

# Benchmarking the Certificate of Nile International Secondary Education (CNISE)



- **Subjects passed at Level 3 (L3) are considered comparable to GCE A Level standard.**
- **Subjects passed at Level 2 (L2) are considered comparable to GCE AS Level standard**
- **Subjects passed at Level 1 (L1) are considered comparable to GCSE standard, where CNISE L1 grades of A\*-C may be considered comparable to GCSE grades 9-4.**

## Context and scope

The Certificate of Nile International Secondary Education (CNISE) is a three-year bilingual English-Arabic upper secondary school qualification currently taught in five purpose-built schools across Egypt.

Developed by Cambridge International Examinations in collaboration with the Education Development Fund in Egypt, and recognised by the national Ministry of Education<sup>1</sup> the qualification aims to combine Egyptian and international curriculum standards and international educational practice. In doing so, the qualification has been designed to prepare students for undergraduate study or employment both nationally and globally.

In July 2016, UK NARIC completed an initial study that found the L2 Biology and Mathematics comparable to GCE AS Level standard, while the L3 Biology and Mathematics were found comparable to GCE A Level standard in the context of the UK education system.

A second study completed in June 2017 reviewing four subjects of the CNISE, L2 Chemistry; Economics; Physics and English and L3 Chemistry in order to determine their comparability. A third study in 2018 evaluated the comparability of L1 programmes in Maths, ICT, Physics, Arabic and English Language. This study also examined the quality assurance processes in place and observed the delivery of the L1, L2 and L3 in practice, which culminated in overall benchmarked level for the L1, L2 and L3 qualifications in the context of the UK education system.

## Overview of the CNISE

The CNISE comprises study and assessment at three levels, Levels 1, 2 and 3 (referred to as L1, L2 and L3 respectively). The first cohort of the CNISE sat the L1 examinations in 2015. The first L2 examinations took place in 2016, and the first L3 examinations in 2017.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education, Egypt (2016) *Ministerial Decision No. 121 dated 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016 regarding Nile Egyptian Schools.*

## Content and teaching

As detailed in the Egyptian Minister of Education and Technical Education's Ministerial Decree of April 2016 the CNISE comprises the following core and optional subjects (additional subjects/levels offered by CNISE are included in italics) with further subjects at all three levels currently under development:

Compulsory	
Internally assessed subjects	CNISE L1
Arts	Mathematics
Music	Arabic
PE	English
Optional CNISE	
Business Studies (L1)	Chemistry (L1, L2, L3)
Global Perspectives (L1)	ICT (L1, L2)
Sociology & Psychology (L1)	Entrepreneurship & Innovation (L2)
Economics (L2)	History (L1, L2)
<i>English (L2)</i>	Geography (L1, L2)
<i>Accounting (L2)</i>	Physics (L1, L2, L3)
<i>Art &amp; Design (L2)</i>	Biology (L1, L2, L3)
	Mathematics (L2, L3)

## Assessment and Grading

The CNISE programmes are assessed through external, written examinations. Individual L1, L2 and L3 subjects are awarded a letter grade, A\*-E where E represents the lowest passing grade. A Grade U represents a fail.

## Key findings

The CNISE L2 and L3 subjects combine strong subject content, broadly comparable in breadth and depth to counterpart programmes offered at GCE AS and A Level respectively; with the development of higher order thinking and academic study skills requisite for higher education study internationally. The CNISE L1 subjects reviewed develop a similar level of knowledge, understanding and skills as those developed at GCSE in the UK.

The supporting CNISE Teacher Guides promote content mastery, cross-curricular linkages and real-world application of the curriculum through student-centred teaching strategies and activities designed to develop students' communicative and collaborative skills through group work, along with their ability to think, reason and problem-solve independently.

Assessment objectives for the selected CNISE L1, L2 and L3 programmes demonstrate clear similarity with those prescribed for the GCSE, GCE AS and A Level respectively, seeking to assess a comparable range and level of knowledge, skills and competencies. The CNISE assessment at all three levels is well designed to ensure a sound evaluation of the programme content, testing across the core subject curriculum; and of students' achievement against the assessment objectives. All papers are similarly designed to allow reliable differentiation between students at higher, middle and lower levels of achievement.

As the overall CNISE qualification aims to develop bilingual English-Arabic students, it is important to highlight that a particular strength of the CNISE L1, L2 and L3 programmes reviewed is that the examinations employ comparable wording in the questions as the GCSE, GCE AS and A Level papers, with no linguistic resources provided to CNISE students within the examinations. The examinations therefore provide an assessment not only of the students' subject-specific knowledge and skills, but also of their English language comprehension skills.

A site visit to a selected school in Cairo highlighted effective teaching and delivery of the CNISE L1, L2 and L3 programmes, including an emphasis on student-centred, collaborative and differentiated learning. Furthermore, the quality assurance processes in place were found to be secure and fit-for-purpose, supporting the overall comparability of the L1, L2 and L3 to GCSE, GCE AS and GCE A Level standards respectively.

## Methodology

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

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

This involved a desk-based comparative review of the Curriculum Framework, teaching guides, test specifications and specimen exam papers for both subjects with specifications and assessment materials for the relevant GCE AS/A Level and the GCSE subjects.