2: Creating the school development plan

This chapter provides an overview of school development planning. It makes a link between the application and initial planning that a school completes in order to register with Cambridge International, and ongoing processes of quality assurance and school development. The starting point for school development planning is the requirement that the school fully meets Cambridge quality standards defined in the registration process. Once this is achieved school development planning becomes an ongoing cycle involving evaluation, planning and development designed to improve student learning and achievement. The school development planning process should fit naturally with, and complement, the school's ongoing quality assurance policies and practices. These are considered in detail in subsequent chapters.

2.1 An overview of school development planning

Professor David Hopkins, Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Education, University of London (2006) defined the purpose of the school improvement process as being:

"… to improve the learning and achievement of all students and enhance the school's capacity to manage continuous improvement. The focus is upon school level factors (e.g. leadership, planning, professional development) and classroom level factors (teaching, learning and student feedback). These two areas are united through a process of enquiry."

In this guide school development planning is the overarching process of enquiry, evaluation, prioritisation, planning and execution of plans designed to improve student learning and achievement.

Enquiry is the first part of the process of evaluation. Evidence is gathered and interpreted to ensure judgements are reasonable and accurate. A school needs to create a flow of data and evidence about how it is performing in key areas. This evidence will be generated annually from processes like those described in Chapters 5 and 6, which consider in detail how student learning can be improved through assessment and evaluating teaching. Evidence will lead to judgements about what is working well and what needs attention. The process helps a reflective school to:

- take ownership of monitoring and evaluating its own performance and to plan effectively for improvement
- gather information and evidence to review progress in terms of the whole-school experience as well as learner outcomes

- build up a picture of the quality of provision in the school over time – this will provide the school and its community (the stakeholders) with a measure of how well learners are performing and the standards being achieved
- identify good practice so that it can be shared throughout the school.

Development plans map out how issues identified during the evaluation phase are followed up. They should be a response to the following questions:

- What specific aspects of our work do we need to develop (priorities and intended outcomes)?
- How are we going to develop them (processes)?
- What resources do we need to achieve this (resources)?
- How long will it realistically take to achieve (timescale)?
- Who is going to lead and manage the achievement of each objective and the overall plan (responsibilities)?
- How will we know that we have achieved the plan (evaluation)?

Annual development cycles and periodic whole-school evaluation

Development planning can just be based on an annual review using evidence generated in the process of running the school. One limitation of this is that it does not allow for a more complete evaluation of the school system as a whole. It also uses a limited number of sources of evidence. For this reason we advise schools to periodically (usually every five to 10 years) have a major whole-school evaluation.

How this is organised will depend on the school context. Normally the process starts with a comprehensive school self-evaluation. This examines all areas of school life, updates the school's mission, vision and educational aims, and considers school strengths and limitations from the perspective of the whole-school community. There are roles for representatives from each group of stakeholders including teachers, students, parents and governors or owners. Their contributions will provide perspectives that will inform the school's review and help identify the next steps that need to be taken. The process is a learning activity for all those engaged in it. The school leadership team should plan to devolve responsibility to groups of other leaders, teachers and stakeholders. If the process is managed well, all those who participate will gain skills, experience and confidence.

Sometimes the school is seeking accreditation with an agency. See, for example, the Council of International Schools (2015). In this case the school evaluation process will use a standard self-evaluation format and incorporate external validation of this. This involves a team of appropriately experienced external evaluators visiting the school. Their role is to validate the school's self-evaluation, be 'critical friends' and make sure the school is actually meeting the standards required for accreditation. They provide an informed outsider's perspective and check the self-evaluation is a realistic reflection of the quality of education in the school.

A strategic development plan is normally created following this comprehensive process of whole-school evaluation. Once written, the strategic plan identifies and explains the school's strategic priorities for a specified period of time, normally 5–10 years. It also identifies actions needed to achieve these goals and considers how resources will be used to achieve the plan. Within this timeframe there is likely to be detailed planning for the first year or two, with higher-level planning for the rest of the plan's lifetime. Implementation will be monitored and the plan will be adjusted in the light of ongoing feedback incorporated in the annual development cycle. Towards the end of the plan the outcomes will be evaluated and the process will then begin again with a new review and self-evaluation. The long-term strategic plan created by this process will provide guidance for the whole-school community – about the school's objectives, how they are to be achieved, and how the members of the school community will contribute to their achievement.

The annual school development cycle, sometimes referred to as the management cycle, is a process of goal setting, implementing actions, monitoring, evidence collecting and evaluation that occurs every year. This leads to affirmation or refinement of the school's strategic plan (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The annual school development cycle
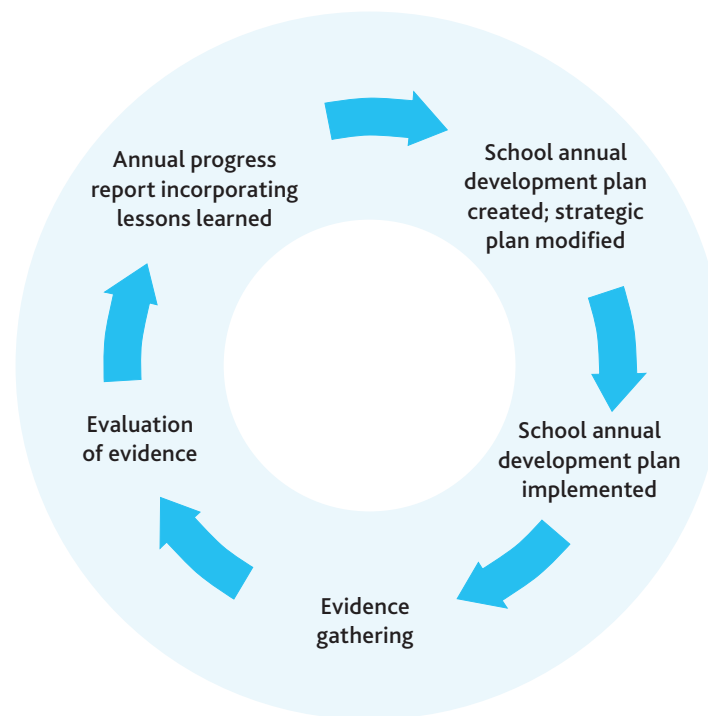
2.2 Achieving Cambridge registration quality standards

Schools registering with Cambridge International are required to complete an application form showing how the school measures up across five sets of registration quality standards (see Table 1). Some standards have to be fully met before the school can teach Cambridge programmes. These include:

- a clear mission
- positive relationships between staff and students
- appropriate qualified staff
- reasonable and safe premises
- transparent financial management and procedures for complaints
- examinations security.

See *Becoming a Cambridge International School: A Guide to the Registration Process* for full details. You can find this document at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/ images/163193-becoming-a-cambridge-international-school.pdf**

Schools, however, are not expected to demonstrate evidence of having fully achieved all the registration standards before they are registered. They can be 'working towards' achieving some of these standards. Examples are:

Standard 1: The school's mission and educational values

- The culture of the school is learner-centred and supports students and teachers to become confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged.
- International awareness and global perspectives are promoted throug h the curriculum and other activities.

Standard 2: School management and leadership

- The school principal is suitably qualified and experienced in educational leadership.
- The senior management team and the governing body demonstrate clear goals for the successful introduction of Cambridge qualifications and can evidence planning to support effective implementation.
- Senior staff are committed to setting targets for school improvement and staff development, supported by well-designed performance review and self-evaluation.

Standard 3: Quality of teaching and learning

- The school curriculum is clearly expressed and accessible to teachers, students and their parents.
- Assessment outcomes are monitored and evaluated with clear feedback into teaching and learning strategies.
- Teaching takes account of students' diverse learning styles and individual needs.
- The school has a well-designed approach to the professional development of teachers and other staff.
- The school has a clear policy to address the language needs of learners.

Depending on the outcome of the registration process, schools will need to review and build upon their initial development planning in order to make sure that these standards are fully achieved as soon as is practically possible. This must be the initial priority for newly registered Cambridge schools – this document is designed to help in this process. Even when the Cambridge registration standards are achieved, schools will want to make sure that they are maintaining them and striving for further improvements. No school can ever claim that it is perfect or afford to be complacent. One of the hallmarks of excellent schools is the fact they are constantly seeking improvements in ways to enhance the learning and achievement of all students.

2.3 Preparing the school development plan

The Cambridge registration quality standards (see Table 1) provide a suitable starting point for new schools implementing formal school development planning for the first time. Schools that have recently registered with Cambridge International should use the initial development plan, part of the application process, as the starting point. Following registration most schools will have some standards identified as needing further work, and the initial priority must be to address these. Once this is achieved the objective becomes continuous school improvement.

Reviewing the initial implementation of Cambridge programmes

Conducting regular reviews of the school curriculum, and the effectiveness of its implementation and delivery, is a critical part of the school development process. An absolute priority for newly registered schools will be to evaluate the implementation of the Cambridge programme. This will include reviewing the effectiveness of each of the contributing factors, answering the following questions:

- How well do the schemes of work and teaching plans support the successful implementation of the curriculum in the classroom? (the school's written curriculum is well aligned with the Cambridge prescribed curriculum)
- Are teachers using appropriate teaching strategies? (the written curriculum is well aligned with the taught curriculum)
- Are learners achieving appropriate results? What progress have learners made? (the assessed curriculum is aligned with the taught and written curriculum)
- What is the experience of learners? (the experienced curriculum is aligned to the written, taught and assessed curriculum)
- Are the conditions for learning supportive?
- Do teachers have the necessary resources and professional development?
- Are school policies well aligned, establishing the right priorities and sending the right messages?

To evaluate effectively, no one piece of evidence is sufficient on its own. You will need to collect data from a wide range of sources and compare it to generate an overall picture. This is sometimes referred to as triangulation. Figure 2 shows a review model for a school evaluating the initial implementation of a Cambridge programme, identifying different sources of feedback. This review model can also be used for evaluating the student learning experience in groups of subjects, grades and for specific groups of learners.

Meeting our registration quality standards

Table 1: Cambridge registration quality standards

1. The school's mission and educational values	2. School management and leadership	3. Quality of teaching and learning	4. The physical environment of the school	5. Legal requirements
a. The school has a clear mission statement that makes reference to its educational values. **b.** The culture of the school is learner centred and supports students and teachers to become confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged. **c.** International awareness and global perspectives are promoted through the curriculum and other activities. **d.** Relationships between staff and students are positive, demonstrate mutual respect, and the school has established and consistent expectations of behaviour.	**a.** The school principal is suitably qualified and experienced in educational leadership. **b.** The senior management team and the governing body demonstrate clear goals for the successful introduction of Cambridge qualifications and can evidence planning to support effective implementation. **c.** Senior staff are committed to setting targets for school improvement and staff development, supported by well-designed performance review and self-evaluation. **d.** There is effective and transparent management of school budgets. **e.** A complaints procedure is in place that effectively manages complaints for parents and other stakeholders.	**a.** The school is appropriately resourced with sufficient staff employed in management, teaching and support roles. **b.** The school curriculum is clearly expressed and accessible to teachers, students and their parents. **c.** Assessment outcomes are monitored and evaluated with clear feedback into teaching and learning strategies. **d.** Teachers have appropriate qualifications to deliver Cambridge programmes and qualifications successfully. **e.** Teaching takes account of students' diverse learning styles and individual needs. **f.** The school has a well-designed approach to the professional development of teachers and other staff. **g.** The school has a clear policy to address the language needs of learners.	**a.** The school premises create a positive learning environment for students. **b.** Library or learning resources adequately support delivery of the curriculum. **c.** Specialist facilities are provided (e.g. for Cambridge syllabuses in art and design, music, languages, ICT, physical education and the sciences). **d.** Secure storage arrangements for question papers and other examination materials comply with our regulations. **e.** Appropriate facilities that comply with our regulations for accommodating examinations have been identified. **f.** A good understanding of the Centre responsibilities set out in the first section of the Cambridge Handbook.	**a.** Fire certificate. **b.** Government approval to operate, including any approvals needed to provide the Cambridge curricula you wish to offer. **c.** Health and safety policies in line with government requirements. **d.** First aid provision in line with government requirements. **e.** Child protection policies in line with government requirements.

2: Creating the school development continued

Figure 2: Sources of evidence for a school reviewing the implementation of a Cambridge programme
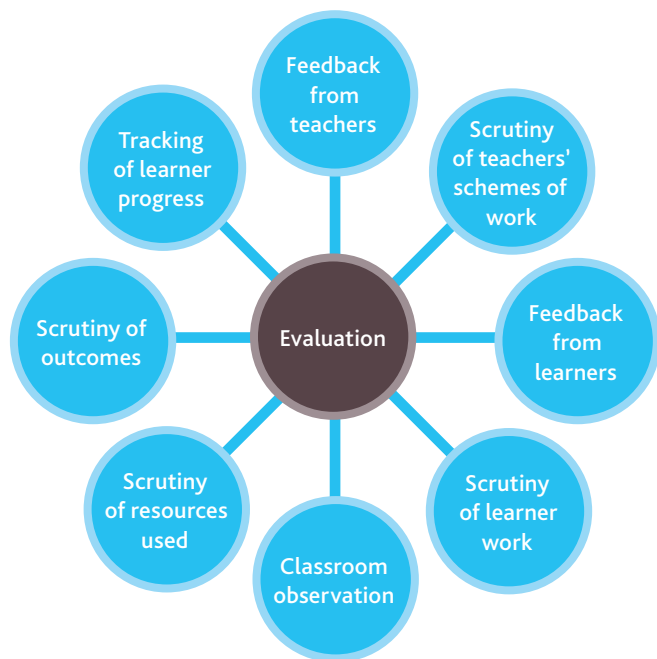
Structure and templates to assist planning

Schools will adapt or develop a format that meets their own needs and circumstances – no one template is suitable for all. There are two points to take into account before choosing a format:

- The period of time covered by the plan. Medium to long-term strategic planning normally considers a period of about 5–10 years. The format of the plan should help users to see how the planned activities are completed over this time. Annual plans need to be more specific, showing in detail the full set of activities and outcomes for that year. This way all contributors will have a clear understanding of what to do.
- The priorities identified in the plan. Plans should prioritise and focus on the most important developments. Some can be achieved in a year and some will take

several years to achieve. The format of the plan should help users to understand the individual objectives and how they are to be achieved. It should also show how the objectives interact and are connected.

The plan format will include high-level overviews of the development plan priorities and objectives, as well as detailed summaries of activity by priority. It is best to present the information in a table format, with explanations as necessary. The format and language of the plan should be accessible, not just to school leaders and teachers but also to other members of the school community and stakeholders.

Table 2 (on page 15) is an example of an annual planning template for an imaginary school that is about to start its second year teaching Cambridge IGCSE® programmes. This school wants to make sure that important changes in teaching and learning started in the first year will continue and expand into the second. The school has decided it needs to focus on the teaching of science (the introduction of science practicals), English (a stronger emphasis on listening and speaking, and on extended writing) and history (development of source-based analysis). These objectives are all intended to have a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning (Cambridge registration standard 3 as well as registration standard 1b: *The culture of the school is learner centred and supports students and teachers to become confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged*).

These three subject departments will identify case studies of good practice from the first year of teaching. This includes the use of assessment in support of learning, learner feedback and effective practice identified from other sources, particularly Cambridge training courses teachers have completed. This material will be discussed and heads of department will be responsible for preparing the detailed plans with actions, responsibilities and success criteria identified. Departments will review and update their schemes of work and monitor the teaching of the new Grade 10 schemes. Towards the end of the plan period, once the results from the first Cambridge IGCSE entry are available, the school will review the whole Cambridge IGCSE programme. It will use data from questionnaires and 'exit interviews' with students completing the programme. Specific activities are described in the plan. We consider the following in detail in subsequent chapters: teacher evaluations, mentoring, writing schemes of work and assessment in support of learning.

The final column will be used for periodic reports on progress, using a 'traffic light' (Red, Amber, Green – RAG) system. In the RAG report, red type indicates that the activity is not on target, amber that deadlines or actions are at risk, and green that the activity is meeting deadlines and on target. When the activity is finished it is marked as completed.

Practices also need to feed into, and be supported by, clear school-wide policies. (This is the subject of the Chapter 3.) These can support the development of teaching practice at a whole-school level. This will support the extension of new styles of teaching and learning into other areas of the curriculum and other years.

2: Creating the school development continued

Table 2: Imaginary annual planning relating to specific objectives

PRIORITY 1: Teaching and Learning
OBJECTIVE: To support the continuing development of learner-centred pedagogy in Cambridge IGCSE courses in Grade 10
RELEVANT CAMBRIDGE STANDARDS: 1.2, 3.3 and 3.5
LEADERSHIP/COORDINATION BY: Ruchira Mitra
MONITORING/EVALUATION BY: Lee Harris

	Specific objectives	Tasks and action required	Who is responsible?	Timescales/ key milestones	Resource implications?	Success criteria – Impact on student learning and achievement	Progress report (RAG)
1	Science a. Develop science practicals	• Evaluation of first year Cambridge IGCSE implementation identifying good practice	Waleed	May previous year	$10,023	Evaluation produces clear recommendations	Closed
		• Upgrading Science lab B	Juan	Work completed Jun–Jul		Work completed by 31 July	Red
		• Mentoring	Waleed to mentor John	Sep–Dec		John's evaluation in January	Green
		• Teacher evaluation criteria added and included in evaluations	Sarah	Jan–Jun		Evidence emerges in evaluations	Green
		• New assessments in support of learning designed and incorporated into schemes of work	Sarah to lead	Sep–Dec		Evidence in schemes of work and their implementation observed in teacher evaluation process	Amber
2	English A. Enhance listening and speaking skills B. Support extended writing	• School workshop bringing in consultant David Smith	Hema to organise	15 October	$500	Recommendations identified and implemented	Closed
		• Rewrite schemes of work indicating how skills are taught	Hema to oversee	By 31 Aug before teaching begins		Evidence in schemes of work and their implementation observed in teacher evaluation process	Green
		• Mentoring	Hema to mentor Chris	Sep–Dec		Chris's evaluation in March	Green
		• Teacher evaluation criteria added and included in evaluations	Jane	Jan–Jun		Evidence emerges in evaluations	Completed
3	History A. Develop students' ability to analyse source material	• Attend Cambridge introductory History training workshop	Peter and Uzma	Sep	$500	Attending conference and dissemination of feedback to department	Completed
		• Purchase new textbooks identified as supporting source interpretation	Jay	Aug		Purchased and used	Completed
		• Rewrite schemes of work indicating how source material will be taught	Whole department led by Mark	By 31 August before teaching begins		Evidence in schemes of work and their implementation observed in teacher evaluation process	Completed
		• Teacher evaluation criteria added and included in evaluations	Mark	Jan–Jun		Evidence emerges in evaluations	Green