



What are Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards?

Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards are a group of awards issued by Cambridge Assessment International Education who recognise exceptional learner achievement in Cambridge examinations around the world.

Awards category definitions

What does 'Top in the World' mean?

'Top in the World' refers to the learner who has gained the highest standard mark in the world for a single subject. This learner will be awarded the Cambridge 'Top in the World' award. There may be other learners in the world, or even in the same country, who scored exactly the same mark; since their achievement is equal they will receive equal recognition and will also be awarded the Cambridge 'Top in the World' award for that subject.

What does 'Top in Country' mean?

'Top in Country' refers to the learner who has gained the highest standard mark in your country for a single subject. This learner will be awarded the Cambridge 'Top in Country' award. There may be other learners in your Country who scored exactly the same mark; since their achievement is equal they will receive equal recognition and will also be awarded the Cambridge 'Top in Country' award for that subject.

What does 'High Achievement' mean?

'High Achievement' is awarded to learners who have achieved outstanding results in subjects which are not so widely taken and which, under the current criteria, would not qualify for 'Top in Country' Awards. Learners who achieve the highest standard marks in Country in a particular subject will receive the award.

What does 'Top in Region' mean?

'Top in Region' awards are only recognised in Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. 'Top in Region' refers to the learner who has gained the highest standard mark in the region for a single subject. There may be other learners in the same region or other regions in the same country who scored exactly the same mark; since their achievement is equal they receive equal recognition and will be awarded the Cambridge 'Top in Region' award for that subject.

What does 'Best Across' mean?

'Best Across' awards are issued to learners who have achieved an A* grade and have attained the first highest cumulative total standard marks over set number of subjects*

- Cambridge IGCSE® or Cambridge O Level in eight subjects
- Cambridge International AS Level in four subjects
- Cambridge International A Level in three subjects

Learners who have achieved the minimum standard mark threshold and an A* grade in each of the specified number of subjects will be considered for the award. Those who have taken more than the required number of subjects for each award category will only have the subjects with the highest marks taken into consideration. Cambridge has introduced these awards to recognise sustained academic achievement over a range of subjects.

*Best Across categories and set number of subjects required to achieve the awards may vary in some countries.

Awards results: calculation and judging

How are Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards calculated?

Cambridge awards are based on overall standard marks rather than percentage marks or grades. The learner with the highest overall standard mark in the world or the country will receive the award for that particular subject. 'Best Across' awards are calculated based on learners achieving A* grades and the highest cumulative total standard marks over a range of subjects.

Awards results are generated electronically using Cambridge's awards data generation system. Results data is accurate at the time of generation.

What is the difference between standard marks and raw marks?

Raw marks are the marks you see on a candidate's completed examination script. Standard marks are produced by converting a candidate's total raw mark against a standard scale, producing a mark out of 100. Standard marks allow us to compare marks between different subjects using an equivalent scale, and demonstrate how well a candidate performed on a particular syllabus; they indicate where in the range of marks for a particular grade the candidate sits.

Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards are calculated according to standard marks.

Why do you not give awards to recognise learners who achieve A grades in a high number of subjects?

We work to ensure that educational value and standards are maintained throughout our awards. We could recognise performance across a larger number of Cambridge subjects, however as a responsible provider of international programmes and qualifications we do not encourage learners around the world to take more examinations than is normally required for the purposes of further education.

Studying for the standard number of subjects required for entrance to further or higher education is already very challenging for many learners. Learners who study a higher number of subjects may decrease their chances of progressing to further education if their overall results are lower than expected as a result of studying larger numbers of subjects.

Why are some subjects not awarded?

We have set minimum entry thresholds for 'Top in the World' and 'Top in Country' awards. These thresholds are set to maintain the value and integrity of each award by ensuring that award-winning learners are selected from a sufficiently representative sample. If there are not enough entries worldwide, we are unable to award 'Top in the World' for that subject. If there are not enough entries for a subject from Country, we are unable to award a 'Top in Country' prize.

Learners who receive a 'Top in the World' award are also not eligible to receive a 'Top in Country' award for the same subject. Additionally, if a learner has not achieved a sufficiently high standard mark to qualify for the 'High Achievement' award, that particular subject may not feature in the awards.

Why are some Cambridge International AS Level subjects not awarded?

Where learners are taking a full Cambridge International A Level, in other words, their end goal is to obtain a Cambridge International A Level qualification, we do not award at Cambridge International AS Level. In these instances, Cambridge International AS Level examinations do not represent the end of study, but rather an opportunity to check and measure progress. In other instances where Cambridge International AS Levels represent the end of study for a learner, these learners will receive an award regardless of whether the subject is available as a full Cambridge International A Level.

Why has a particular subject not been awarded when many learners in the country enter the subject?

Although there may be significant entries for a subject from a particular country, learners may not receive an award due to the number of entries being insufficient to meet the agreed minimum entry threshold for the award category. Another reason might be that the learners have not achieved sufficiently high standard marks to be considered for the award.

Why are some qualifications not awarded?

All Cambridge awards are calculated using stringent criteria to maintain high and consistent standards worldwide. Cambridge awards recognise outstanding achievements and are issued to those learners who have attained the highest standard marks in a subject, providing that the minimum grade and standard mark thresholds for the award category have been met.

In some countries, entry numbers are not sufficient for the qualification to be recognised within the awards. We review the number of entries for qualifications on an annual basis to determine any significant increase which will enable the qualification to be recognised.

How does Cambridge decide which examination series to award?

The Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards recognise learners' performance for examination results achieved during the main examination series for the country. This means that the level of entries for the alternative series is not high enough to guarantee that awards can be made, or the series is held for re-sit examinations only. If both examination series are of equal importance within the country, results will be calculated for both June and November.

Why has a learner who has achieved an A grade in a subject with limited entries not received an award for 'High Achievement' in an individual subject?

Although the learner may have achieved an A grade, the 'High Achievement' award recognises learners who have achieved a high A grade. The award is calculated based on standard marks. This is to ensure that only truly outstanding learners are awarded a 'High Achievement' award.

Why does a learner not receive a 'Best Across' award if they achieved results across more than one examination series within the same year?

The 'Best Across' award criterion which exists to maintain educational standards and promote consistency in awards within and between countries, stipulates that to qualify for this award, subjects should be taken within the same examination series.

What is the difference between percentage marks and standard marks?

There is no difference between percentage uniform marks and standard marks. The percentage uniform mark shown on the statement of results has been brought in line with the overall standard mark achieved. Learners who achieve 100 percentage uniform marks have also achieved 100 per cent standard marks.

Cambridge awards are calculated based on overall standard marks rather than percentage marks. The learner with the highest overall standard mark will receive the award for a particular subject.

How can a learner find out which subjects they achieved their highest marks in?

Although percentage uniform marks appear on statements of results, Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards are calculated using standard marks. Standard marks are classified as confidential information within Cambridge Assessment International Education, therefore we are unable to disclose information on individual learner standard marks.

Awards criteria

What criteria does Cambridge use when calculating results?

Cambridge awards are calculated using stringent and confidential criteria that operate to maintain high educational standards and values in awards across countries, subjects and qualification levels. Learners only receive awards if they have achieved outstanding results.

Why does Cambridge set minimum entry level and grade thresholds?

Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards were introduced to celebrate the achievements of learners who outperform their peers. For this reason it is necessary to ensure that the peer group is sufficiently large. We set entry thresholds to ensure that award-winning learners are selected from a sufficiently representative sample where relevant. This is to maintain the integrity and value of awards.

For example, where there is only one entrant for a subject in a country, it would be misleading to award a prize to this learner as it implies that other learners took the examination and that the sample is representative of the country. Similarly, a 'Top in the World' prize cannot be considered for a subject with only five entrants in the whole world, or where a high percentage of the entrants came from one country, since the representative sample is not truly global.

We set a grade threshold for award categories to ensure that outstanding performance is recognised. It is not possible to make an award if the winning learner falls below this threshold, even if all other criteria have been met. Consistent entry and grade thresholds ensure parity and maintain standards across countries, subjects and qualification levels. Without these thresholds, the meaning and value of Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards would be eroded.

Why will Cambridge not reveal these entry and grade thresholds?

Cambridge awards are not based on grades but overall standard marks. Our policy is not to disclose standard marks. Additionally, results data, the number of entries in the world or the country for a single subject, and learners' rankings in the world for particular subjects are also confidential. Sharing results, entry and grade thresholds data for Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards criteria would entail disclosing elements of this confidential information.

How is the transparency of Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards ensured?

All winners are identified on the basis of their examination performance by standard mark, which is a matter of record.

How is the accuracy of Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards ensured?

Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards are generated, checked and then approved through a clearly defined process which involves using an automated results system. All our procedures are subject to quality auditing and conform to British Standards Institute (BSI) ISO 9001 certification.

How are winners awarded for the March series in India?

Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards recognised in the March series are combined with those from the June series. Winners from both series will then be announced following the June series results release. For Top in World, Top in Country and Best Across awards categories, winners are determined by the student who has achieved the highest mark in an individual subject or across of a range of subjects from the combined March and June series. Award winners from the November series are generated separately to March and June, and will be announced after the November results release. This applies to winners in India only