approved curriculum framework in Victorian Catholic schools and is available on the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's dedicated website victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au.
- Schools with high English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) student populations are not exempt from offering all students from Foundation to Year 10 a quality additional Languages learning experience (or mother tongue maintenance program).

Note: The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) updated its [Guidelines to the Minimum Standards](#), which commenced on 1 January 2019 and must be complied with by registered schools from **1 July 2019**.

4.1.4 Non-compliance

If a school is unable to provide a satisfactory Languages program, the following procedure must be followed:

- As soon as possible after becoming aware of the issue, the principal must advise their appropriate principal/regional education consultant or diocesan Languages representative, who will assist the school to explore all reasonable options.
- Where the situation remains unresolved, the diocesan Languages representative will provide information to the CECV so that a request can be made to the VRQA for an exemption. Note: Exemptions will only be granted for one school year or less (i.e. number of terms).
- During the period of the exemption, schools are expected to liaise with their diocesan Languages representative to develop an Action Plan for the future provision of Languages in preparation for the exemption's expiry.

A Languages program is defined as one that focuses on students' language acquisition as mandated within the Victorian Curriculum. Language, culture and identity are closely interrelated and involved in the shaping and expression of each other.

Cultural understanding is an important aspect of any Language program; however, programs that predominantly focus on culture, without specific language learning outcomes for students, will not meet the requirements of the Victorian Curriculum.

4.2 Quality

4.2.1 Languages curriculum

All Victorian Catholic schools are required to use the Victorian Curriculum F–10 to teach Languages. The Victorian Curriculum’s [achievement standards](#) enable teachers to plan, monitor, assess and report on the learning achievement and student progression in Languages. To maximise student learning, schools are required to provide all learners with frequent and ongoing opportunities to learn a language in addition to English, including those conducted entirely in the target language.

4.2.2 Assessment and reporting requirements

The [Victorian Curriculum Foundation–10: Structure](#) shown below reflects the reporting requirements of the Victorian Curriculum, which includes mandated reporting for Languages at Levels 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10.

All schools registered in Victoria must ensure they:

- monitor and report on students’ performance, in accordance with the minimum standards for school registration

- implement and report against the Victorian Curriculum’s achievement standards for Languages.

It is a requirement of the Victorian Curriculum for schools to report on Languages at the end of every band (i.e. Levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and beyond), as appropriate for the student. It is recommended that schools provide more frequent, accurate reports on individual student progress in Languages in each reporting cycle.

Reporting student growth and progression in language learning is informed by authentic assessment for data collection and analysis. Reporting should not be generic and must reflect individual student progress.

Note: In circumstances where program provision compromises students’ ability to meet the achievement standards, schools have an obligation to communicate this to parents and implement actions to improve program quality in the future.

Victorian Curriculum Foundation–10: Structure

Victorian Curriculum F–10		Levels A–D (Towards Foundation)				Foundation	Levels 1–2		Levels 3–4		Levels 5–6		Levels 7–8		Levels 9–10	
		A	B	C	D											
English		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
Mathematics		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
The Arts	Dance	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	Drama	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	Media Arts	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	Music	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	Visual Arts	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	Visual Communication Design												→	Standard	→	Standard
Critical and Creative Thinking		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
Ethical Capability						→	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
Health and Physical Education		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
The Humanities	Civics and Citizenship								→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	Economics and Business										→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	Geography	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	History	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
Intercultural Capability						→	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
Languages	F–10 Sequence					→	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	7–10 Sequence												→	Standard	→	Standard
Personal and Social Capability		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
Science		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
Technologies	Design and Technologies	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard
	Digital Technologies	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard	→	Standard

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 content elements are © VCAA, licensed CC-BY-NC-SA. The Victorian Curriculum F–10 and related content can be accessed directly at the VCAA website.

4.2.3 Flexible and innovative pedagogical approaches

Effective Languages programs must reflect best practice contemporary learning and teaching approaches. Student motivation and engagement are derived from the acquisition of skills through communicating and understanding a language.

Supportive school leaders will have high teacher and student learning expectations demonstrated by providing ongoing professional development in contemporary approaches to Languages. Teachers of Languages are expected to engage in continuous improvement of their professional practice, in line with the standards of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA).

In order to meet the [AITSL](#), [VIT](#) and [AFMLTA](#) standards for provision of quality Languages programs, schools may need to adopt flexible and/or innovative approaches, shifting away from the traditional model of a specialist language teacher working in isolation to deliver a single Languages lesson per week.

In the absence of a suitably qualified teacher of Languages, alternative modes of delivery may be explored. Flexible approaches may also be necessary to sustain a Languages program when the school is faced with short-term or ongoing staffing issues. This is especially difficult for small schools and those in remote areas where limited time, low population and great distance impact a school's capacity to provide a sustainable program for the selected language/s in the usual way.

Any alternative modes of delivering Languages programs must adhere to and accurately report on the Victorian Curriculum's achievement standards. CECV Languages staff are available to advise and support schools with the planning and implementation of alternative approaches, or a combination of approaches, to ensure the requirements are met.

Examples of successfully implemented flexible and innovative approaches are provided below.

A daily, whole-school approach to learning supported by a language resource

One of the fundamental tenets of a quality Languages program is maximising frequency of exposure to the language. Strategically planned whole-school approaches to Languages learning have been successfully implemented at a growing number of schools. In this contemporary model, classroom teachers across the school (non-language specialists) lead short, language-focused sessions, with regular frequency (usually daily) throughout the week. This approach is not simply a cultural program; students and teachers are co-learners of the language. Therefore, access to a proficient speaker of the language and language resources is vital. In this model, the classroom teacher is responsible for collecting evidence of student progression in the target language and accurately reporting against the achievement standards as stated in the Victorian Curriculum.

This approach is highly encouraged and has resulted in outstanding results in a number of primary school programs.

Example of 'teachers as co-learners' in practice: St Bede's School, Balwyn North.



<https://youtu.be/-IliZknoayk>



Intentional use of gestures

The use of intentional gestures ‘facilitate[s] deep and long-lasting learning’, with the kinaesthetic aspect not only helping to cement the accompanying language in memory, but also actively reducing the load on working memory (as cited in Ozcelik & Sengul 2012, p. E86).

Online product use

In general, Languages programs delivered by qualified teachers, which reference the Victorian Curriculum, are preferred over online learning products. However, in isolated areas, some schools are using a number of online products that range in quality and effectiveness to deliver a Languages program. Schools should seek the expert advice of diocesan Languages representatives to ensure the products and methods of delivery meet the reporting and assessment requirements of the minimum standards and the Victorian Curriculum, as applicable.

See also Q6 of the Frequently Asked Questions.

Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) refers to a pedagogical approach with a dual focus on developing outcomes in both a language (e.g. French) and a content area (e.g. Science). CLIL is increasingly being recognised as a ‘change agent’ for Language education programs, with a capacity to transform traditional ineffective approaches to Languages into purposeful and genuine experiences for learners.

CLIL, as well as immersion, provides the optimum conditions for second language development: namely, opportunities to encounter comprehensible and meaningful language with the expectation that students engage with, respond to and use that language for themselves within purposeful, well-scaffolded communicative experiences.

CLIL-based approaches are:

- communicative. Language is acquired most successfully when it is learned for communication purposes in meaningful and significant social situations.
- content-driven. The integration of content and second language instruction provides an authentic context for students to use the target language to discuss their learning.
- task-based. Practical, hands-on activities are motivating and relevant to students’ lives – a prerequisite for successful language learning.

Example of CLIL in practice: Sacred Heart College, Kyneton.



<https://youtu.be/E9UPYzzQp0Q>

Mother tongue maintenance

Speakers of specific languages within the community can be engaged to work with a qualified teacher to co-facilitate learning. Where schools offer a mother tongue maintenance program for Languages, the classroom teacher is responsible for collecting evidence of student progression in the target language and accurately reporting against the achievement standards as stated in the Victorian Curriculum.

Example of mother tongue maintenance in practice: St Catherine's School, Lalor West.



<https://youtu.be/NGnM6Z65cQo>

Video conferencing

Video conferencing, where two or more people or groups can see each other using a network or internet video connection, can be used for:

- sharing teachers across schools when face-to-face access to qualified languages teachers is limited
- networking and co-developing language curriculum
- accessing professional development
- working on collaborative language projects across schools or around the globe
- connecting individuals or groups with native speakers or other learners across schools or around the globe.

It is important to be aware that where an online mode of delivery is used, the classroom teacher is responsible for collecting evidence of student progression in the target language and for providing accurate reporting against the achievement standards as stated in the Victorian Curriculum.



4.2.4 Staffing

Schools are required to staff a Languages program with a teacher who is registered with the VIT. This requirement will be satisfied where a qualified classroom teacher is also proactively involved in learning with the students, and is supported by a language assistant. Engaging a native-speaking language assistant is highly recommended as an additional support to the provision of a quality Languages program. Schools are encouraged to consider languages qualifications and competencies as key selection criteria when employing any new staff members.

Developing and maintaining teachers' language proficiency is crucial to sustaining a quality Languages program, which enables ongoing student progress in Languages learning. Therefore, it is important that schools are encouraged to ensure teachers access ongoing opportunities for professional learning.

4.3 Value and status

4.3.1 High expectations regarding teacher practice and student achievement

Every student has the ability to learn and be successful in Languages. Schools have high expectations regarding teacher practice and student achievement in all areas of the curriculum, including Languages. Therefore, schools need to consider differentiated teaching and learning to ensure meaningful progress for all students. Success in Languages learning that is celebrated and communicated with the wider school community adds value to the status and deeper understanding of the importance of Languages learning.

4.3.2 Advocacy and raising the profile of Languages

Despite the evidence that learning a second or third language enhances first language literacy, this fact remains poorly understood.

Raising the profile and visibility of Languages within schools can assist the learning community to understand the cognitive and social benefits of language learning. The '[Advocacy for Languages – Documents](#)' page of the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria (MLTAV) website provides articles and approaches to promote quality Languages programs, especially in the context of presenting persuasive arguments for the teaching and learning of Languages, to school curriculum committees, principals and parents.

4.3.3 What the research says

Catholic Education Melbourne's 2018 presentation, [Leading and Learning through Languages](#), draws on literature from experts in a number of fields, including second language acquisition and psycholinguistics, summarising key concepts and ideas that support the rich learning benefits of language education.

Research articles are available on request from CECV Languages staff.

4.4 Partnerships

4.4.1 Transition

Schools are required to ensure available and sustainable Languages pathways for students from Foundation to Year 12. Students' prior knowledge and learning in Languages are important to acknowledge as part of the transition from primary to secondary school.

4.4.2 Networks

Collaborative professional Languages networks, aligned with evidence-informed research and practice, are an essential component when building the capacity of language teachers to improve student learning outcomes.

4.4.3 Collaboration

Consistent with the development of the other learning areas, Languages programs are best developed in collaboration with school leaders and teachers. Collaborative approaches to Languages will support and enhance learning across the curriculum.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Can I just teach a cultural program?

No. All Victorian schools are required by law, and as a condition of their registration with the VRQA, to provide instruction in the eight learning areas, including Languages. The definition of a ‘Languages program’ is a program that focuses on language acquisition. Cultural programs – where language is not taught or is not the focus of the program – are not considered to be Languages programs and do not satisfy the minimum standards.

Q2. My school has a high EAL/D student population and many students are already multilingual. Do I still need to offer a language?

Yes – all students are entitled to learn an additional language. Obviously there are many learners who become literate through a language other than English. It is also true that students who can communicate in a number of different languages are more effective learners of another language (Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross-Cultural Communication (RUMACCC) 2018).

Research shows that knowing one language helps you learn another. For this reason, all students are entitled to learn a third language in addition to English and their home language. Through learning a second or third language, students are able to gain insights about how languages function, compare systems of language and strengthen their understanding of literacy across languages.

Q3. Our monolingual students have low literacy levels and need to study English. Can students be withdrawn to spend more time on English?

Withdrawing students from Languages learning may be taking away a potentially valuable opportunity for student success. While English is an important world language, research shows that, ‘in the 21st century, speaking only English is as much of a disadvantage as speaking no English’ (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages 2014, p. 1). A holistic view of becoming expert language users requires students to have ‘the knowledge and skills ... to access, understand, analyse and evaluate information, make meaning, express thoughts and

emotions ... and participate in activities at school and in their lives beyond school' (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2019).

Literacy is not language-specific and there is substantial evidence that it can be acquired in more than one language. Literacy involves students listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating texts, as well as using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of different contexts. These skills are transferable and are enhanced by acquiring additional languages.

We celebrate the diverse educational and literacy backgrounds of all students within our Catholic context, and recognise the importance of effective and differentiated instruction and high expectations to support all learners.

Q4. We have actively sought to employ a suitably qualified teacher of Languages, but have been unsuccessful. What can we do?

Meeting the requirements in the context of challenges cannot be achieved by replicating the traditional models of language education. This demands a new approach, characterised by flexible delivery, personalised learning and collaboration. Every effort should be made to provide continuity for programs when short-term issues arise. In the event of an unexpected change in staff or staffing difficulties due to demographic factors, schools should seek advice from diocesan Languages representatives. Where schools face ongoing difficulties sourcing and retaining appropriate staff, it may be possible to use a combination of resources. In this situation, the Languages representatives are available to assist and support the school to ensure that the implementation of a temporary solution to offering a quality Languages program can still substantially address the curriculum requirements.

Schools can seek solutions to the challenges of offering a Languages program by:

- establishing partnerships with other schools and providers to pool resources, share expertise and, where possible, ensure continuity

- encouraging learner autonomy and progress through self-paced learning tools
- leveraging digital technologies by combining face-to-face, online and mobile learning to make languages more engaging, authentic and available across time zones to connect language learners to native speakers in the local community and overseas
- providing more authentic content and contexts through bilingual, immersion and CLIL approaches, and ICT
- engaging speakers of languages in school communities, including parents and partner organisations across the world, to enrich programs and connect content to real-life situations.

Q5. We have speakers of the language in our school community. Can we employ someone who is not a VIT-registered teacher to facilitate our Languages program?

A growing number of schools are experiencing the benefits of co-facilitating their Languages program by leveraging the expertise of a 'language assistant'. This model takes advantage of the pedagogical expertise of classroom teachers across the school and allows them to model the attributes of an effective co-learner of the language to their students, supported by a language assistant. Research shows frequent contact with a language produces far superior learning outcomes than longer exposure to the language occurring only once a week. Language assistants can empower classroom teachers to learn and use the language with students every day. Implementing this classroom model enables teachers to deepen students' metalinguistic understanding by comparing systems of language incidentally in context throughout the day, optimising learning opportunities.

Diocesan Languages representatives can support and guide schools who are interested in implementing this highly successful model.

Q6. Can I use an online product to deliver our Languages program? What about Google Translate?

A number of online products have been marketed to schools as a simple solution to the VRQA requirement to offer a Languages program. It is important to be aware, when an online mode of delivery is used, the classroom teacher is responsible for actively facilitating the learning, collecting evidence of student progression in the target language and providing accurate reporting against the achievement standards as stated in the Victorian Curriculum for Languages.

School leaders should be aware that a number of online programs do not align with the Languages achievement standards in the Victorian Curriculum.

Computer-assisted translation (which is also called computer-aided translation, CAT, machine-assisted translation and machine-aided translation) is not able to produce high-quality translation unaided. Translation tools can be used to support independent language learning, but their limits and learning value must be recognised. If students use translation tools to look up words or phrases they don't understand, and to help with writing or translation tasks, they need to have an understanding of the complexities of language, of grammar and homonyms in both languages, and of colloquial language to ensure accuracy.



While the long-term aim of a program is to develop proficiency in the target language, learners should have regular opportunities to practise in a supportive environment where fluency rather than accuracy is the initial aim. Teachers must play an active role in explaining to students the value of building on their existing knowledge.

Students who are encouraged to effectively utilise and draw on the limited vocabulary they have already acquired, and strategically extend their relevant high-frequency classroom language, will learn to creatively use language (not memorise or rote learn phrases) to become effective communicators.

Q7. Our Language program is not connected to the learning across the school. What can we do to integrate this learning across the curriculum?

Inquiry-based learning, or transdisciplinary learning and teaching, encourages students to view learning in a more holistic and connected way. When students are explicitly made aware of the transferable skills that language learning develops, they are able to see the relevance and benefits of learning a language for literacy development and learning in general across the curriculum.

In transdisciplinary learning, a Language program is supported by a collaborative and informed approach to learning. For Languages, this dialogic approach encourages a complex engagement with the material being taught; that is, a deeper understanding of the content (including language lexis and syntax) beyond a recall/comprehension model of engagement. Successful inquiry-based learning relies upon carefully scaffolded frameworks. An inquiry-based approach to Languages learning encourages:

- discussing other cultures' traditions and ideas
- comparing and reflecting on grammar and systems of language
- engaging in relevant concepts and big ideas
- developing questioning skills
- finding information using authentic texts
- presenting and evaluating information and ideas.

Q8. Our students learn a language for 60 minutes every two weeks: is this OK? How much time do we need to dedicate to Languages learning?

Learning a language is a sequential and cumulative process; therefore, schools need to plan for regular and frequent contact with the language every week across the full school year. Evidence shows students learn most effectively through:

- short daily lessons, including those conducted entirely in the target language
- engagement over an extended period of time
- opportunities to practise and meaningfully use the language in authentic situations.

Continuity and frequency of language learning will contribute significantly to a student gaining proficiency in the language.

The Victorian Curriculum was designed to be delivered within a minimum of 150 minutes per week, spread as evenly as possible across the week.

If a school is initially unable to provide the recommended 150-minute time allocation, it should explicitly incorporate into its Strategic Plan details of how the school will incrementally increase time allocated for Languages education. Meeting the recommended time allocation will ensure students have the opportunity to achieve a level of linguistic proficiency.

CECV Languages staff can advise schools on strategies to extend students' exposure to the language they are learning and eventually meet the recommended time allocation of 150 minutes per week of Languages education.

Q9. The curriculum is already too crowded to allow time for learning an additional language. What can we do?

In a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) program, learners gain knowledge of the curricular subject (e.g. Science) while simultaneously learning and using the target language (e.g. Italian). CLIL has the advantage of addressing the 'crowded curriculum' issue, as it enables one or more learning areas to be taught in and through an additional language, and thereby extends the time on task for integrated learning across the curriculum.

There are important factors which need to be considered before a school commits to the introduction of a CLIL program and it is recommended that diocesan Languages representatives be contacted to support the successful implementation of the program.

These factors include:

- the availability of teaching staff with the required content and curriculum knowledge, understanding of the CLIL approach and the appropriate level of competence in the target language
- the need for collaboration with mainstream and subject teachers to teach the target language through a subject area
- the resources and potential timetabling changes required to implement a CLIL program (including curriculum planning time).

Initially, schools may choose to trial short units or modules rather than an entire CLIL year-long program. Additional professional learning is encouraged and may be required to ensure the success of this approach.



Q10. Do we need to report on Languages every year?

While the requirements of the Victorian Curriculum mandate reporting on Languages progress at Levels 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10, more frequent assessment and reporting are vital in providing information about what students know and can do, and enabling teachers to make recommendations for future learning.

Effective feedback through reporting and assessment will motivate students to continue to improve and persist in their learning.

Refer to the image included at 4.2.2 of the Victorian Curriculum Foundation–10: Structure.

Q11. What are the VCAA Language Assessments?

To support teachers implementing the Victorian Curriculum F–10 Languages, the VCAA provides access to a suite of online language assessments.

Developed and hosted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), the language assessments consist of a series of multiple-choice reading and listening tests. The assessments provide a snapshot of each student's reading and listening skills, which can then be used to better target the individual student's learning needs.

The language assessments are free of charge and available 'on demand', with teachers deciding when and how often they wish to use them. For further information or to register for access, visit www.acer.org/au/vcaa-language-assessments.

References

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