



CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Code of practice

This is an updated version of the Code of Practice that was published in 2017. It has been updated only to reflect our new name, logo and look announced in October 2023. The rest of the content is exactly as it was published in 2017. It will continue to apply until further notice.

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Introduction

About us

Cambridge International Education is the awarding body of the International Education group at Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

Cambridge International Education develops, assesses and awards our international programmes and qualifications for students worldwide, including Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International AS & A Level.

We have over 160 years' experience as an international awarding body. Our qualifications are recognised and valued by universities and employers around the world.

Purpose of this Code of Practice

This Code of Practice sets out our approach to assessment and demonstrates our commitment to transparency. It represents a set of standards against which our self-assessment is conducted.

It serves as the foundation on which our assessment processes are built, and as a benchmark against which those processes must be judged, both by ourselves and by independent appeals panels.

Scope

This Code of Practice applies to the assessment of our certificated international qualifications. These include Cambridge IGCSE™s, Cambridge O Levels, Cambridge International AS Levels, Cambridge International A Levels and Cambridge Pre-U. The Code of Practice does not apply to:

- any educational service provided by us which is not assessment
- the support services, resources and training provided by us to teachers preparing students for assessment
- any assessment for which certificates are not issued
- any assessment which is produced in collaboration with a ministry of education or other local awarding organisation.

This is an updated version of the Code of Practice that was published in 2017. It has been updated only to reflect our new name, logo and look announced in October 2023. The rest of the content is exactly as it was published in 2017. It will continue to apply until further notice.

The Code of Practice is subject to revision in line with Cambridge's commitment to continual improvement. Any additions, deletions or amendments will be published on our public website at www.cambridgeinternational.org

Structure

Each chapter of this Code of Practice comprises a set of aims and, for each aim, a set of commitments.

The commitments are the actions which we commit ourselves to taking in order to achieve our aims.

Compliance with the Code of Practice

We will have complied with the Code of Practice if we have complied with the commitments contained within it. When called to account and when holding ourselves to account, we will show how we have followed these commitments in practice.

The introductory sections, aims and footnotes are provided for clarification only. The extent to which we have complied with the Code of Practice will be determined solely on the basis of the commitments and without reference to the introductory sections, aims or footnotes.

Assessment as judgement

For all assessments covered by this Code of Practice, the result of the assessment is expressed as a grade and shown on a certificate. The grade represents a judgement of the ability of the candidate as demonstrated by their performance in the assessment.

The certificate is issued by Cambridge International Education and under our name. The grade that appears on the certificate is our judgement of the candidate's ability. When a centre¹ enters a candidate for an assessment, the service that we provide is our judgement of the candidate's ability.

It sometimes happens that candidates, teachers, centres, schools or parents disagree with our judgement. Such disagreement does not constitute evidence that we have failed to comply with this Code of Practice. In circumstances where there is disagreement, there are processes by which centres may ask us to reconsider aspects of our judgements. Once those processes have been completed, it will be our judgement that appears on the certificate.

This Code of Practice sets out the commitments that we make in order to produce judgements that are valid, reliable and fair.

¹ Throughout this document, 'school' is used to refer to a place where teaching and learning occurs, and 'centre' is used to refer to a school, institution or other organisation which enters candidates for Cambridge International qualifications and carries out related assessments. In many cases a candidate's centre will also be their school.

Chapter 1: Syllabuses

Introduction

The purpose of a syllabus document is to declare what candidates are expected to learn and how it is to be assessed. Syllabus documents are designed to enable teachers to prepare candidates for the assessment.

Published in conjunction with some syllabuses, the grade descriptors state what levels of performance are represented by the results. Read together, the syllabus and the grade descriptions allow users of the results (such as universities and employers) to understand what the examination results mean.

Aim 1.1: Syllabuses will make clear what candidates are expected to learn and what they will be assessed on.

Our commitments:

- (a) Each syllabus will state the knowledge, understanding and skills which candidates are expected to acquire and on which they may be assessed.
- (b) The learning content of each syllabus will be clearly specified, accurate and up to date.
- (c) The content of syllabuses will span not only knowledge and understanding but also skills.

Aim 1.2: Grade descriptors will indicate the levels of performance which are signified by the results.

Our commitments:

- (a) Grade descriptors, which describe the level of performance at a selection of grades², will be published for some syllabuses.
- (b) Grade descriptors will be worded so as to recognise positive achievement.

Aim 1.3: Syllabuses will make clear how candidates are to be assessed.

Our commitments:

- (a) Each syllabus will contain a scheme of assessment.
- (b) The scheme of assessment will include descriptions of all assessment components such as examination papers, practical tests, internal assessment and oral tests.

- (c) The scheme of assessment will clearly specify the available options³. Each option will satisfy the assessment objectives of the syllabus.
- (d) The scheme of assessment will state the number of marks available for the component.
- (e) The scheme of assessment will state the percentage weighting allocated to each component.
- (f) The scheme of assessment will state the assessment methods and techniques to be used in each component.
- (g) The scheme of assessment will state the time allocated to each timed component.
- (h) The syllabus will state the knowledge, understanding and skills that will be assessed by each component.
- (i) The syllabus will state the grades available to candidates taking it, and any option within it.
- (j) The syllabus will state the ability range, expressed in terms of grades, for which each component is intended.
- (k) The syllabus will set out the relationship between the assessment objectives and the components.
- (l) The syllabus will make clear the arrangements, if any, for a candidate to carry forward their result in an individual component from one series⁴ to another.
- (m) Schemes of assessment for Cambridge International A Level will make clear what arrangements, if any, there are for carrying forward a result in a Cambridge International AS Level qualification to a subsequent A Level.

Aim 1.4: Each syllabus will enable schools to develop appropriate courses of study⁵ that provide one part of a coherent school education and that prepare candidates for assessment.

Our commitments:

- (a) Syllabuses will state in which examination series each year they are available, which years they apply to and, if appropriate, will indicate the countries or regions in which they are available.
- (b) Each syllabus will contain a statement of recommended prior knowledge or level of attainment.

2 Most Cambridge IGCSE and Pre-U syllabuses have grade descriptors. For other syllabuses, grade descriptors will be gradually introduced after the first assessment following a syllabus review.

3 An option is a combination of components that candidates are permitted to take.

4 An examination series is a short period of about a month within which candidates take their examinations. Many Cambridge syllabuses are examined in a May/June series and an October/November series each year.

5 Syllabuses will not in themselves be courses of study but will be designed to help schools to devise courses that stimulate candidates' interest in the area of study and their enjoyment of it, and to facilitate and guide learning.

- (c) Each syllabus will give an indication of the number of hours of teaching contact time for which the syllabus is designed.
- (d) Each syllabus will contain a statement of how it may facilitate progression to further study.
- (e) Each syllabus will state any special requirements (e.g. laboratory space or computer hardware or software).
- (f) Each syllabus will specify any exclusions⁶.
- (g) Each syllabus will include an indication of any Group Awards (such as Cambridge AICE or Cambridge ICE) to which the syllabus may contribute.

Aim 1.5: Where an assessment component is to be set or marked by the centre, the syllabus will make the requirements clear.

Our commitments:

- (a) The syllabus will state which assessment components (if any) require tasks to be set by the centre.
- (b) In cases where tasks are set by the centre, and where a centre submits a task for consideration, Cambridge will advise on whether the task provides opportunity for the candidate to fulfil the assessment objectives⁷.
- (c) For any assessment component which is not conducted in timed examination conditions, the syllabus will contain clear rules on whether (and, if so, to what extent) candidates have the opportunity to re-draft and re-submit work after initial feedback from the teacher.
- (d) Where an assessment component is to be marked by the centre, the syllabus will state the marking criteria. These criteria will be sufficiently specific to minimise inconsistencies in interpretation, even when they are applied to different tasks by teachers of different experience and expertise.
- (e) Where an assessment component is to be marked by the centre, the syllabus will state the requirements for moderation, including both internal moderation within the centre and external moderation by Cambridge.

Aim 1.6: Each scheme of assessment will be fit for its purpose, which is to facilitate reliable and valid assessment.

Our commitments:

- (a) Each scheme of assessment will allow the measuring of candidates' attainment across the target ability range.
- (b) Schemes of assessment will provide candidates with the opportunity to show what they know, understand and can do, and will be designed to reward positive achievement.
- (c) Each component and each type of question or task will make a contribution to the achievement of the assessment objectives and will be appropriate for assessing the objective or objectives it is designed for.
- (d) Syllabuses and options will include more than one component⁸.
- (e) The percentage weighting attached to each component and skill will be appropriate for the subject, level and stated assessment objectives.
- (f) The duration of a timed written component will broadly reflect its weight within the examination.
- (g) Components that are alternatives to one another will make comparable demands on candidates.
- (h) A syllabus will not have so many acceptable combinations of components that there is a threat to the reliability of the assessment.
- (i) Schemes of assessment will not include hurdles⁹.
- (j) Schemes of assessment will include at least one component that is externally set and marked¹⁰.
- (k) Assessment components that are marked by the centre will not contribute more than 50% of the total maximum mark for a syllabus or option¹¹.
- (l) Cambridge will use the most appropriate assessment methods to measure candidates' skills.

⁶ An exclusion is a combination with another syllabus that is prohibited because of significant overlap of content or for some other reason so that a candidate may not be entered for both syllabuses in the same examination series.

⁷ For some components, a formal process for seeking advice may be provided.

⁸ This is in order to reduce the impact of any irrelevant temporary factors on a candidate's performance.

⁹ A hurdle is an individual component in which a certain standard must be achieved if the candidate is to be eligible for a grade on the syllabus as a whole.

¹⁰ 'Externally set and marked' means that the setting and marking is done by Cambridge (and not by the centre). Some schemes of assessment consist entirely of externally set and marked components.

¹¹ Where the nature of the subject is performance based, this may exceptionally be increased to 60%.

Aim 1.7: Schemes of assessment will not make unreasonable demands on candidates, teachers or resources.

Our commitments:

- (a) Options and components will be designed to avoid unnecessary repetition of the testing of the same knowledge, understanding and skills.
- (b) Schemes of assessment will not require a candidate to take more than four components, except when the need for a wider range of evidence outweighs concern about examination pressure on candidates.
- (c) A timed written component will not be of more than three hours' duration for a Cambridge Advanced qualification such as Cambridge International AS Level, Cambridge International A Level or Cambridge Pre-U, or more than 2.5 hours' duration for a Cambridge Upper Secondary qualification such as Cambridge IGCSE or Cambridge O Level, unless the nature of the assessment makes this unavoidable.
- (d) No component will contribute less than 10% of the total maximum mark for the syllabus or option, except in cases where performance on the component is reported separately as an endorsement (in those cases it will not contribute at all to the syllabus mark and grade).

Aim 1.8: Syllabuses will be periodically reviewed to ensure that they remain up to date and fit for purpose.

Our commitments:

- (a) Syllabuses will normally be reviewed once every six years.
- (b) Each review of a syllabus will include consideration of the knowledge, understanding and skills that it is appropriate to teach students at the level being assessed.

Aim 1.9: Syllabuses will be developed and revised by appropriate personnel.

Our commitments:

- (a) The preparation of a new or revised syllabus will be preceded by a period of consultation with centres expected to enter candidates for the syllabus.
- (b) The development or revision of a syllabus will be carried out by a team of staff and consultants.
- (c) The team developing or revising a syllabus will have experience both in the subject and in assessment.

Aim 1.10: Schools will be given adequate notice of the introduction, revision or withdrawal of a syllabus.

Our commitments:

- (a) New and revised syllabuses will be available to schools at least 25 months before the first examination to which they refer (or at least 13 months in the case of qualifications that typically have a teaching cycle of less than two years).
- (b) When a syllabus is withdrawn without being replaced by an equivalent Cambridge syllabus, schools will be given enough notice to enable them to choose and implement an alternative. For qualifications that typically have a teaching cycle of one year, this will normally be a notice period of at least 18 months (ending with the date of the last examination). For qualifications that typically have a teaching cycle of two years, this will normally be a notice period of at least 30 months (ending with the date of the last examination).

Chapter 2: Setting of question papers and mark schemes

Introduction

Most – but not all – of the assessment components which make up our qualifications have a question paper and a corresponding mark scheme.

We aim to provide question papers and mark schemes that produce valid and reliable tests which have a positive educational impact and are practicable for all concerned.

Aim 2.1: Question papers will conform with the syllabus.

Our commitments:

- (a) Question papers will be consistent with the syllabus and scheme of assessment in terms of the maximum mark, the duration, the assessment objectives assessed and the learning content assessed.
- (b) Each part of each question will assess knowledge and skills that fall within the syllabus.
- (c) Each question paper will allocate marks to the assessment objectives in the proportions specified in the syllabus.

Aim 2.2: Mark schemes will conform with the question paper.

Our commitments:

- (a) The first draft of the mark scheme will be produced at the same time as the first draft of the question paper and will be written in sufficient detail to allow a full evaluation of the question paper.
- (b) The mark scheme will be developed alongside the question paper and there will be a single definitive version of it at each stage in the development process.
- (c) Mark schemes will correctly show the maximum number of marks available for each part of each question.
- (d) Mark schemes will allocate marks commensurate with the demands of questions or tasks.
- (e) Mark schemes will give credit for correct answers that are beyond the scope of the syllabus but will allow full marks to be achieved by answers that do not go beyond the scope of the syllabus.
- (f) Mark schemes will be correct in terms of the subject matter as understood at the appropriate level.

- (g) Mark schemes will award marks positively¹².
- (h) Mark schemes will not disproportionately penalise a candidate for a single error.

Aim 2.3: Question papers will sample the content of the syllabus appropriately.

Our commitments:

- (a) The question papers for a syllabus will between them cover the whole syllabus – if not in a single series, then over a number of years, with each year covering a representative sample.
- (b) Question papers will not unnecessarily repeat assessment of the same thing, and will avoid overlap between questions and with other papers in the same syllabus in the same series.
- (c) Each question or task will contribute to the achievement of the assessment objectives.
- (d) The maximum number of marks available for each question or task will be indicated on the question paper.
- (e) If there is a choice of questions, it will not compromise the aims of syllabus coverage and of avoiding overlap.

Aim 2.4: Question papers and mark schemes will minimise construct-irrelevant variance¹³.

Our commitments:

- (a) Questions and tasks will avoid drawing upon knowledge that is not required by the syllabus.
- (b) The wording of papers will be at a suitable level of linguistic demand given the expected age of candidates and the knowledge, understanding and skills being assessed.
- (c) Translation of questions or tasks from the language in which they were written will not introduce any error or ambiguity, or change the level of language expected of the candidate.
- (d) The wording will be as brief, intelligible and unambiguous as possible (unless the comprehension of language is itself what is being assessed).
- (e) Material accompanying questions will not be redundant (unless the selection of relevant information is itself what is being assessed).

¹² *In positive marking, a candidate begins with zero marks, and marks are then added for credit-worthy aspects of their work. It contrasts with negative marking, in which candidates begin with full marks, and marks are then deducted for failings in their work.*

¹³ *Construct-irrelevant variance is when candidates' marks are affected by factors other than the knowledge, understanding and skills that the assessment is intended to assess.*

- (f) Question papers will be such that the effect on the results of the test of irrelevant factors (e.g. gender, language, socio-economic group) is minimised and cultural bias is avoided (unless the perception of such bias is itself what is being assessed).
- (g) Any diagrams or illustrations will be clear, accurate and correctly labelled.
- (h) Question papers will be free of content errors and typographical errors.

Aim 2.5: Question papers will contain items with an appropriate distribution of difficulties.

Our commitments:

- (a) Question papers will be able to discriminate among the candidates for whom they are intended.
- (b) The paper will maintain, as far as is reasonable, the intellectual challenge and level of demand of the same question paper in previous years.
- (c) If there is a choice of questions within a paper, alternatives will, as far as possible, be of equal difficulty.

Aim 2.6: Mark schemes will facilitate reliable marking.

Our commitments:

- (a) Mark schemes will provide enough detail to facilitate marking that is sufficiently reliable.
- (b) Mark schemes will not seek to list every possible response unless there is a closed set of acceptable responses, but will state the intended correct answer to objective questions.
- (c) Mark schemes will include an indication of the nature and range of likely responses and will provide a rationale to allow markers to mark the different approaches that candidates might take.
- (d) Mark schemes will encourage a spread of marks.
- (e) Mark schemes will only allow whole numbers of marks to be awarded.
- (f) Each multiple-choice question will have one unambiguously correct answer and three incorrect but plausible distractors.

Aim 2.7: Centres will find the administration of assessments manageable.

Our commitments:

- (a) Practicals, orals and other special examinations will have clear instructions for supervisors and others administering the test.
- (b) If special equipment or materials are required, it will be clear what they are and whether they are provided by Cambridge, the centre or the candidate.
- (c) Equipment or materials required for any practical test will be specified in sufficient detail for the test to be carried out properly.
- (d) The requirements for practical tests will not make unreasonable demands on centres.
- (e) Practical tasks will be chosen with proper regard to the health and safety of candidates.
- (f) Practical tasks will be appropriate for an international context.
- (g) All practical tasks will be thoroughly tested prior to inclusion in a practical paper and will be practicable for the conditions under which they will be taken.

Aim 2.8: Candidates will have enough time to complete the paper.

Our commitment:

- (a) The moderately well-prepared candidate will have enough time for both reading the paper (or listening to the material) and answering the questions.

Aim 2.9: The style and format of the question paper will not be a surprise to candidates.

Our commitments:

- (a) Question papers will be compatible with any published specimen assessment material.
- (b) Question papers will conform to house style, which will include such matters as scientific units and the presentation of diagrams and tables.
- (c) The rubric¹⁴ and the layout of question papers will be clear, consistent in style and accessible to candidates.
- (d) The number of marks allocated to each question or part question will be shown on the question paper and in the mark scheme.

¹⁴ The rubric is the instructions given to candidates, for example about how many questions to answer in each section of the paper.

Aim 2.10: Candidates will not know the questions in advance.

Our commitments:

- (a) Questions and papers (and their associated mark schemes) will be kept secure at all stages of drafting, transmission, printing and delivery, whether in hard copy or electronic format.
- (b) All staff, Examiners and other contractors will be required to sign agreements that they will maintain the confidentiality of questions, question papers and mark schemes.
- (c) Cambridge will require consultants who set questions or question papers to confirm that the questions they submit are original, prepared exclusively for the examination, not previously used and not designed to follow a particular textbook.
- (d) Questions will not be so predictable that the paper assesses familiarity with the examination or rote learning under the guise of higher skills.
- (e) Contingency plans will be in place to allow Cambridge to react swiftly in the event of question paper security being breached before an examination.
- (f) Question papers will avoid repetition of identical questions from one year to another, except that limited re-use of multiple-choice questions may occur.

Aim 2.11: Question papers and mark schemes will be set by appropriately qualified personnel.

Our commitments:

- (a) More than one person will be involved in the production of a question paper.
- (b) All those involved in the drafting and revision of question papers will be expert both in the subject and in assessment (or at least in the teaching of the subject at the level of the examination).
- (c) Consultants and staff will consider and review together all draft questions.
- (d) Consultants and staff will consider and review together the question paper as a whole.

Chapter 3: Marking

Introduction

The purpose of marking is to place the candidates' work into a reliable order of merit before categorising the work into grades. First of all, a mark is produced for each component, and then the component marks are combined to produce a single overall mark for the syllabus. This chapter considers the production of a mark for each component of the syllabus: the aggregation of the component marks into a syllabus mark will be covered in Chapter 4.

This chapter is organised in three sections, corresponding to the three ways in which candidates' work is marked:

- Section A deals with marking by Examiners commissioned by Cambridge.
- Section B deals with automatic marking (usually of multiple-choice papers).
- Section C deals with the external moderation, by Moderators commissioned by Cambridge, of marking done internally by teachers within centres.

Where candidates' work is marked by Examiners, the work allocated to Examiners may be complete scripts to be marked on paper, or images of complete scripts or of parts of scripts made available to them electronically. In a few cases, candidates' performances may be marked during a visit to the centre.

Where candidates' work is marked by teachers and externally moderated, it is the responsibility of the centre to mark consistently so that the candidates are in an appropriate order of merit. The purpose of moderation is to correct any consistent leniency or consistent severity in the centre's marking. These corrections, if they are necessary, are made by applying scaling adjustments¹⁵ to the marks of all candidates in the centre. The process of moderation cannot correct inconsistencies in the centre's marking.

The way in which candidates' work is marked – by Examiners, automatically, or by teachers – will be decided on the basis of what is most appropriate to the marking task.

Section A: Marking by Examiners

Aim 3.1: Candidates' work will be marked by appropriately qualified Examiners.

Our commitments:

- (a) The Examiners for a component in an examination series will be led by a Principal Examiner, who will take appropriate steps to ensure accuracy and consistency in marking.

- (b) Marking will normally be undertaken by Expert Examiners but, if the nature of the marking task permits, marking may instead be undertaken by Subject Examiners or General Examiners.

(c) Expert Examiners will:

- have expertise in the subject being examined
- be experienced in the likely performance of candidates at the level of the examination
- have adequate language proficiency in the language in which scripts are written
- have adequate IT skills and facilities for marking on-screen, in cases where the marking is to be done on-screen.

Experience in the likely performance of candidates will normally involve three years' recent and relevant teaching experience at the time when the Examiner applied to mark for Cambridge, or recent experience of marking or moderating in the same subject and at the same level.

(d) Subject Examiners will:

- have expertise in the subject being examined
- have adequate language proficiency in the language in which scripts are written
- have adequate IT skills and facilities for marking on-screen, in cases where the marking is to be done on-screen.

(e) General Examiners will:

- have adequate language proficiency in the language in which scripts are written
- have adequate IT skills and facilities for marking on-screen, in cases where the marking is to be done on-screen.

Aim 3.2: Examiners will mark in accordance with the mark scheme.

Our commitments:

- (a) Examiners will assess all candidates for a component according to the same mark scheme.
- (b) Examiners will not be influenced by extraneous factors, such as the handwriting or background of the candidate, when applying the mark scheme.
- (c) Examiners will not deduct marks for breaches of regulations that cannot have given the candidate an advantage, e.g. writing in red pen.

¹⁵ Scaling adjustments are adjustments made to a centre's marks and are described in 3.12(d).

Aim 3.3: Each Examiner will apply the mark scheme in the same way as the Principal Examiner¹⁶.

Our commitments:

- (a) Except where there is a single Examiner, all Examiners marking a component will be standardised¹⁷.
- (b) The standardisation of Examiners will be led by the Principal Examiner.
- (c) The standardisation of Examiners will be conducted either by a meeting or electronically. It will be a condition of service for each Examiner that they complete the standardisation process.
- (d) If standardisation is conducted electronically, there will nevertheless be a meeting¹⁸ of the Principal Examiner and some of the other Examiners in order to finalise the mark scheme and the definitive marks for the scripts to be used in the standardisation and monitoring processes.
- (e) The standardisation process will train Examiners in the following areas:
 - familiarity with the mark scheme
 - examples of the application of the mark scheme
 - the principles that these examples illustrate
 - the ways in which candidates' work is to be annotated
 - the administrative procedures required of Examiners.
- (f) The standardisation process will require Examiners to submit trial marking for evaluation.
- (g) Examiners may not submit marks unless they have completed the standardisation process and their trial marking is satisfactory.
- (h) The work of all Examiners except the Principal Examiner will be monitored during the marking period to check that their marking continues to be satisfactory.
- (i) Checking of Examiners' work will be sufficiently extensive and frequent to identify Examiners whose marking is unsatisfactory.

Aim 3.4: Examiners will have sufficient time to mark candidates' scripts with care.

Our commitments:

- (a) Allocations of scripts and schedules will be such as to give Examiners enough time to mark the scripts allocated to them.
- (b) The work allocated to each Examiner will be such as to maximise reliability and enable it to be monitored.

Aim 3.5: Examiners' judgements will be accurately recorded.

Our commitments:

- (a) Marked scripts will give a clear indication of how many marks have been awarded for each question or part question.
- (b) The mechanism for recording the Examiners' marks will minimise the risk of transcription or arithmetic error.
- (c) When the Examiner marks on paper, they will appoint a Checker to check the addition of the marks awarded and the transcription of the total to the mark sheet.
- (d) When the Examiner marks on paper, a transcription check on the total mark will be conducted by Cambridge.
- (e) Examiners will be able to annotate the scripts that they mark. The purpose of such annotations will be to clarify the application of the mark scheme for the benefit of other Examiners.
- (f) The meaning of all Examiners' comments and annotations on the scripts will be clear to anybody else who has completed the standardisation process for the paper.

Aim 3.6: Where a candidate is at risk of receiving an inappropriate grade, the marking will be checked.

Our commitments:

- (a) Before the issue of results and after the grading process has been completed, there will be a grade review process. The grade review will consist of a targeted re-marking by senior Examiners of the work of candidates who are most at risk of receiving inappropriate results¹⁹.
- (b) A candidate's work will be re-marked at grade review if they are close to a grade threshold (at syllabus level) and also at risk for at least one other reason. A list of these reasons will be maintained by Cambridge.
- (c) Candidates whose marks have been adjusted downwards to mitigate the effect of a consistently lenient Examiner and who are, as a consequence, close to and below a grade threshold at syllabus level will have the component with the downward adjustment re-marked.

¹⁶ The Principal Examiner is the most senior Examiner marking a component.

¹⁷ Standardisation is the process of training other Examiners to apply the mark scheme in the same way as the Principal Examiner.

¹⁸ The meeting may be a face-to-face meeting or it may be a virtual meeting such as a video conference.

¹⁹ Components which are marked during a visit to the centre may be excluded from the grade review.

Aim 3.7: Candidates' work will be marked fairly if the unexpected happens.

Our commitments:

- (a) Scripts received or found late will be marked, irrespective of whether the results have been despatched, provided that they have been kept secure²⁰.
- (b) A candidate's work will be allocated for re-marking by a second Examiner when the checks required by Section 3.3(h) of this Code suggest that the first Examiner is not marking consistently.
- (c) The marks of Examiners who are consistently lenient or consistently severe will be adjusted to align them with the Principal Examiner's marking standard.
- (d) When a more senior Examiner awards a mark that is different from the original Examiner's, it will be the more senior Examiner's mark that prevails, subject to any pre-established tolerance within which it is agreed that marks will not be adjusted.
- (e) In the event of an apparently accidental rubric infringement, the candidate will be awarded the highest possible mark consistent with the rubric. However, systematic violation of rubrics by candidates from identifiable centres may be treated differently.
- (f) There will be the facility to exclude a question from the assessment if the question has proved inappropriate.

Aim 3.8: The insights gained by Examiners during marking will enable teachers to improve teaching and learning.

Our commitments:

- (a) Each Principal Examiner will write a report for publication to centres about the performance of candidates on the component that they marked.
- (b) In their reports, Principal Examiners will comment on every question, unless there were too few responses to a question to make general comment appropriate, in which case they will say so.
- (c) In their reports, Principal Examiners will indicate the correct answer, where there is such a thing.
- (d) In their reports, Principal Examiners will give guidance about what Examiners were seeking in answer to each question. They will comment on frequent errors by candidates and on parts of the syllabus that seem to be causing particular problems for candidates, unless there were too few responses to the question to make such comment appropriate. They will include examples and give praise where appropriate.

²⁰ Provided that the work is received before the deadline for enquiries about results.

²¹ Internally assessed components are components that are marked by teachers within the centre.

Section B: Automatic marking

Aim 3.9: Automatically marked items will be marked accurately.

Our commitment:

- (a) Appropriate quality control systems will be in place to confirm the accuracy of the marking of automatically marked items.

Aim 3.10: Candidates' work will be marked fairly if the unexpected happens.

Our commitment:

- (a) There will be the facility to exclude a question from all candidates' total marks if the question has proved inappropriate.

Section C: Moderation of teacher marking

Aim 3.11: Moderation will be carried out by appropriately qualified Moderators.

Our commitments:

- (a) The Moderators for a component in an examination series will be led by a Principal Moderator, who will take appropriate steps to ensure consistency in moderation.
- (b) Moderators will:
 - have expertise in the subject being assessed
 - be experienced in the likely performance of candidates at the level of the examination
 - have adequate language proficiency in the language in which candidates' work is written.
- (c) Experience in the likely performance of candidates will normally involve three years' recent and relevant teaching experience at the time when the Examiner applied to moderate for Cambridge, or recent experience of marking or moderating in the same subject and at the same level.

Aim 3.12: Moderators will bring the marking of different centres into alignment.

Our commitments:

- (a) Teachers' marks awarded for internally assessed²¹ components will always be subject to external moderation by a Moderator commissioned by Cambridge.
- (b) Cambridge will not issue a result for any candidate entered for an internally assessed component unless the moderation process has been completed for that component in their centre.
- (c) Moderators will use the published marking criteria when moderating.
- (d) Moderators will recommend one of the following actions for each centre:
 - no change to the centre's marks
 - increase or reduce marks uniformly over all of the mark range
 - divide the mark range into blocks and, within each block, either increase the marks uniformly, decrease the marks uniformly, or make no change to the marks.
- (e) The relative rank order of two candidates from the same centre will not be reversed by the process of moderation²².
- (f) Moderators will not re-mark the work with a view to changing the marks of individual candidates²³.
- (g) Moderators will consider the work of a sample of candidates from the centre when making their judgements.
- (h) The size of the sample will be adequate for the Moderator to make a judgement about the marking standard applied by the centre.
- (i) The sample will cover the range of marks awarded by the centre.
- (j) For the candidates included in the sample, Moderators will normally consider all of the work that contributed to their final mark for that component.

- (k) The candidates to be included in the sample will be determined by Cambridge²⁴.

Aim 3.13: Each Moderator will moderate in the same way as the Principal Moderator.

Our commitments:

- (a) Except where there is a single Moderator, all Moderators for a component will be standardised.
- (b) The standardisation of Moderators will be led by the Principal Moderator.
- (c) The standardisation of Moderators will be conducted either by a meeting or electronically. It will be a condition of service for each Moderator that they complete the standardisation process.
- (d) The standardisation process will train Moderators in the following areas:
 - familiarity with the marking criteria
 - examples of the application of the marking criteria
 - the principles that these examples illustrate
 - the ways in which scaling adjustments are to be determined
 - the administrative procedures required of Moderators.
- (e) The standardisation process will require Moderators to submit trial moderation for evaluation.
- (f) Moderators may not moderate unless they have completed the standardisation process and their trial moderation is satisfactory.
- (g) The work of all Moderators except the Principal Moderator will be monitored during the moderating period to check that their work continues to be satisfactory.
- (h) Checking of Moderators' work will be sufficiently extensive and frequent to identify Moderators whose work is unsatisfactory.

²² To clarify, if candidate A has been awarded a higher mark by the centre than candidate B, then the process of moderation may retain this rank order or may bring candidates A and B to the same mark, but the process of moderation may not bring candidate B to a higher mark than candidate A.

²³ In circumstances where a centre's marking is exceptionally inconsistent, the moderation process may be abandoned for that centre and the work of all candidates re-marked. This will only be done where the work of all candidates in the centre is available for re-marking, and only as a rare exception. Moderators will not re-mark the work of some candidates within a centre and moderate the work of others.

²⁴ In some cases, Cambridge will ask the centre only for the work of the candidates in the sample, identifying which candidates are to be included. In other cases, Cambridge will ask centres for the work of some or all candidates, and the sample will be selected by the Moderator out of those candidates whose work has been provided.

Aim 3.14: Moderators will have sufficient time to moderate centres' marking with care.

Our commitments:

- (a) Allocations of centres and schedules will be such as to give Moderators enough time to moderate the centres allocated to them.
- (b) The work allocated to each Moderator will be such as to maximise reliability and enable it to be monitored.

Aim 3.15: Moderators' judgements will be accurately recorded.

Our commitments:

- (a) Moderators will not annotate the work of candidates.
- (b) Cambridge will record which candidates have been included in the sample used for external moderation, and the marks that would have been awarded to these candidates if the Moderator had been marking them.
- (c) Cambridge will record the scaling adjustment recommended by the Moderator.
- (d) The mechanism for recording the Moderators' marks and scaling adjustments will minimise the risk of transcription or arithmetic error.

Aim 3.16: Centres will be moderated fairly if the unexpected happens.

Our commitments:

- (a) Cambridge will ask for additional work from a centre if the Moderator is unable to make a judgement on the basis of the original sample.
- (b) All samples received or found late will be moderated, provided that they have been kept secure²⁵.
- (c) A centre's sample will be allocated for re-moderation by a second Moderator when the checks required by Section 3.13(g) of this Code suggest that the first Moderator's work is not satisfactory.
- (d) When a more senior Moderator recommends a scaling adjustment that is different from the original Moderator's, it will be the more senior Moderator's scaling adjustment that prevails.

Aim 3.17: The insights gained during moderation will enable teachers to improve teaching and learning.

Our commitments:

- (a) Each centre will receive a report for each externally moderated component for which it has entered. The nature of any adjustment to the centre's marks will be indicated.

²⁵ Provided that the work is received before the scheduled date for the issue of provisional results. Work which is received late may cause delays in the issue of provisional results for the centre.

Chapter 4: Grading and the reporting of results

Introduction

The result of an examination is a single grade for the subject, printed on a certificate. Other information about candidates' performance may be provided in addition, but the result is the grade on the certificate.

By the time marking and moderation are completed, we have a mark for each candidate on each component they have taken. We then have two further tasks to complete in order to determine the candidate's result from these marks.

First, we have to combine the marks for the components into a single mark for the syllabus for each candidate. This is called the aggregation of marks. It will place the candidates into a single order of merit for the syllabus²⁶.

Second, we have to divide the order of merit into grades by applying the grade thresholds²⁷. For example, all candidates whose mark is at or above the Grade B threshold, but below the Grade A threshold, will be awarded a Grade B.

The process of deciding what the grade thresholds should be is called grading.

Grading usually begins with the setting of grade thresholds for each component. These component-level grade thresholds are then aggregated to give syllabus-level grade thresholds.

The existence of component-level grade thresholds means that we can calculate individual candidates' component grades if we wish to. However, component grades are not used in the determination of candidates' results and are not part of the candidates' results.

Aim 4.1: The aggregation of candidates' component marks into a syllabus mark will comply with the syllabus.

Our commitments:

- (a) When the marks for different papers or components are aggregated in the calculation of an overall syllabus mark, Cambridge will use the weighting stated in the syllabus.

Aim 4.2: The grading process will be robust and dependable.

Our commitments:

- (a) The grading process will occur when the marking of candidates' work and the moderation of the marking of centres is substantially complete, quality checks on the marking have been completed and there is no likelihood of significant changes to distributions of marks.
- (b) At least two people will be involved in deciding the grade thresholds. One of these will normally be the member of staff responsible for the syllabus.
- (c) The amount of time allowed for grading will be sufficient to facilitate the use of available evidence and to ensure the quality of the decisions made.
- (d) Staff involved in the grading process will be trained in grading techniques.
- (e) Grade thresholds will be determined for each component and for each option within the syllabus.
- (f) A grade threshold at option level will be the sum of the weighted marks necessary to receive that grade in the individual components that comprise the option, except that at the higher grades a lower mark may be taken to allow for regression to the mean²⁸.
- (g) Grade thresholds will be decided for the key grades²⁹ for the qualification using evidence and the judgement of those carrying out the grading process. The thresholds of the remaining grades will be calculated from those at the key grades using arithmetic rules.
- (h) Enough of the grades will be key grades to ensure that consideration has been given to thresholds at widely different levels of ability (and/or those that are most critical for progression to the next stage of education).
- (i) The initial decisions about grade thresholds will be independently checked by a senior member of staff, who may require further justification or further consideration for specified grade thresholds before the grading is approved.
- (j) The outcome of the grading process for each syllabus will be endorsed by the Accountable Officer, who will be either the Chief Executive or a senior member of staff nominated by the Chief Executive. The Accountable Officer may require further justification or further consideration for specified grade thresholds before the outcomes are endorsed.

²⁶ Or, if there is more than one option within the syllabus, for the option. An option is a combination of components for which candidates may be entered. This chapter will use the term 'syllabus' to mean option where there is more than one option.

²⁷ A grade threshold is the minimum number of marks required to be awarded a grade.

²⁸ Regression to the mean is a statistical phenomenon that, at the higher grades, can make the grade thresholds at syllabus level more severe than they are in any of the components, unless an allowance is made.

²⁹ A key grade (or judgemental grade) is a grade whose threshold is decided in the light of evidence, as opposed to an arithmetic grade whose threshold is determined by an arithmetic rule.

Aim 4.3: Grading will maintain the awarding standard³⁰ of the previous year's examination and comparability with other options and qualifications.

Our commitments:

- (a) The grading process will maintain the awarding standard of a syllabus from one year to the next, subject to the need for alignment with any equivalent qualification taken in England, and paying due consideration to the need for comparability with different subjects in the same qualification.
- (b) The grading process will take account of the need for comparability between alternative options and alternative papers within the syllabus, including alternatives taken in different time zones.
- (c) The grading process will take account of the need for comparability between different series in the year.
- (d) The grading process will take account of the need for comparability between alternative syllabuses in the same subject at the same level.
- (e) The grade thresholds for a component may be raised or lowered from one series to another to allow for changes in difficulty, or to make an adjustment to the awarding standard.
- (f) If the assessment tasks, marking criteria and marking standards³¹ for a component are unchanged from one year to the next, the grade thresholds will normally remain unchanged.
- (g) Cambridge's examinations will not be norm referenced³².
- (h) The proportion of successful candidates will increase when the knowledge, understanding and skills being assessed have improved over time, but no such improvements in results will arise merely from improved familiarity with the nature of the assessment.
- (i) If there is reason to think that the awarding standard for the syllabus requires adjustment, examination outcomes will reflect this adjustment.
- (j) The outcome of grading will be such that candidates' results are consistent with the grade descriptors, where they exist.
- (k) Candidate performance will be assessed against the same awarding standard regardless of the point in the candidate's course, life or personal development at which assessment takes place.

Aim 4.4: Decisions about grade thresholds will be based on the strongest available evidence.

Our commitments:

- (a) A combination of expert judgements and statistical evidence will be used to inform grading decisions.
- (b) The evidence considered will include both evidence about the difficulty of the assessment and evidence about the ability of the cohort³³.
- (c) Cambridge will provide an opportunity for teachers to submit their views about the difficulty of question papers and will consider these views when making grading decisions.
- (d) Consideration will be given to changes in the aggregates of forecasts from candidates' centres as an indication of whether teachers perceive the candidates to be of the same ability as those in previous years.
- (e) Each Principal Examiner will use their expert judgement to recommend grade thresholds, or ranges of marks within which they believe the grade thresholds should fall, on the component which they have marked. These recommendations will be made at the end of the marking period and before the grading process itself, and will be considered during grading.
- (f) Cambridge will maintain an archive of candidates' marked scripts to illustrate the standard required at the key thresholds and to inform the judgements of Principal Examiners.
- (g) The Principal Examiners supplying their professional judgement for the grading process will have sufficient experience, expertise, training and familiarity with current and archive scripts and marking schemes for their judgement to be informed.
- (h) The statistical evidence used will relate to more than one previous examination series, except in cases where the examination is new and previous examination series do not exist.
- (i) Wherever appropriate, Cambridge will consider independent measures of the ability of the cohort (e.g. their results in previous examinations or in control/reference tests).
- (j) Checks on the likely accuracy of prospective results will be conducted by reference to benchmark centres³⁴ or other groups of candidates.

30 The awarding standard is the standard of candidate performance that is just sufficient for the award of a particular grade.

31 Marking standard refers to the degree of leniency or severity with which the mark scheme is applied.

32 In a norm-referenced assessment, the proportion of candidates awarded each grade is fixed regardless of changes in the ability of the cohort.

33 The cohort is the group of candidates who took the assessment.

34 A benchmark centre is a centre which enters a large and stable number of candidates, and whose results might be expected to be stable from one series to another.

Aim 4.5: The mechanism for translating candidates' marks into grades will be transparent.

Our commitments:

- (a) A candidate's syllabus grade will be calculated directly from the total of their marks on the components that they took (weighted in accordance with the syllabus), not from the component grades calculated for them.
- (b) Cambridge will publish grade thresholds for the components and options within each syllabus³⁵.

Aim 4.6: Results will be reported to candidates.

Our commitments:

- (a) The results of Cambridge's examinations will be reported on certificates in the form of a grade for each syllabus examined. The grade will be numerical or alphabetical, or both.
- (b) The result issued will be for the syllabus and option for which the candidate was entered at the time when the first component was taken.
- (c) Where a candidate's performance falls below the minimum standard required for the lowest available grade, the candidate will receive U (ungraded).
- (d) Any syllabus in which a candidate is ungraded will not appear on the candidate's certificate.
- (e) Additional information, such as marks or grades for individual components of an examination, may be provided to meet the needs of schools or candidates. Such additional information is not the result of the examination.
- (f) Any changes to the way in which results are presented will be explained to stakeholders.

³⁵ A small number of components and syllabuses which are available only in one country do not have published grade thresholds

Chapter 5: Maintaining the integrity and currency value of examination results

Introduction

Schools and other organisations enter candidates for our assessments because of their educational value and because the results are widely recognised as valid, reliable, fair and impartial by employers, universities and other schools. That widespread recognition makes a Cambridge certificate a valuable document and gives it ‘currency value’.

Maintaining the currency value of our qualifications not only requires us to liaise with schools, universities and employers but also to ensure that the exams are fair to all and that they continue to have a reputation for fairness. Candidates who have disabilities or who suffer misfortune must be treated appropriately. The security of examination materials must be guaranteed and malpractice must be detected and dealt with where it occurs. Centres must be allowed to challenge our decisions, and those challenges must be allowed to succeed where appropriate. Staff must be trained and managed so that our reputation for quality extends into the future.

Aim 5.1: The currency value of Cambridge results will be widely recognised by employers and institutions of higher education.

Our commitments:

- (a) Cambridge will employ staff dedicated to achieving widespread recognition of our qualifications among ministries of education, universities and other institutions of higher education.
- (b) Cambridge will employ staff dedicated to upholding the reputation of our qualifications on social media and in the media.
- (c) Cambridge will pass candidates’ results to third parties such as universities to facilitate prompt verification of their results for admissions purposes.
- (d) Cambridge will check and verify results when asked to do so by a university or employer.

Aim 5.2: Candidates will be treated fairly in all circumstances.

Our commitments:

- (a) Cambridge’s assessment materials will be designed to be equally accessible to candidates of all national, cultural and social backgrounds.
- (b) Cambridge will assess all candidates for what they show that they know and can do, not for what they might have achieved had circumstances been different.
- (c) Cambridge will offer reasonable access arrangements to allow candidates with substantial and long-term disabilities to gain access to the examination and to demonstrate their attainment in the most appropriate examination conditions.
- (d) Access arrangements will seek to remove barriers to access but will not assist candidates with the knowledge, understanding or skills being assessed.
- (e) Where candidates take the examination under adverse conditions which are outside their control, such as bereavement or illness, Cambridge may, as a special consideration, make small adjustments to candidates’ marks.
- (f) In order to preserve the integrity of the examination, the adjustments to marks made under special consideration will be small. They cannot remove the adversity faced by the candidate. If a candidate is absent from a component for an acceptable reason, or lacks a component mark for an acceptable reason, Cambridge may, as a special consideration, calculate and award an assessed mark³⁶ for the missing component.
- (g) An assessed mark will only be calculated when the remaining components provide sufficient evidence of the candidate’s performance to ensure that the result for the syllabus would be valid. In situations where the evidence is insufficient, the candidate will receive no result for the syllabus.
- (h) If a candidate misses a component without an acceptable reason, the candidate will receive no result for the syllabus³⁷.
- (i) Access arrangements and special consideration will not give a candidate receiving them an advantage over other candidates.
- (j) Cambridge will not initiate access arrangements or special consideration. These must be requested by the centre.

³⁶ An assessed mark is an estimated mark based on the candidate’s performance on other components in the same syllabus.

³⁷ Except where the component is an optional endorsement which does not count towards the syllabus grade.

Aim 5.3: We will maintain the security and integrity of our examinations.

Our commitments:

- (a) Cambridge will provide clear documentation, procedures and guidance to support centres in meeting their responsibilities relating to the security, conduct and administration of examinations and internal assessments.
- (b) Cambridge will inspect a sample of centres without notice in each examination series to check that they are following regulations.
- (c) Cambridge will normally provide different versions of question papers for candidates in different time zones in order to minimise the risk of a security breach.
- (d) Examiners and Moderators will check candidates' work for signs of malpractice.
- (e) Checks will be run on patterns of answers in order to detect possible malpractice.
- (f) Cases of suspected malpractice, whether by candidates, centre staff or others, will be investigated. Where malpractice is found to have occurred, action will be taken.
- (g) Cambridge will not issue results in cases where it does not have confidence that the work on assessment materials is, in its entirety, the unaided work of the candidate.
- (h) In cases where centre staff are found to have been involved in malpractice, Cambridge will weigh the need to avoid disadvantaging candidates as a consequence of the centre's actions (or inaction) against the obligation to maintain the integrity of the examination for candidates elsewhere and the need to avoid incentivising poor practice. In some cases this may mean that results are not issued to candidates in the centre concerned.
- (i) Examiners, Moderators and consultants involved in the setting of question papers, and Cambridge staff will be required to declare an interest in any centres or candidates with whom they have a connection.
- (j) Examiners and Moderators will not be allocated work from centres or candidates in which they have declared an interest.

Aim 5.4: Centres will be able to challenge our judgements or decisions where they suspect that an error has been made.

Our commitments:

- (a) Cambridge will ensure that for each process in its assessment system there is an internal audit trail that sets out the key evidence that supports the decision taken³⁸.
- (b) Cambridge will provide enquiries about results services for centres that would like a candidate's result to be reconsidered.
- (c) Cambridge will consider concerns about candidates' results only when they are submitted as enquiries about results.
- (d) Cambridge will ensure that candidates' original scripts are retained for a sufficient period of time to allow for the possibility of enquiries about results.
- (e) The submission of certain types of enquiry about results will give centres the right of access to the marked work that is the subject of the enquiry.
- (f) A review of marking will be among the enquiries about results services available. A re-mark³⁹ will not be available.
- (g) A review of marking undertaken as part of an enquiry about results will not be done by the original Examiner, unless there was only one Examiner for the component, or unless exceptional circumstances make it impossible to obtain a second opinion.
- (h) The fee for an enquiry about results will be waived if the enquiry leads to a change in the candidate's syllabus grade.
- (i) The outcome of an enquiry about results will be open to an appeals process.
- (j) The results of applications for access arrangements or special consideration will be open to an appeals process.
- (k) The outcome of an enquiry into malpractice will be open to an appeals process.
- (l) The only admissible grounds for appeal will be that we have used procedures which were not consistent with this Code of Practice, or that we have not applied our procedures properly and fairly.

³⁸ *The audit trail will be for internal use only.*

³⁹ *The distinction between a re-mark and a review of marking is that, in a re-mark, the second mark prevails, whereas in a review of marking the existing mark is changed only if it is deemed to be wrong. The two approaches can have different outcomes where the mark difference is to do with judgement in applying the mark scheme, but where the existing mark is not wrong.*

- (m) The first stage of an appeal will be investigated by a senior member of staff who was not involved with the matter under appeal.
- (n) If the centre is unsatisfied with the outcome of the first stage of an appeal, a second stage of the appeal will be available to the centre. At the second stage, the appeal will be decided by an independent panel. The decision of this panel will be final.
- (o) The fee for an appeal will be waived if the appeal is upheld

Aim 5.5: Cambridge's reputation for quality, and hence the currency value of its qualifications, will continue into the future.

Our commitments:

- (a) Cambridge will seek and consider the views of schools and other stakeholders when developing its products and services.
- (b) Cambridge will develop the skills, knowledge and competencies of its staff, and provide the work environment necessary for them to do their work.
- (c) Cambridge will conform with the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard.
- (d) Cambridge will fund research and development to enhance its assessments and services.

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