

# ST. JOSEPH'S INSTITUTION INTERNATIONAL MALAYSIA



## Mandarin Ab Initio HANDBOOK 2017-18

# Why study Mandarin Ab Initio?

China is the home of one of the worlds' great civilisations. Chinese culture and civilisation, as recorded in written records, has evolved continuously for almost 4,000 years, and she is the only survivors of the great" ancient" civilisations. China today has almost one quarter of the world's population and is an emerging great powder. Communication in Chinese language and awareness of the values and achievements of this civilisation are highly desirable elements in a curriculum geared to international understanding. It is particularly relevant and important to an international school like SJIIM set in Malaysia where one third of the population is Chinese descendant. There is a burgeoning desire on behalf of both Chinese Malaysian students and students with other background to learn about Chinese language and culture.

Mandarin Ab Initio is a language acquisition course developed at one level only—standard level (SL). While acquiring the Chinese language, students will explore the culture connected to it. The focus of the course is Chinese language acquisition and intercultural understanding.

## Approaches to teaching and learning in Mandarin Ab Initio

Teaching and learning Mandarin Ab Initio is consistent with the IB learner profile and the pedagogical principles that underpin the IB programs: the promotion of critical- and creative- thinking skills, and learning how to learn.

In Mandarin Ab Initio language classroom one can expect to see the following taking place:

### **Communication:**

Students learn to exchange thoughts, messages and information through personal interaction, reading, writing and culturally appropriate gestures. A decent amount of grammar is introduced alongside new vocabulary and students must adapt quickly to make sense of what they see and hear, and be able to express basic ideas by using the grammar and vocabulary in both written and oral (presentation and interactive) forms.

### **Thinking:**

From a content point of view, students analyze and evaluate issues and ideas that arise from being exposed to more authentic texts relating to cultural differences between Chinese and other cultures. These for example are up to date texts from the internet and current news via the CCTV and other sources selected by the teacher. Through readings and listening, students, while they may not able to compare the difference between Chinese and other cultures in Mandarin fluently, will be able to deduce approximate meaning of words in a new context. They use these linguistic

skills and knowledge in other contexts, including listening, reading, writing and speaking.

**Self-Management:**

Students start to develop a mind-set whereby they accept that they will not be able to know every word on the page. They learn to make educated guesses about the meaning of words based on the context and familiar language surrounding the word. They develop a certain resilience and perseverance with regard to making meaning in unfamiliar contexts. The reading materials relating to the topics studied provide a bigger range of readings. While the material recommended by the teacher cannot all be covered in class, students are asked to read in their own time.

**Social Skills:**

The IB mission statement encourages students to “understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.” In the context of second language acquisition this could not be more appropriate. Through exposure to authentic texts, videos and people, students begin to understand that while a particular trait may be strange or even unacceptable in one society, it is encouraged and accepted in another. From the point of view of a learner, collaborative activities give students an opportunity to engage in discussion and to be exposed to alternative points of view, which means that “cooperative learning and critical reflection are natural allies” (Kagan 2003). To this end, students work in pairs or groups to apply strategies to decipher meaning from texts, discover creative ways of remembering words etc.

**Research Skills:**

“In the Internet world, the ease of finding something obscures the difficulty of finding the right thing” (Gustavson and Nall 2011: 291). The written assignment requires students to conduct their own research, not necessarily, but often online. Students are taught and then call on their research and critical thinking skills to select relevant sources upon which to base an independent written production comparing Chinese and their own culture.

## Mandarin Ab Initio and the IB learner profile

While you progress through your diploma programme studies and activities, you will develop a number of attributes. The IB calls this the IB “learner profile”. This table shows you what the learner profile attributes are and some examples of how Mandarin Ab initio can help you develop these.

<b>We hope you will become ...</b>	<b>Example in Mandarin Ab Initio</b>
Inquirers	We teach students how to use online resources (for example, Chinese social media and Chinese learning Apps) and assess the validity of them to maximize their exposure to authentic Chinese language. We encourage students to go beyond the syllabus by inquiring into material that has not been explicitly taught. This promotes self-driven investigation and cultural research. We try to inspire students to continue with their cultural and language-based inquiries. Inquiry is fostered by watching simple television programmes and YouTube clips in

	Chinese language; listening to Chinese songs; and visiting China.
Knowledgeable	Through the Cores we engage in topics such as family, food and drink, daily routines, school life and friendship. We examine these topics both in Chinese language and other languages in order to facilitate comparisons. Misconceptions that arise due to inexperience with how expression of ideas in Chinese language relate to that of other languages are explored and ultimately clarified. Knowledgeable students are able to understand and appreciate differences. Additionally, knowing vocabulary, grammar and different linguistic systems all contribute to being a knowledgeable learner in the context of Group 2.
Thinkers	We encourage students to use the knowledge gained (see above) and thereby adopt a defensible stance. The assessment task-Written Assignment requires students to express researched opinions and also to select appropriate topic for effective delivery to the target audience under consideration. They must use knowledge to assess issues and react with critical responses.
Communicators	Our subject, by implication, requires that students communicate in more than one language. For some students, this may indeed be their third language. Communication in another language is most effective if students are able to incorporate culturally appropriate gestures, body language, rituals, idioms, practices and choose language appropriate to the situation and audience.
Principled	We try to develop an appreciation for other languages and to understand the nuances between languages. Comments such as “that’s weird” are explored until students are better able to understand the meaning of such. The differences between daily lives of societies are explored and respect of other peoples and their traditions are highly encouraged.
Open-minded	We spend time learning about, evaluating and assessing different cultures and societies non judgmentally. We try to look at customs and traditions in society without bias. Through this, we gain further understanding for our own culture. We encourage students to look at issues from all sides, for example, why there are differences between paternal and maternal grandparents in Chinese language; why certain characters have female radical? Students are encouraged to explore and appreciate their own and others’ cultures and personal histories; how traditions are maintained for future generations and whether or not some traditions should be maintained (for example, fire crackers during Chinese New Year). Students learn to adopt a position and justify it.
Caring	To be open-minded about an issue is to explore and think about an issue non judgmentally. Caring is to exhibit empathy

	for an issue. This is demonstrated by the students written and spoken word. Students are encouraged to be accepting of others and show respect for the different cultural practices and behaviors.
Risk-takers	The best way to learn a language is to “jump in both feet first”. This means taking a risk in using the language, going beyond your comfort zone, expanding your skill and confidence. The best language students are those who will go to a native speaker and initiate a conversation. We encourage students to use language in unfamiliar contexts to create spontaneous communication. Strategies are taught to provide students with the tools that they can call upon to give meaning in unfamiliar situations.
Balanced	Languages are different to other subjects or skills in that there are no short cuts to learn or catch up on missed material. Learning a language requires patience and time. It is a cumulative process; skill in a language improves with time and use. Learning languages promotes greater cultural awareness which in turn provides students with a balanced view of different cultures. For example, students compare the Chinese family values with own family values. We also engage with students about how things are going with regard to balance in their own lives (It may not always be possible in Chinese language due to the nature of this course).
Reflective	The feedback we provide, be it informal or formal, verbal, hand written or via email, encourages students to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. We encourage them to use this feedback when preparing for their next tasks.

## Topics studied

**Topic 1: INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY** (Personal Details, Appearance and Character, Food and Drink, Education, Daily Routines, Relationships, Physical Health, Shopping)

**Topic 2: LEISURE AND WORK** (Entertainment, Holidays, Sport, Employment, Media, Technology, Transport)

**Topic 3: URBAN AND RURAL ENVIRONMENT** (Neighborhood, Town and Services, Physical Geography, Environmental Concerns, Global Issues, Weather)

# Mandarin Ab Initio in the timetable at SJIIM

The IB requires 150 hours of teaching for SL. At SJIIM, Mandarin Ab Initio is allocated two double lessons per week.

## The IB Mandarin Ab Initio Assessment

Mandarin Ab Initio assessment, like all IB DP subjects, consists of two “components”.

The first of these is the External Assessment(EA) which will be examined in the examination papers at the end of the course. Completed examination papers are sent to IB and marked by IB examiners.

The second of these is the Internal Assessment(IA). In Mandarin Ab Initio, this is an Oral component. The assessment is marked by the teacher according to a set of criteria, then sent to IB and checked by IB moderators.

Assessment will be conducted throughout the course in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The criteria will be on language accuracy and fluency; appropriateness of language selected for a particular cultural and social context; whether understanding of the ideas and organization of the language are correct and appropriate. The oral component of the internal assessment will be based on the accuracy and fluency of the language spoken; whether the grammar and vocabulary are correct and idiomatic; to what extent intonation contributes to communication.

There are five assessment objectives for Chinese Ab initio course. Students will be assessed on their ability to:

- ✧ demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the intercultural elements related to the prescribed topics
- ✧ communicate clearly and effectively in a range of situations
- ✧ understand and use accurately the basic structures of the language
- ✧ understand and use an appropriate range of vocabulary
- ✧ use a register and a format that are appropriate to the situation.

The assessment model is summarized below:

Assessment component	Weighting
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<p><b>External assessment</b></p> <p>Paper 1 (1 hour 30 minutes):</p> <p>Receptive skills</p> <p>Paper 2 (1 hour):</p> <p>Productive skills</p> <p>Written assignment (2 hours): Receptive and productive skills</p>	<p><b>75%</b></p> <p>30%</p> <p>25%</p> <p>20%</p>
<p><b>Internal assessment (10 minutes): Interactive skills</b></p> <p>Three-part oral internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB towards the end of the course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part 1: Presentation of a visual stimulus (from a choice of two) by the student</li> <li>• Part 2: Follow-up questions on the visual stimulus</li> <li>• Part 3: General conversation including at least two questions on the written assignment</li> </ul>	<p><b>25%</b></p>

## Mandarin Ab Initio course outline

This table reflects the topics covered but not necessarily the order in which they will be taught.

Year	Term	Topics Covered	Summative Assessment
1	1	<p><b><u>Topic 1: INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY</u></b></p> <p>1.1 Personal details, appearance and character</p> <p>1.2 Food and drink 1.3 Education</p> <p>1.4 Daily routines</p>	<p>Interactive Oral Activity</p> <p>Vocabulary Test</p>

		1.5 Relationships	
	2	<p><b><u>Topic 1: INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY</u></b></p> <p>1.6 Physical health</p> <p>1.7 Shopping</p> <p><b><u>Topic 2: LEISURE AND WORK</u></b></p> <p>2.1 Entertainment</p> <p>2.2 Holidays</p> <p>2.3 Sport</p> <p>2.4 Employment</p> <p>2.5 Media</p>	<p>Interactive Oral Activity</p> <p>Vocabulary Test</p>
	3	<p><b><u>Topic 2: LEISURE AND WORK</u></b></p> <p>2.6 Technology</p> <p>2.7 Transport</p>	<p>Interactive Oral Activity</p> <p>Reading Test</p> <p>Writing Test</p> <p>Vocabulary Test</p>

Year	Term	Topics Learned	Summative Assessment
2	1	<p><b><u>Topic 3: URBAN AND RURAL ENVIRONMENT</u></b></p> <p>3.1 Neighborhood</p> <p>3.2 Town and services</p> <p>3.3 Physical geography</p> <p>3.4 Environmental concerns</p>	<p>Written Assignment</p> <p>Reading Test</p> <p>Writing Test</p> <p>Vocabulary Test</p>

		3.5 Global issues 3.6 Weather	
2	<b>Exam Revision</b>		Reading test Writing test  MOCK EXAMINATIONS IA
3	Exam		EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

## Mandarin Ab Initio resources

- 1, New Practical Chinese Reader 1-2
- 2, A Kaleidoscope of Chinese Culture
- 3, iChinese1-2
- 4, Other authentic materials like movies, documentaries, newspapers and YouTube clips.

This list is growing all the time so do keep a look out.

### Books of Chinese Language interest

Due to the nature of language ab initio course, there are not many books are suitable for students.

But in the school library, students are able to find a whole set of *FLTRP Graded Readers-Reading China* with 10 books. Mandarin Ab Initio students should be able to read 1A, 1B, 2A and 2B.

### Websites and apps

There are many websites and apps – not all of them reputable, so beware. Reputable and useful ones include:

Du Chinese (app)  
Pinyin News(app)

慢速中文 : <https://www.slow-chinese.com/podcast/>

纽约时报中文网 : <http://cn.nytimes.com/>

主席日报 : <http://www.thechairmansbao.com/>

中文阅读天地 : [http://collections.uiowa.edu/chinese/topic\\_intermediate.html](http://collections.uiowa.edu/chinese/topic_intermediate.html)

新唐人 : [http://www.ntdtv.com/xtr/gb/picture.html#v2014\\_206](http://www.ntdtv.com/xtr/gb/picture.html#v2014_206)

