

Update for schools

Cambridge Pre-U is an exciting post-16 qualification preparing learners for university



In this issue:

UCAS data revealed	2
Spotlight on: science	4
Case study: Walthamstow Hall	6
Training and events	7

And more!

Is it time you considered Cambridge Pre-U?

A Level changes are leading many schools to re-evaluate their post-16 curriculum.

With thousands of schools across the UK considering which syllabuses to offer in 2015, Cambridge Pre-U continues to gain recognition for closing the gap between sixth form and undergraduate-level study.

Developed in consultation with leading universities, Cambridge Pre-U contains many of the planned features of the proposed new A Levels, and teachers and students alike appreciate the end-of-course assessment.

Matthew Armstrong, Assistant Headmaster (External Relations) at Charterhouse, Surrey, says the linear structure has had a very positive effect on students' intellectual development: "It has the huge merit of allowing understanding to be developed without the need for constant exam preparation. When the exams do come around, they provide an imaginative assessment of students' abilities."

Cambridge Pre-U offers a framework that enables teachers to develop a coherent programme across 25 Principal Subjects and eight Short Courses. Schools offering Cambridge Pre-U like the flexibility to run the programme alongside A Levels, and the Global Perspectives & Research element which provides a stimulating alternative to Critical Thinking or Extended Project qualifications.

Speaking in this newsletter, Head of

Science at Rugby School, Mike Thompson, says his students are also reassured by the fact that Cambridge Pre-U is a tried and tested qualification.

More than 150 state and independent schools are registered to offer Cambridge Pre-U. If you want to know more, you can sign up for our Learn More! seminars in June 2014 (see page 7 for details) or contact us to arrange a school visit at info@cie.org.uk

2016 syllabuses accredited by Ofqual

More than half of the Cambridge Pre-U 2016 syllabuses have been re-accredited by Ofqual, with the remainder due in early 2014. We are adding the syllabuses to our website as soon as they are available.

We have made changes to some of the 2016 syllabuses following consultation with schools. We regularly review all Cambridge qualifications to check they meet schools' and learners' needs.

Find the 2016 syllabuses at www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu

University success for Cambridge Pre-U students

UCAS data for 2013 shows that more Cambridge Pre-U students accepted a place at Oxford than at any other university.



Data released by UCAS shows that for the second year in a row, Oxford, Bristol, Cambridge and UCL are the universities with the highest number of acceptances by Cambridge Pre-U applicants.

The 2013 data also shows that history (by period) is the most popular degree subject for Cambridge Pre-U students.

UCAS data 2013 – key facts

- 83% of Cambridge Pre-U students who applied to universities using UCAS accepted a place at a UK university for entry in 2013.
- 12% increase in the number of Cambridge Pre-U students who applied to universities using UCAS in 2013 compared to 2012.
- 15% increase in the number of Cambridge Pre-U students who accepted places at university in 2013 compared to 2012.

Top 10 universities for number of Cambridge Pre-U applicants accepting places

University	2013 ranking	2012 ranking
Oxford University	1	1
University of Bristol	2	2
University of Cambridge	3	3
University College London (University of London)	4	4
Durham University	5	6 ▲
University of Edinburgh	6	5 ▼
University of Exeter	7	7
University of Warwick	8	(new entry)
University of Leeds	9	9
Newcastle University	10	(new entry)

Top 5 subjects – 2013

Cambridge Pre-U applicants accepted places to study the following subjects, ranked in order of highest number of acceptances:

Ranking	Subject
1	History by period
2	English studies
3	Pre-clinical medicine
4	Combinations of three subjects, or other general courses
5	Economics

Data source: UCAS

Cambridge Pre-U meets IET Diamond Jubilee Scholarship criteria

Applications for 2014 scholarships are now open.

Cambridge Pre-U has been added to the list of eligible qualifications for students wishing to apply for The Institution of Engineering and Technology's (IET) Diamond Jubilee Scholarships in 2014.

Up to 40 scholarships are available for students beginning their studies on an IET-accredited course in autumn 2014. Winners will each receive a scholarship of £1000 per year, up to a maximum of £3000 for Bachelors students and £4000 for MEng students.

A minimum of three D3 grades in Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects, or a combination of D3 and A grades if taking a combination of Cambridge Pre-U and A Level subjects, will be acceptable qualifications for IET undergraduate scholarships in 2014. Scholarships will be awarded on a competitive basis, not solely based on minimum academic qualifications.

Applications for 2014 scholarships are now open. To find out more, go to the IET website at www.theiet.org/awards

Want to know which universities accept Cambridge Pre-U?

Search our database at www.cie.org.uk/recognitionsearch



New research shows Cambridge Pre-U provides essential skills for university

Independent thinking and learning, critical thinking, and the ability to research independently are the most important skills students need to possess when they embark on university study, according to a recent survey of teachers.

We asked more than 1000 teachers from Cambridge schools worldwide about the skills students need for success at university. Ninety-six per cent of teachers questioned named independent thinking as the top skill needed for success at university and over a half (56%) of the respondents said that students lacked this particular skill when entering university. Other skills rated as crucial for university study were critical thinking (92%), the ability to analyse different information sources (92%) and independent research (90%).

Nearly 140 teachers in UK schools responded to the survey. The data reveals that the vast majority of Cambridge Pre-U teachers believe the qualification helps students to understand the subject in depth, prepares them well for university and develops more independent learners.

Karen Ward, Assistant Headteacher at Midsomer Norton Sixth Form, said: "We decided to take up Cambridge Pre-U because it provides students with essential skills for university and beyond. The linearity of the qualification gives teachers more flexibility in how they teach their

subjects as there is no need to teach to the test. This allows students to develop deep subject knowledge and teaches them to be independent learners, important skills needed for success at university. Students can follow their own interests and the teacher becomes a facilitator to encourage independent thinking."

The poll also looked at teachers' views of post-16 assessment:

- a linear approach to examinations was the most popular option
- a third of teachers opted for extended essays and research, and
- a quarter prefer the modular approach.

In addition, the majority of UK teachers questioned in the poll support closer involvement of universities in developing content for post-16 qualifications.

Michael O'Sullivan, Chief Executive, Cambridge International Examinations, said: "At Cambridge, we believe that students must be

able to think and learn for themselves before they start university.

"This new research supports the message we get from our schools. Cambridge Pre-U is helping students get into university and, more importantly, get on when they get there."

International teacher survey, December 2013

- **96% of teachers named independent thinking as the top skill needed for success at university**
- **92% of teachers rated critical thinking as essential for university study**
- **90% of teachers rated independent research as essential for university study**
- **56% of teachers said students lacked the ability to think independently when entering university**

Survey size: 1089 teachers

Spotlight on: science

Cambridge Pre-U science qualifications put students ahead of the game when it comes to university study, with the chance to design their own experiments, go beyond a syllabus and solve problems. We spoke to the Head of Science at Rugby School, Mike Thompson, to find out more.

Mike Thompson, Head of Science at Rugby School, has seen first-hand how Cambridge Pre-U Chemistry and Physics have reinvigorated teaching and created students who seek to learn more. So much so, that the school plans to introduce the third Cambridge Pre-U science course – Biology – from September 2014.

Mike said: "I have taught Cambridge Pre-U Chemistry at Winchester College and Rugby School for the last five years. It is the most interesting course to teach as it really gets the students talking about the subject and why things happen. Cambridge Pre-U is delivering all that we hoped for. It is accessible for all and is a genuine preparation for university."

The sciences, as with the other Cambridge Pre-U qualifications, have been constructed in consultation with schools and universities, to provide students with a solid and coherent grounding in the specialist subjects. Students have the freedom to undertake independent and self-directed learning and the curriculum includes modern applications of the sciences.

Better preparation for university

Rugby School has seen many benefits for science students including increased confidence and success in external exams (such as the Olympiad and Cambridge Chemistry Challenge).

"Practically, Cambridge Pre-U students are better prepared for university as they are designing their own experiments. The physics investigations generate a real buzz and it is not unknown for teachers from other departments to go and see what their tutees are up to in the basement," said Mike. "In one hilarious moment I found a boy I teach covered in flour after a series of impact crater experiments."

"I've seen that Cambridge Pre-U students ask a lot more questions in class and lessons are less didactic and more interactive. It is even bringing out the quietest of students who are willing to take on theories and test them to destruction."



“ I’ve seen that Cambridge Pre-U students ask a lot more questions in class and lessons are less didactic and more interactive. ”

“Students returning to school whilst at university will say things like ‘the first year was so easy as most of what we did we covered in Cambridge Pre-U’. They say their ability to solve problems is more advanced than peers who took an A Level,” Mike added.

More active learning

The Cambridge Pre-U sciences have stimulated teaching and learning at Rugby School. Mike says students taking the courses are more likely to get involved with science societies and be more active role models to the younger students.

Mike said: “The great thing about Cambridge Pre-U is you never hear students ask ‘is it on the syllabus?’. All chemistry is up for discussion and what I really like is the intellectual ambition that soon comes with studying this course. You can quickly use papers from journals and discuss science in the news without worrying students won’t engage or understand. If it is part of the subject then it is up for discussion.

“ The question papers are up to date and genuinely interesting. The key to success is genuine understanding rather than learning how to write model answers. ”



“By the end of the third term the students are asking for more advanced books so we have a reading list for them to enrich the curriculum. The thing which is obvious is that a Year 12 set by Christmas is comparable to a Year 13 A Level set. There is no hoop jumping and the key to success is genuine understanding rather than learning how to write model answers in the style of the chief examiner.

“Students like the fact that as teachers we do not know everything about our subjects and that knowledge is rapidly changing. Cambridge Pre-U has reinvigorated teachers, too.”

Mike says students are also mindful of A Level reforms and feel thankful to have opted for Cambridge Pre-U. “Our students see Cambridge Pre-U as a stable course and A Level reforms as an unknown quantity. Now is the time to switch to Cambridge Pre-U as change is coming anyway.”

Some distinctive features of Cambridge Pre-U science courses

Physics: offers choice between questions with a strongly mathematical flavour and those which are more discursive and reflective, so students can concentrate their work on the approach that suits them – and teaching can be adapted too.

Chemistry: allows the interested and independent candidate to take the subject further, by introducing them to the big ideas of chemistry and exposing them to modern applications too.

Biology: the syllabus is distinctive in its approach to the emerging fields of molecular genetics and immunology. The course gives candidates opportunities to develop their interests and communication skills.

Case study: Walthamstow Hall, Kent

As one of the first schools to offer Cambridge Pre-U in 2008, Walthamstow Hall in Sevenoaks has built up several years' experience of the qualification. We spoke to Steve Ledsham, Director of Studies, to find out how Cambridge Pre-U has impacted on teaching and learning.



Q. Walthamstow Hall offers Cambridge Pre-U English, History, Mathematics and Global Perspectives & Research. Are the courses delivering their aims, such as preparing students well for university and stretching students of all abilities?

A. Yes they are. We have had a number of former Walthamstow Hall pupils tell us how well they have been prepared for their university courses in comparison with their contemporaries, with much of this being due to Cambridge Pre-U.

Even the most able of our students have demands placed upon them by Cambridge Pre-U and they greatly appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Charlotte Whittaker (pictured below), who had the distinction of gaining the highest result for Cambridge Pre-U History in 2013 across all candidates, was a striking example of this.

The students at Walthamstow Hall have a range of abilities and we have been very pleased with all their results, illustrated by the 'added value' that is achieved.



Charlotte Whittaker (pictured above right) achieved the highest mark in Cambridge Pre-U History in the June 2013 exam series.

Q. How do you think the Cambridge Pre-U courses benefit your students in terms of subject enjoyment and skills development? And do you see benefits across the ability range?

A. Less prescriptive syllabuses mean that we can be less concerned about 'getting through' content, helping

teachers' efforts to bring subjects alive and make them more interesting. For example, our historians are able to use a broader range of sources, boosting interest considerably.

Pupils are expected to use skills and techniques across all aspects of a subject, rather than regarding them as being tied to a particular topic. This is particularly appreciated by our mathematicians, enabling them to demonstrate their ability and go further than the A Level specification requires.

Essay skills are developed to a far higher degree, inspired by more open-ended questions which encourage creative thinking. We have seen this across pupils of all ability.

Q. You offer Cambridge Pre-U alongside A Levels. Have you noticed any advantages in the linear two-year structure of Cambridge Pre-U in terms of students' development?

A. The lack of pressure at the end of Year 12 allows our students more time to reflect, mature and continue to enjoy their studies. The increase in teaching time enables us to stretch pupils further and enhance their skills. They make considerable progress during the summer term, which we are sure is reflected in their results.

Q. What does Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives & Research (GPR) bring to your curriculum?

A. Global Perspectives & Research is open to all our students as a fourth subject, and prepares them well for university. The skills learnt are transferable across other subjects, whether Cambridge Pre-U or A Level, and we see our students actively doing so.

Enjoyment of the Research Report element of the course is particularly apparent. Many of our students have used this to very good effect in university interviews, an example being one of our ablest students who felt that her report was one of the reasons that her application to medical school was successful.

We have occasionally used some GPR teaching materials with our Year 11 students to great effect.

Training and events

INSET events

We will be holding training workshops in London in February and March 2014. These 'Getting Started' events are aimed at teachers who are new to teaching Cambridge Pre-U, or who are considering teaching the qualification. The following workshops have been confirmed:

Date	Subject
28 February 2014	Chemistry
3 March 2014	Global Perspectives
3 March 2014	Philosophy & Theology
4 March 2014	History
4 March 2014	Literature in English

For the latest information on our training workshops, and to book, go to www.cie.org.uk/events



Learn More! seminar – June 2014

Interested in finding out more about Cambridge Pre-U? We will be running a Learn More! seminar on Tuesday 10 June 2014, which offers schools a basic introduction to Cambridge Pre-U.

The free half-day event for school leaders and heads of department will include presentations from schools that already offer Cambridge Pre-U. It will also cover all the essentials, including adoption models, teacher support, the UCAS tariff and university recognition.

We are also holding a Learn More! Cambridge IGCSE® seminar on Tuesday 17 June 2014 for schools interested in introducing this qualification.

To register your interest in attending either event, please email events@cie.org.uk or keep an eye on our events calendar for more details at www.cie.org.uk/events

Are you attending these events?

Come and talk to us about Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge Pre-U at the following events:

Date	Event
4 April 2014	Language World 2014 (Association for Language Learning), Lancaster
14 April 2014	Geographical Association Annual Conference, Surrey
30 April 2014	The Academies Show, London
16 May 2014	Historical Association Annual Conference, Stratford-Upon-Avon
6 June 2014	11th Annual Chinese Conference of the Confucius Institute for Schools, London
27 June 2014	NATE (National Association for the Teaching of English) Conference 2014, Bristol

Cambridge Assessment debate: Schools in the cloud

Concepts such as Massive Open Online Courses and 'schools in the cloud' are attracting a growing level of support. So what are the threats and opportunities of learning without teachers?

Our parent organisation, Cambridge Assessment, is holding a debate on this topic in London on Tuesday 11 February 2014.

If you missed the debate, you can watch a recording online at a time that suits you. Just go to the Cambridge Assessment website at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/insights/schools-in-the-cloud/



Schools recognise growing importance of Mandarin Chinese

Forty teachers from 20 schools attended our recent Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese INSET, a sign that the most widely spoken language in the world is considered increasingly important preparation for students' future. The session in November 2013 covered the language requirements of the syllabus and an introduction on teaching Chinese history – an option within the 'Chinese culture' component of the course.

“ Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese is not like any other post-16 course. It's a really interesting mix of language, history and contemporary Chinese society, film and novel analysis, making us think outside of the language-only bubble. It's my favourite subject, because lessons are so much fun! ”

Year 12 student, Katharine Lady Berkeley's School, Gloucestershire

About the course

- Suitable for non-native speakers
- Develops ability to communicate in Mandarin Chinese
- Develops an awareness of Chinese culture and history, tested through essay questions in English
- Provides a stepping stone for university courses in Chinese and Chinese studies
- A Short Course option is available.

Britain's relationship with China and the importance of Mandarin Chinese as a language have featured heavily in the news in recent months. Prime Minister David Cameron's trade mission to China coincided with the publication of a YouGov survey which found that the UK had an "alarming shortage" of people able to speak the 10 languages vital to our future prosperity and global standing. Following publication of the survey, the British Council said that language skills should be given the same status as the sciences and maths, and failure to act risks the UK losing out "both economically and culturally". Mandarin Chinese was considered one of the top five.

Michael O'Sullivan, Chief Executive of Cambridge International Examinations, said: "The Prime Minister's recent trade mission to China sent a clear message to educators about the importance of young people learning Mandarin Chinese, as China looks set to become the world's largest economy by the middle of the 21st century.

"Having learnt Chinese myself, I can say that it presents challenges different from those of European languages. A well-constructed learning programme, with realistic goals and fair assessment is essential if students are to get beyond the initial obstacles of Chinese characters and tones.

"Our Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese course measures up to this requirement, and we are pleased to see more and more UK schools are taking it up. We expect this trend to continue. Schools understand their students need to be prepared to work and compete in a globalised economy, where China plays an increasingly important role."

What's available

Here's a list of subjects for examination in 2016. Subjects marked with an asterisk (*) are also available as Short Courses.

Mathematics*
Further Mathematics*

Literature in English

Biology
Chemistry
Physics

French*
German*
Italian*
Mandarin Chinese*
Russian*
Spanish*

Art History
Classical Greek
Comparative Government & Politics
Geography
History
Latin
Philosophy & Theology
Psychology

Business & Management
Economics

Art & Design
Drama & Theatre
Music

Global Perspectives & Research
(a two-year extended project qualification). A Global Perspectives Short Course is also available.

Please note: Classical Heritage and Sports Science have been withdrawn. The last examinations for these subjects will take place in 2015.

Learn more! Find us at www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu, or contact us at info@cie.org.uk or on 01223 553554.

Find our stand at conferences, or attend one of our free INSET days.

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