

Benchmarking Selected Cambridge International Qualifications



UK NARIC has found the:

- **Cambridge IGCSE comparable to GCSE standard**
- **Cambridge International AS Level comparable to the GCE AS Level standard**
- **Cambridge International A Level comparable to the GCE A Level standard**
- **Cambridge AICE Diploma (6 credit) comparable to 3 GCE A Levels**
- **Cambridge AICE Diploma (7 credit) comparable to 3 GCE A Levels and 1 GCE AS Level.**

Context and scope

Cambridge International Examinations offers a range of international secondary qualifications worldwide, with the International AS & A Level offered in over 130 countries, and the IGCSE offered in more than 145.

In March 2016, UK NARIC completed an independent evaluation and benchmarking study of the Cambridge IGCSE, International AS & A Level, and AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) Diploma in the context of the UK education system.

This reviewed a sample of subjects at each level as well as an in-depth review of the IGCSE Global Perspectives and International AS & A Level Global Perspectives & Research.

Key findings

UK NARIC has found the Cambridge qualifications to be rigorous, robust and globally-relevant, underpinned by sufficient quality assurance policies and procedures in place to maintain standards.

The assessment methods employed provide a sound evaluation of the key knowledge and skills outlined in the syllabuses. They also demonstrate closer alignment to the newly reformed national GCSEs, AS and A Levels which have recently introduced terminal liner assessment.

UK NARIC has considered the key changes proposed to the national GCSEs, AS and A Levels overall and

on a subject level, concluding that the changes would not impact on the overall comparability of the Cambridge international secondary awards.

Furthermore, Cambridge's quality assurance procedures for assessment development ensure that all students are assessed appropriately at the outcomes intended in the syllabuses.

IGCSE

The IGCSE and GCSE have comparable entrance requirements and associated outcomes, indicating similar orientation in the UK education system.

For the IGCSE subjects analysed in the study, there is little notable difference between the IGCSE aims and learning outcomes with those found in similarly-focused GCSE syllabuses.

In catering for an international audience, minor differences in IGCSE subject content, assessment methods and assessment weightings have been observed with UK GCSEs in certain subjects, but on the whole has little, if any, overall impact on the comparability of the IGCSE in the UK education system.

Identification of similar examination tasks and mark schemes across a range of IGCSE and GCSE subjects confirms that the breadth and depth of knowledge, understanding and skills that the IGCSE develops and assesses compares very well to the national GCSEs examined in this study.

International AS & A Level

UK NARIC found that Cambridge International AS & A Level specifications provide a coherent and well-defined framework, while allowing centres the freedom to develop supporting curricula and implement their own methods of methods in their delivery

The Cambridge International and national A Levels are similar in terms of breadth and depth of content coverage despite observable differences in topic coverage, predominantly reflecting the international focus of the Cambridge International A Level.

Learning outcomes demonstrated many areas of similarity between Cambridge International AS & A Level and the national AS/A Levels, with broadly comparable emphasis on developing knowledge and understanding, application, analysis and evaluation skills across the different subject areas.

Across all subjects reviewed, Cambridge International AS & A Levels provide a solid grounding in preparation for higher education, aiming to develop a combination of subject-specific and transferable skills.

The Cambridge International AS & A Level in Global Perspectives & Research in particular enables development and consolidation of higher order thinking skills and research skills valued by higher education institutions. Global Perspectives & Research also benefits from an interdisciplinary approach to study, which aims to connect subject-specific knowledge.

The principal assessment method used by Cambridge is external examination, with a range of question and task types appropriate to each subject adopted to ensure holistic evaluation of candidate's abilities and reliable differentiation between higher and lower levels of performance.

A focus on synoptic assessment can be observed in the Cambridge International A Level across the different subject areas, evaluating different topic areas from across the respective syllabi, as is similarly the case in the national A Level.

The study's review of associated outcomes considered UK university admissions policies and found that Cambridge International A Levels are typically accepted with the same grade requirements as those stipulated for national A Level holders.

Methodology

Based on UK NARIC's well-established methodology for credential evaluation, this independent evaluation and benchmarking study comprised a detailed review of the Cambridge qualifications in terms of:

- Entry requirements
- Duration, including recommended guided learning hours
- Content and structure
- Modes of learning and assessment
- Learning outcomes and assessment objectives
- Associated outcomes.