



Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Cambridge Schools Conference

Right grade, first time, on time

Roderic Gillespie

Director of Assessment

September 2017



Right grade, first time, on time

This session will offer an overview of Cambridge's philosophy and standards, and how our processes and procedures ensure the robust delivery of each examination series.

Find out why Cambridge qualifications are recognised by the world's best universities.

Icebreaker

What are the things you most value about Cambridge?

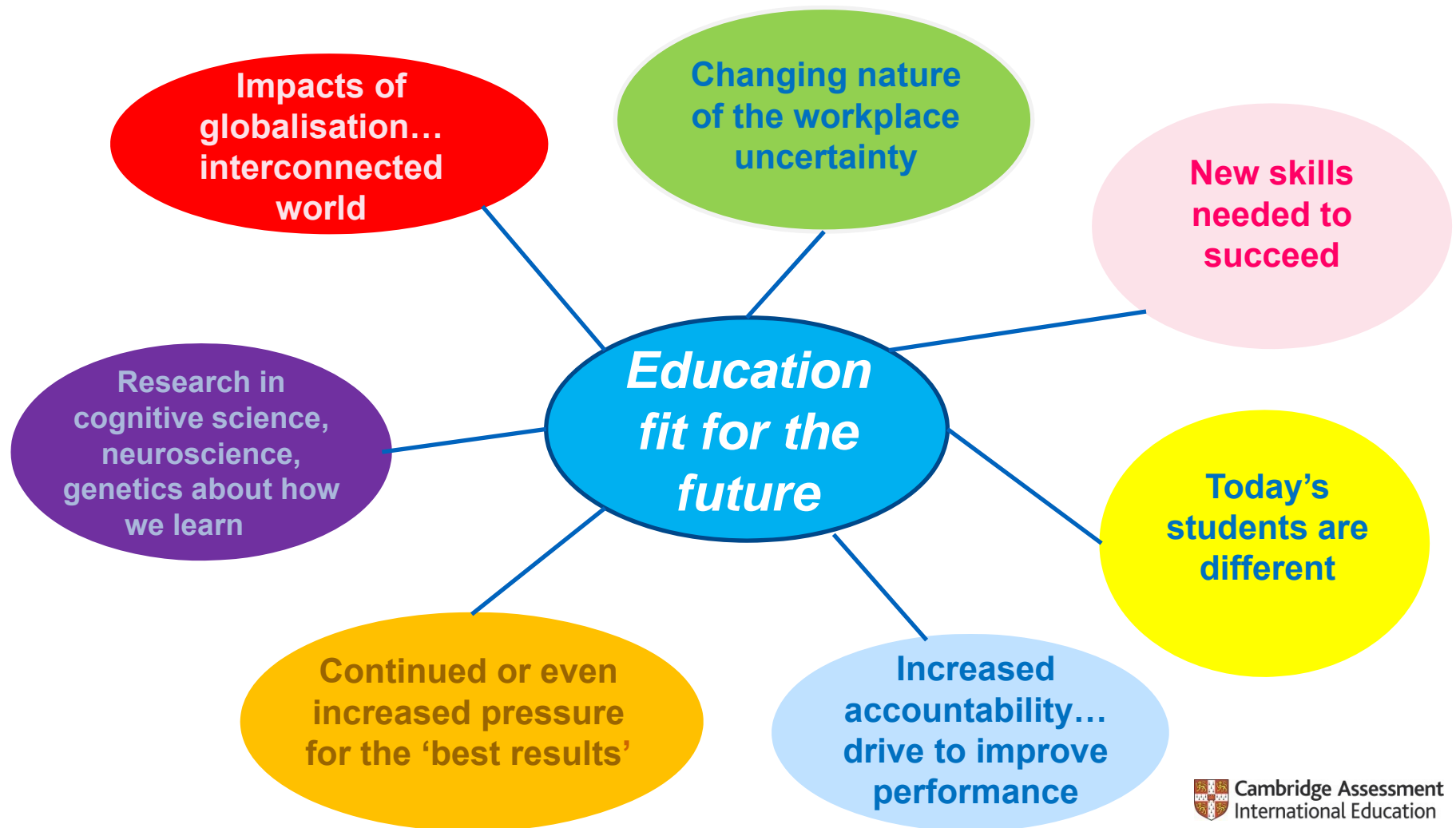
What do we need to improve on?

Agenda

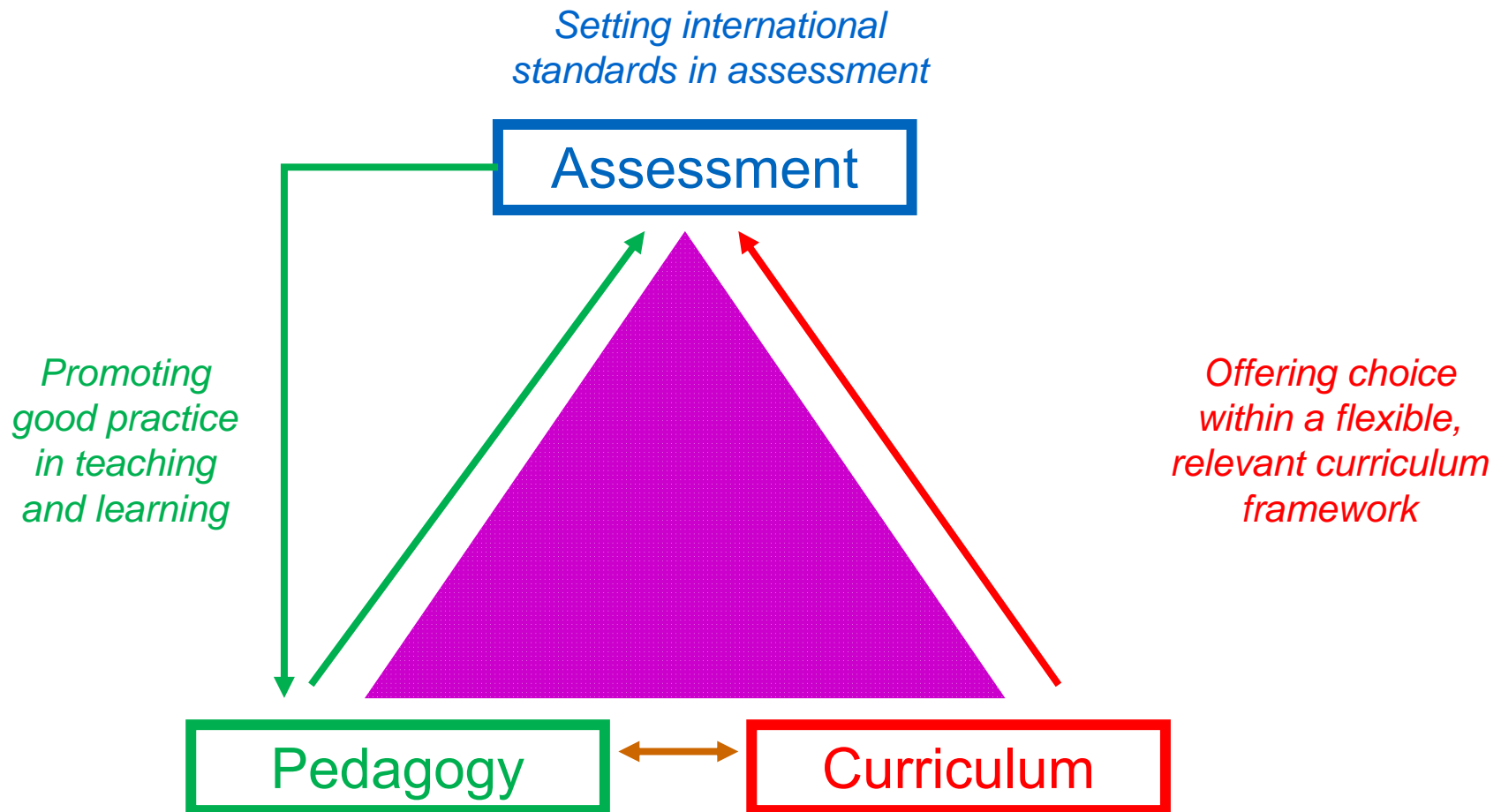
- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Standards
- ▶ Cambridge Code of Practice
- ▶ Syllabuses, question papers and mark schemes
- ▶ Marking
- ▶ Grading
- ▶ Questions and answers – opening out to general assessment-based questions

Education fit for the future

Schools are complex social organisations, an intricate web of interdependent parts, and they are becoming more complex...



Our educational vision



...discussion

‘What is meant by standards?’



Standards internationally

The term is used differently

- ▶ USA – standards as content; attainment and aptitude measured by psychometric tests
- ▶ China – standards viewed as ideas and incentives for continuous improvement, but do not use a year-to-year standard
- ▶ East Asia – clear learning outcomes and goals
- ▶ Europe – the ideal of teachers' judgement of student learning standards pervades
- ▶ UK – standards (and accountability) of examinations are important (both between subjects and over time)

Curriculum-based exam standards

- **Content standard**

- ▶ What has to be learned (i.e. the curriculum/syllabus)?

-does not include concept of demand or difficulty

- **Demand standard**

- ▶ How demanding are the questions/tasks (in terms of the skills and knowledge that are required)?

-does not include concept of the level of performance required

- **Marking standard**

- ▶ How are responses rewarded?

- **Awarding standard**

- ▶ What quality of performance is required (e.g. for a grade/pass)?

- **Attainment standard**

- ▶ Preparedness for further progression to study/employment

Our research priorities

- ▶ Validating our curriculum frameworks, syllabuses, qualifications and assessments
- ▶ Informing best practice
- ▶ Maintaining standards
- ▶ Comparability of standards
- ▶ Investigating impact
- ▶ Ensuring fair measurement and reporting reliability



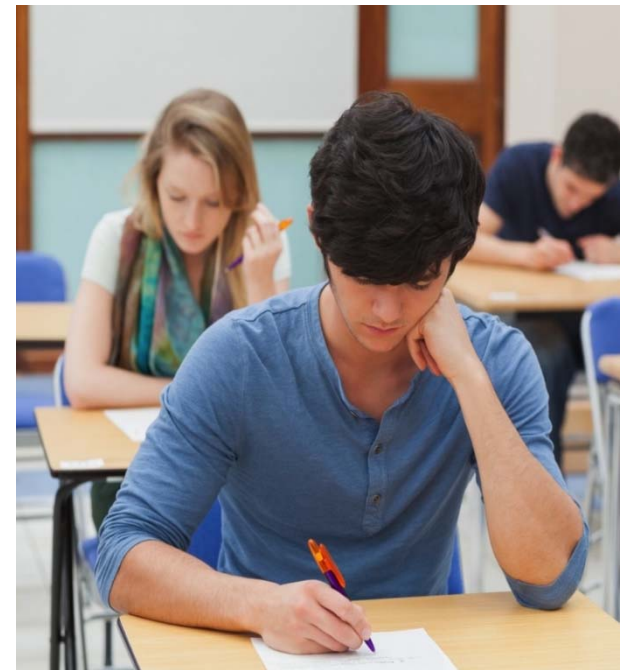
Cambridge Code of Practice

- ▶ Outlines how we apply the Cambridge Approach principles to ensure that our examinations are valid, reliable and fair
- ▶ Covers the full assessment cycle
- ▶ Schools now base appeals on 'whether we used procedures which were consistent with our C of P'
- ▶ Currently under review, for update in 2017, provisionally retitled 'Assessment Code of Practice'
- ▶ Review will ensure it is clearly focused, fit for purpose and captures the current and future needs of assessment and awarding-related activities



Code of Practice – four sections

1. Devising suitable syllabuses
2. Setting valid tests (question papers, mark schemes, coursework tasks)
3. Getting candidates' scripts marked reliably
4. Changing marks to grades accurately



...discussion

‘What is the purpose of a syllabus?’



A good syllabus

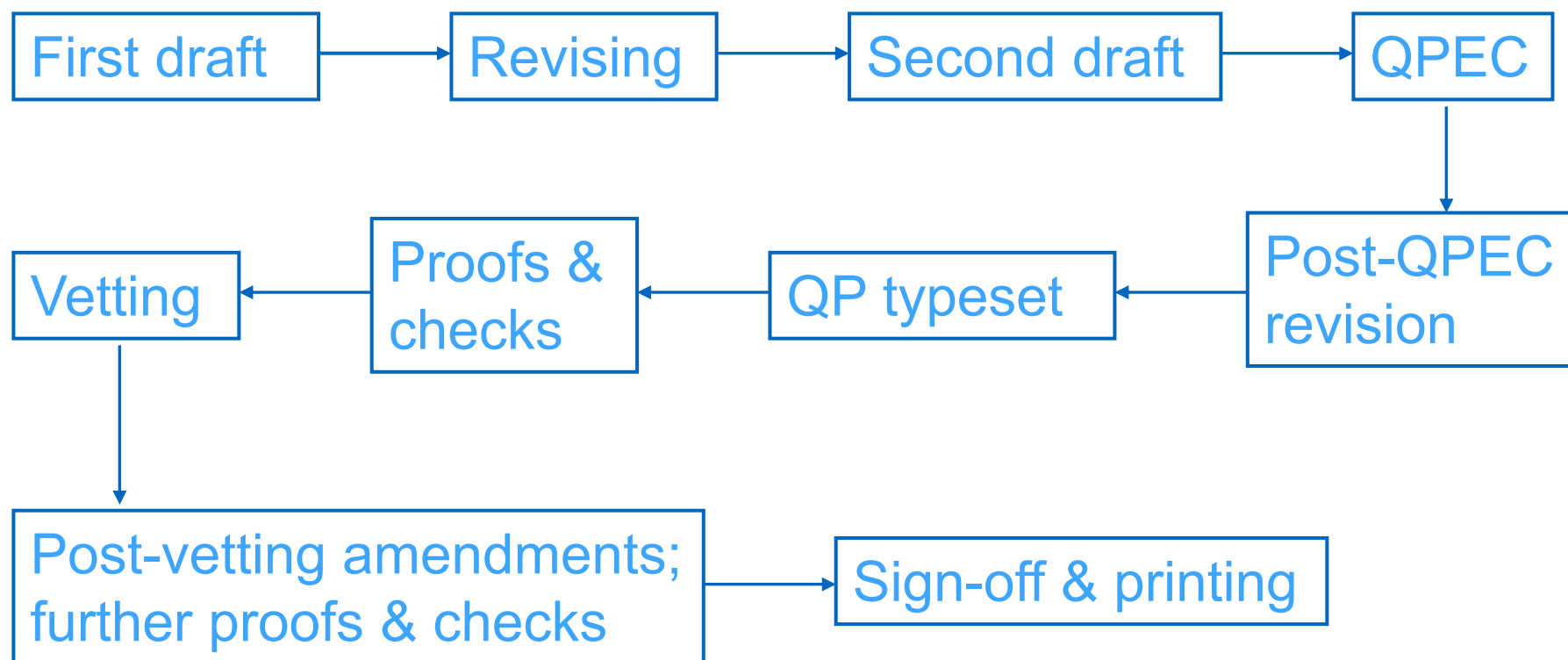
- ▶ Has clear aims and purpose
- ▶ Is clear about what is assessed, and how
- ▶ Samples the subject appropriately for the level
- ▶ Has up-to-date content
- ▶ Permits progression to a higher level in the subject while also being appropriate if this is the last level the learner attempts in the subject
- ▶ Provides scheme of assessment to produce assessment that is valid, reliable and practicable for schools, and likely to have a good impact on teaching
- ▶ Is clear for end-users as to what grades mean

Question papers

Must meet requirements regarding:

- ▶ Validity – conforms to syllabus
- ▶ Validity – avoiding irrelevant matters
- ▶ Choice of questions – they are equally hard
- ▶ Discrimination (enabling us to distinguish between A* and A students, A and B students, and so on...)
- ▶ Coverage – covers a fair proportion of the syllabus
- ▶ Accuracy of content (no mistakes)
- ▶ Other considerations, including practicability and impact

Question paper – development



Question paper – Mark schemes

As with question papers, mark schemes must be:

- ▶ Accurate
- ▶ Conducive to reliability
- ▶ Conducive to discrimination

It is crucial that mark schemes are developed alongside question papers.

Their purpose is to:

- ▶ Ensure that all markers mark the paper in the same way, to the same standard
- ▶ Inform teachers about standards

Marking

Getting the marking accurate and consistent

- ▶ Recruitment of markers
- ▶ Standardisation process
- ▶ Monitoring the work of markers
- ▶ Grade Review

The aim of grading and awarding

‘CIE’s grading processes will ensure that the standard of a qualification is maintained from one year to another...’

CIE Code of Practice 2008, 5.2(d)

What else has to be aligned?

- ▶ One year with another
- ▶ Different options within the syllabus
- ▶ Different variants within the syllabus
- ▶ Different subjects within the year
- ▶ One series with another
- ▶ Different qualifications that are declared to be equivalent

The two key questions in grading

- ▶ How does the difficulty of the assessment compare to the last exam series?
- ▶ How does the ability of the candidates compare to last year?

...discussion

‘What evidence should be considered in grading?’



Determinants of grade thresholds

Cambridge's grading decisions are made using a combination of:

professional judgement
and
statistical and technical evidence

Note: The professional judgement of the Principal Examiners is based on their marking of scripts

Sources of evidence

Evidence about the difficulty of the assessment

- ▶ Some assessments don't change
- ▶ The Principal Examiner's judgement
- ▶ Item level data

Evidence about the ability of the cohort

- ▶ Teachers' forecast grades
- ▶ Prior attainment
- ▶ Cohort mix
- ▶ Performance in other components
- ▶ 'Islands of stability'

...discussion

‘What more could Cambridge do to support schools?’

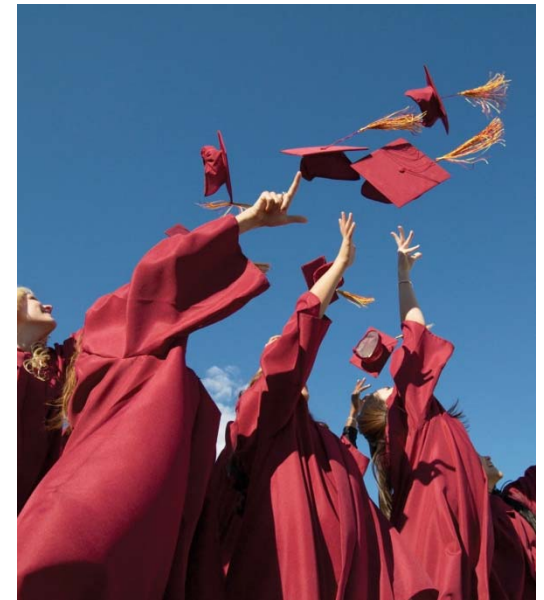
‘What more could schools, in collaboration with Cambridge, do to help themselves improve?’



Why are our assessments worth doing?

They provide qualifications which are internationally portable, recognised by universities and employers in many countries

- ▶ Global standard for international education
- ▶ Confidence that results are valid, reliable and fairly awarded
- ▶ Recognised by world's best universities, and employers worldwide
- ▶ Give learners better options in their education and careers



Getting it right matters





Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Thank you
Any questions?

