

Language study in Senior School

Why study a language?

Knowledge of another language in an increasingly globalised world has important practical benefits for our students, opening up the possibility of studying or working in other countries and cultures. This can directly increase their potential of finding a rewarding job and expands their horizons in terms of accessing higher education. However, more important than these tangible benefits are the rich rewards that mastery of another language accrues on both a personal and interpersonal level. Students' lives are enriched and their minds broadened through the direct experience of another culture and coming to terms with alternative ways of looking at the world.

An old Hungarian saying, *ahány nyelv, annyi ember*, suggests that an individual is as many different people as the number of languages they speak. Our world is certainly in need of greater understanding of others' perspectives in order to make informed decisions about appropriate ways of responding to those from other cultures. Gaining greater understanding of others' way of life is also an important step in increasing insight into one's own culture and appreciation for positive aspects that we often take for granted, as well critical evaluation of things that could be improved within our own context.

Language is the key to entering into another culture. It is one of the important ways in which people express their culture, from values implicit in the everyday language used to interact with and talk about the world, to the literature, poetry and music composed by those valued as the muses of that culture. Translation can only ever give us a second-hand understanding, as it acts as a filter, sifting out the more subtle aspects of language and culture which are difficult (often impossible) to render in English. These are often the very aspects of language and culture that give important insights into differences in ways of thinking about the world. It is not then surprising that a number of universities in Australia offer bonus ATAR points for those who take a language in the HSC.

What makes a successful language student?

- Showing an interest in the world beyond their own experience
- Taking responsibility to regularly revise language learnt in class – vocabulary, expressions and language structures
- Writing down new vocabulary and expressions that students meet in the classroom and in other contexts and consistently revising these
- Always completing homework set by the teacher, as this gives consistent practice of language learnt in class
- Being an independent learner. An independent language-learner makes use of the resources at their disposal - such as their textbook, dictionary, or online resources – to answer their questions or to access materials that help practise language skills
- Paying careful attention to spelling when writing as the rules are different from English
- Taking every opportunity to use the language inside and outside the classroom.

Which languages can I study at Meriden?

Year 7

At the beginning of Year 7 students elect to study one of either French or Chinese.

Year 8

In Year 8, students have a number of options with regard to their language study:

- students can continue with their study of French or Chinese from Year 7;
- in addition to continuing their study of French or Chinese, students may take up the study of Latin, thereby allowing them to study two languages;
- students may choose to discontinue their study of French or Chinese and instead take up Latin;
- students may choose to discontinue all language study. The student would then be ineligible to undertake any further language study until Year 11 when Beginners Courses are offered.

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Years 9 and 10

At the beginning of Year 9, students have the opportunity to choose electives. They may choose to continue with their language options from Year 8 or, if they are doing Latin and either French or Chinese, they may wish to continue with only one of their language choices. Please note that if students discontinue a language at this point they will not be able to pick it up in later years. Their only option would be to do one of the Beginners Language options offered in Year 11 either at Meriden, the Open High School or a Community School.

Years 11 and 12

Courses offered:

- Continuers French
- Continuers Chinese/Chinese in Context/Chinese and Literature*
- Continuers Latin
- Beginners Japanese**
- Beginners Spanish**
- Extension French
- Extension Latin
- Language study through Open High School
- Language study through a Community School.

*As there is a small number of students in these classes, two of these three courses are run concurrently. The two courses are selected in line with the demand of the year group.

** This indicates that the courses are only offered if there is sufficient demand in a year group

Continuers French and Chinese Continuers/Chinese in Context/Chinese and Literature

The courses in Continuers French and Chinese, and the Chinese in Context and Chinese and Literature courses progress over two years: the Preliminary course in Year 11 and the HSC course in Year 12.

- The Continuers course is structured around three prescribed themes:
 - The individual
 - French/Chinese-speaking communities
 - The changing world.

Each theme has a number of topics and suggested sub-topics, for example, technology, travel, tourism, relationships, leisure and interests, current issues, the world of work, arts and entertainment.

- The Chinese in Context course is structured around prescribed issues:
 - Young people and their relationships
 - Traditions and values in a contemporary society
 - The changing nature of work
 - The individual as a global citizen
 - Chinese identity in the international context.
- The Chinese and Literature course is structured around prescribed themes:
 - The individual and the community
 - Youth culture
 - Chinese communities overseas
 - Global issues.

In their study of Chinese, students will engage with a number of prescribed contemporary issues that are linked to each theme. The contemporary issues are intended to provide a particular perspective or perspectives for each of the themes.



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Latin Continuers

The Continuers course in Latin progresses over two years: the Preliminary course in Year 11 and the HSC course in Year 12. In Year 11, students complete the study of Latin structures and extend their vocabulary.

Students develop techniques for analysing complex passages of Latin and are able to deduce the meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary in context. They use their knowledge of the language to read and analyse original (abridged) prose and poetry in Latin, particularly Virgil's *Aeneid*, and begin to appreciate the purpose and point of view of different authors and their effective use of language. Students review a range of Latin structures and extend their vocabulary. They also apply their knowledge of Latin to the translation into English of unseen texts by a range of classical authors.

Beginners Japanese and Spanish

The Beginners Stage 6 course is a two-year course which has been designed for students who wish to begin their study of a language at the senior secondary level. It comprises the Preliminary course in Year 11 and the HSC course in Year 12.

This is an excellent option for students who want to have a fresh start, particularly those who may have some background in related languages. For example, students may have some knowledge of French or another romance language that will help in the study of Spanish. Equally Korean speakers will find similarities with Japanese.

The course is structured around two prescribed themes: the personal world and the language-speaking communities. Each theme is made up of a number of topics, for example, family life, friends, recreation and pastimes, home and neighbourhood, education and work, people, places and communities.

Note: These courses only run in any given year if there is enough student interest by a cohort.

Extension Courses

Extension courses are available in French and Latin. These courses begin in Year 12 and consist of one extra unit. They enable students to go into the language in more depth.

The French Extension course is structured around the study of a prescribed text – this can be a novel, film or song. The text is chosen because it deals with a particular range of issues. These issues are further explored in related texts, such as articles, news reports or songs. Students are required to discuss and write about these at a sophisticated level in French. In the examination, students are required to talk about two of these issues in a monologue (3 minutes).

The Extension Latin course involves in-depth translation and analysis of the poetry or prose of set authors. It involves in-depth discussion and understanding of the linguistic, literary and historical background of the text, as well as a detailed knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the texts.

Open High School/Community Schools

In the event that a student wishes to study a language not offered by Meriden, they may study this through the Open High School or at a Community School.

Students studying through the Open High School go to the library during the periods allotted to this subject in the school timetable. All materials, marking and feedback are provided by the staff at the Open High School. Once a week they contact their Open High School teacher via telephone to practise the speaking component of the course. Whilst student attendance in the library and receipt of materials is monitored by Meriden, no teacher is provided by the School and students must be capable of working independently.

Community School courses are run independently of Meriden outside the normal timetable, usually on a weekend.

