

Update for schools

Cambridge Pre-U is an exciting post-16 qualification preparing learners for university

Adding value for all students

Schools offering Cambridge Pre-U are seeing real improvements across the student group

Cambridge Pre-U not only encourages in-depth subject knowledge, but also develops a wider range of problem solving, critical thinking and communication skills – which is why schools offering Cambridge Pre-U across the cohort are reporting improved performance for students at all ability levels. At Cheadle Hulme School, for example, Deputy Head Lee Richardson is convinced more students should be offered Cambridge Pre-U in order to

build skills and boost confidence: 'We've found that our Cambridge Pre-U courses deliver measurable added value across the student

“ We have consistently found that even those students starting the course with a low predicted grade achieve much better results than would have been expected if they had taken A Level. ”

Lee Richardson, Deputy Head (Teaching and Curriculum), Cheadle Hulme School

group, as well as giving students the skills they need to flourish if they go on to university.' (For more on the Cheadle Hulme School experience, see pages 3–4.)

In terms of its educational aims, Cambridge Pre-U recognises a wide range of individual talents and interests. Although much attention is paid to the fact that Cambridge Pre-U allows the most able students to



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And more!

achieve recognition beyond A*, many features underpinning Cambridge Pre-U are ideally suited to students at all levels of educational attainment and potential. The syllabuses, for example, encourage broader exploration of the subject and extensive wider reading, with credit given for this exploration in the marking scheme. This approach benefits all students, and gives individuals the scope to explore a subject in depth using a variety of sources, including those which perhaps some students find more accessible.

Of course, there will always be parts of the syllabus which may appear challenging, but Cambridge Pre-U is designed to stretch candidates intellectually, and to give them the opportunity to excel and exceed expectations. Giving all students the chance to experience a more rigorous syllabus can encourage and motivate them, and also boost confidence. This in turn is supported in the exam by a more open mark scheme, and wider grade boundaries – resulting in a fair assessment of ability, rewarding effort for every member of the cohort.

To ensure all students do well at Cambridge Pre-U, support is vital, and Cambridge works hard to ensure this support is available. We hold regular subject-specific training workshops, for example, for teachers who are new to Cambridge Pre-U or who are thinking of introducing the qualification at their school.

“ The communication and written skills developed firstly through the Cambridge Pre-U have been built on through my university experience. It was vital that I developed those skills early. In my opinion the Cambridge Pre-U course gave me a head start at university, developing concepts, skills and a work ethic that have benefited me in the long term. ”

Callum Street, Cambridge Pre-U student



“ The layout of the course is rather similar to the layout of some modules at university, hence it has meant that I have been one step ahead of the majority on my degree course in knowing how to overcome certain issues. The first year of Pre-U Economics was tough but the hard work and perseverance paid dividends in the second year. Overall I'm very glad I was able to take the Cambridge Pre-U Economics course as it kept me on my toes and suited my hardworking mentality. ”

Ben Mesrie, Cambridge Pre-U student



Cheadle Hulme School, Cheshire

Deputy Head (Teaching and Curriculum) Lee Richardson is an avid supporter of Cambridge Pre-U for all sixth form students, given the benefits it can deliver across the ability range.

'We've been offering three Cambridge Pre-U courses – Economics, Business & Management, and Philosophy & Theology – since 2008, when the qualification was first introduced,' Lee Richardson explains. 'We took the decision early on to only offer Cambridge Pre-U in these subjects (as opposed to giving students the option of Cambridge Pre-U or A Level) as we were convinced that all our students had the ability to tackle a Cambridge Pre-U course, and we were right.'

We have consistently found that even those students starting the course with a low predicted grade achieve much better results than would have been expected if they had taken A Level.'

The result, says Lee, is that these three Cambridge Pre-U subjects consistently top the School's added value performance table. 'For us, this is a clear indicator that Cambridge Pre-U is "doing its job" across the whole cohort,' comments Lee. 'It enables the brightest students

to gain a grade above A*, while also improving the performance of all students in the class, including those not expected to do so well.'

As a result of this experience, Cheadle Hulme School is now expanding its Cambridge Pre-U offering. From September, the

“ Whilst I was not interested in attending university, I have truly benefited from the Cambridge Pre-U course. It has helped directly with my businesses and I have been able to apply it on a regular basis. It has given me a strong general subject knowledge and a platform to learn for myself. ”

James Gordon, Cambridge Pre-U student

Cheadle Hulme School, Cheshire continued



school will add Geography, French, German and Spanish to its list of options, and once again will only offer these subjects as Cambridge Pre-U qualifications as opposed to giving students the option of doing Cambridge Pre-U or A Level.

'The return to the linear, two-year A Level makes it easier to offer more Cambridge Pre-U qualifications, and to offer them alongside A Level courses,' comments Lee, 'but over the years we have become increasingly impressed by the quality underpinning Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses, the broader grade boundaries, and the expertise evident in the marking teams. Together, these factors deliver a greater degree of certainty, and we always find that Cambridge Pre-U results accurately reflect the rank order we have established for a cohort, which is satisfying for both teacher and student.'

Students' efforts rewarded

Exam structure is also important, he adds. 'You cannot "teach to the test" for a Cambridge Pre-U exam. This benefits the strongest students, who will get the results they deserve, and rewards effort across the cohort. The more "open" mark scheme is very flexible and supportive, and allows markers to acknowledge, for example, wider reading of sources beyond the textbook or reading list,

“ Cambridge Pre-U was definitely a good preparation for university study. I gained valuable essay writing skills of the sort probably unattainable had I not done Cambridge Pre-U. In terms of knowledge, both the Philosophy and Economics courses covered content others didn't at the same level and, though challenging, were more closely aligned to the standard of work I came across during my first few terms at university. ”

Zach Cvetkovic, Cambridge Pre-U student

and the use of more topical examples, which is also an advantage for the more "generalist" student. In addition, Cambridge Pre-U Business & Management includes a coursework requirement which must be based on real life and produced with very limited feedback from teachers – this gives students a huge amount of independence, allowing them to build confidence in their ability to study and to do well, and is an ideal foundation for university-level study.'

Overcoming challenges

Introducing Cambridge Pre-U across the cohort is not without its challenges, admits Lee. 'We know that some students find the syllabus daunting when they first see what will be covered, and when they look at past Cambridge Pre-U papers for the first time – and teachers can also feel unsure when faced with concepts they have never taught

before. It can be a culture shock, but our response to our students is to say "don't worry" – if you cover the Cambridge Pre-U syllabus thoroughly you will have plenty of opportunity, in the exam, to gain marks, whatever your ability. And for our teachers, we make sure they can find the resources they need to support syllabus delivery, helping them brush up their own knowledge, and extend their teaching skills.'

For Lee, the less prescriptive, more flexible structure of the Cambridge Pre-U course empowers all students, giving them the confidence to perform well at school, and to make the most of higher education should they move on to college or university. 'Cambridge Pre-U simply adds more value,' he concludes, 'and brings greater equality and fairness across the cohort, whatever the individual level of performance.'

Become a Cambridge Pre-U examiner

Examining develops professional skills and career prospects, says **Russell Wareing**, Chief Examiner for Cambridge Pre-U Business & Management. Russell is also Head of the Economics and Business department at Lancaster Royal Grammar School (LRGS).

How did your examining 'career' start?

I began as an ad hoc examiner for OCR (around 1998). As a result I was approached by the product manager, who asked if I was interested in writing the specification for a new examination, which eventually turned out to be Cambridge Pre-U Business & Management. As a result of this involvement I started to examine for Cambridge Pre-U while I was working at The Perse School in Cambridge.

How do you work with your fellow subject examiners?

Subject examiners work as a team, and we begin the examining year with the Standardisation Meeting, when we discuss mark schemes and candidate answers. Meeting other examiners is an important benefit of examining, as you can make new contacts and meet some of the leading figures in your field – very experienced examiners, for example, or well-known authors.

How does the marking process work?

Scripts are marked during a two to four-week period, which can be quite intense – I typically mark around 100 scripts a week, but this figure does depend on the exam and on the examiner's experience. The pressure is short lived, however, and comes at a 'lighter' time of the academic year, when exams have finished and university applications have been processed, so the workload shouldn't feel too stressful.

How much support do examiners receive?

The team structure means there is always support available, especially from the Principal Examiner for that exam paper. After the exam, we undertake a lot of sample script marking to ensure standards are understood, and continue checking throughout the 'live' process, so although examiners have a responsibility to mark accurately, they do not work in isolation.

What does LRGS think about having examiners on its staff?

LRGS is very happy – it knows that examining can improve teaching, and it also brings kudos to the school. Cambridge International Examinations also compensates schools for time lost when teachers are attending meetings, so there is no practical disadvantage for the school.

Is examining a career path in itself?

Yes, it can be. A teacher starting as an assistant examiner may progress to become a team leader, and can also become involved in revising or setting exam papers – making a real contribution to the way a subject is assessed. Principal examiners will usually have team leader experience, and many continue in the role even when no longer in the classroom – perhaps in retirement, or while working in a different branch of education – so it can become part of a lifelong career.



Interested in becoming a Cambridge Pre-U examiner? Find out more on page 6.

Become a Cambridge Pre-U examiner continued

Join the team

The role of Cambridge Pre-U examiner is one of many opportunities to work for Cambridge as an 'assessment specialist' – the term we use to cover all the roles involved in setting and marketing exams, including:

- assistant examiner
- team leader
- principal examiner
- setter
- reviser
- vetter
- trainer
- item writer
- moderator

Why become an assessment specialist?

By joining the assessment specialist team, you can:

- enhance your teaching skills by gaining an improved understanding of assessment related to your subject area, enabling you to better support your students in their learning and development and improve their results
- gain invaluable insights into assessment which can underpin your professional development, and develop your knowledge of assessment which you can then pass on to your colleagues.

What we expect from you

Assessment specialists have strong subject knowledge, and a positive and professional attitude. The roles involve team-working, sometimes within a virtual environment, and against strict deadlines, and therefore demand a collaborative and supportive approach.

Interested in applying?

With so many different assessment opportunities available, we can offer the flexibility to fit work with Cambridge around other commitments, and we also provide opportunities to change roles, or to take on more responsibility.



To find out more, visit: www.cie.org.uk/Cambridge-for/examiners

Cambridge research

Latest research findings can support professional development

Research is a major activity within the Cambridge Assessment Group. It underpins the validity of our assessments, and helps us to develop and improve our assessments and our services. Cambridge Assessment has the largest research capability of its kind in Europe, with over 80 researchers currently employed across the Group. The research brief is wide-ranging, and covers issues such as assessment design, impact, and marking, vocational and eAssessment, and broader topics such as the psychology of assessment.

Cambridge Assessment is keen to share its research with educators across the spectrum, from teacher to policy maker, providing the detailed analysis and broader perspectives that can support classroom practice and influence thinking and policy on educational assessment around the world. Research outputs from Cambridge Assessment are freely available online and in a variety of formats.

We also regularly contribute to leading journals such as the *Oxford Review of Education and Educational Studies*, and these papers can be found on the Cambridge Assessment website, free of charge, together with chapters we have contributed to books on assessment and other issues. Also available are conference papers, statistical reports, and the Cambridge Assessment research journal *Research Matters*. Cambridge Assessment also regularly hosts events, and many of these are relevant to Cambridge Pre-U teachers.

For details, visit the Cambridge Assessment website: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/

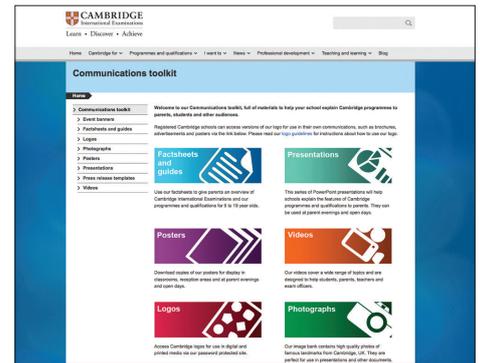


Research matters

A free, biannual publication, *Research Matters*, reports on research undertaken by Cambridge Assessment, and each issue features articles, short summaries, research papers and comment. Although aimed primarily at the wider assessment community, there is much of interest and relevance to Cambridge Pre-U teachers, says Tom Bramley, Deputy Director of the Cambridge Assessment Research Division. '*Research Matters* aims to provide a real insight into the assessment process, informing the understanding of anyone involved in teaching Cambridge qualifications, including Cambridge Pre-U, and especially those teachers who are also examiners,' he comments.

'For example, the current issue reports on research into the mathematics needed by prospective architecture undergraduates, and an investigation into 'the effect of specialism and attainment in secondary school on the choice of Higher Education institution and field of study'. We have also published research on Cambridge Pre-U, such as the 2010 paper on assessing Cambridge Pre-U research reports (available to read online). There is much to discover within *Research Matters*, and the journal can also make an important contribution to ongoing professional development.'

Read the latest issue at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/research-matters



Support for your communications

We offer a range of free resources to help you present and explain Cambridge programmes to parents, students, and to any other group needing to know more, such as staff or governors.

Resources include:

- *Cambridge Pre-U Guide for Parents and Cambridge Pre-U Guide for Schools* – available at www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu
- **Syllabus outlines** – a summary of each Cambridge Pre-U syllabus for students and parents. Email us at outlook@cie.org.uk to request copies.
- **Videos** – explaining the Cambridge Pre-U approach. Find them in the case study section of www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu
- **Logos and photos** – up-to-date logos and high-quality photos for use in brochures, adverts, posters and presentations. Available at www.cie.org.uk/toolkit

Contact us to order syllabus outlines.



Training and events

Forthcoming training

To register for the workshops listed below, go to www.cie.org.uk/events

- Cambridge Pre-U Literature in English (9765) – 7 June 2016, London
- Cambridge Pre-U Economics (9772) – October 2016, London
- Cambridge Pre-U Spanish (9781) – October 2016, London
- Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives & Research (9777) – October 2016, London
- Cambridge Pre-U Art & Design (9837) – October 2016, London
- Cambridge Pre-U Economics (9772) – October 2016, Manchester



Cambridge Schools Conferences 2016

We are holding three conferences for schools in 2016, including an event in Cambridge, at St John's College, from 7 to 9 September.

The Cambridge Schools Conference is an opportunity for representatives of the global Cambridge school community to come together and hear about the latest developments from Cambridge International Examinations, and to contribute to the Conference theme, which this year is 'leading learning'. This concept is fundamental to all educators, from school principal to classroom teacher, and will be explored by keynote speakers from across the education sector, who will consider the role leadership plays in getting the best out of the education system, and in creating the right conditions in which individual potential can be realised.

For more details and to book, go to www.cie.org.uk/conference

We will also be holding a Cambridge Schools Conference in Kuala Lumpur later in the year (dates yet to be announced).

Learn more!

Find us at www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu or contact us at info@cie.org.uk or on 01223 553554.

Find our stand at conferences, or attend one of our free INSET days.

What's available



Here's a list of subjects for examination in 2018.

Mathematics
Further Mathematics

Literature in English

Biology
Chemistry
Physics

French
German
Italian
Mandarin Chinese
Russian
Spanish

Art History
Classical Greek
Geography
History
Latin
Philosophy & Theology
Psychology

Business & Management
Economics

Art & Design
Drama & Theatre
Music

Global Perspectives & Research
(a two-year extended project qualification).

A Global Perspectives Short Course is also available.

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