



**Cambridge Assessment  
International Education**

# Syllabus

## Cambridge IGCSE™ Religious Studies 0490

Use this syllabus for exams in 2022 and 2023.  
Exams are available in the November series.



Version 1

Please check the syllabus page at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse) to see if this syllabus is available in your administrative zone.

**Cambridge  
Pathway** 

---

## Why choose Cambridge International?

---

Cambridge International prepares school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning. We are part of the University of Cambridge.

Our Cambridge Pathway gives students a clear path for educational success from age 5 to 19. Schools can shape the curriculum around how they want students to learn – with a wide range of subjects and flexible ways to offer them. It helps students discover new abilities and a wider world, and gives them the skills they need for life, so they can achieve at school, university and work.

Our programmes and qualifications set the global standard for international education. They are created by subject experts, rooted in academic rigour and reflect the latest educational research. They provide a strong platform for learners to progress from one stage to the next, and are well supported by teaching and learning resources.

Our mission is to provide educational benefit through provision of international programmes and qualifications for school education and to be the world leader in this field. Together with schools, we develop Cambridge learners who are confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged – equipped for success in the modern world.

Every year, nearly a million Cambridge students from 10 000 schools in 160 countries prepare for their future with the Cambridge Pathway.

**'We think the Cambridge curriculum is superb preparation for university.'**

**Christoph Guttentag**, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University, USA



### Quality management

Cambridge International is committed to providing exceptional quality. In line with this commitment, our quality management system for the provision of international qualifications and education programmes for students aged 5 to 19 is independently certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard, ISO 9001:2015. Learn more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/ISO9001](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/ISO9001)

Copyright © UCLES September 2019

Cambridge Assessment International Education is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which itself is a department of the University of Cambridge.

UCLES retains the copyright on all its publications. Registered centres are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use. However, we cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within a centre.

---

# Contents

---

<b>1 Why choose this syllabus?</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>2 Syllabus overview</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Aims	5
Content overview	5
Assessment overview	6
Assessment objectives	7
<b>3 Subject content</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Introduction	8
Christianity	9
Islam	10
Judaism	11
<b>4 Details of the assessment</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Paper 1	12
Paper 2	12
<b>5 What else you need to know</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Before you start	13
Making entries	14
After the exam	15
How students and teachers can use the grades	15
Grade descriptions	15
Changes to this syllabus for 2022 and 2023	16

## Changes to this syllabus

For information about changes to this syllabus for 2022 and 2023, go to page 16.

The latest syllabus is version 1, published September 2019. There are no significant changes which affect teaching.



---

# 1 Why choose this syllabus?

---

## Key benefits

Cambridge IGCSE is the world's most popular international qualification for 14 to 16 year olds, although it can be taken by students of other ages. It is tried, tested and trusted.

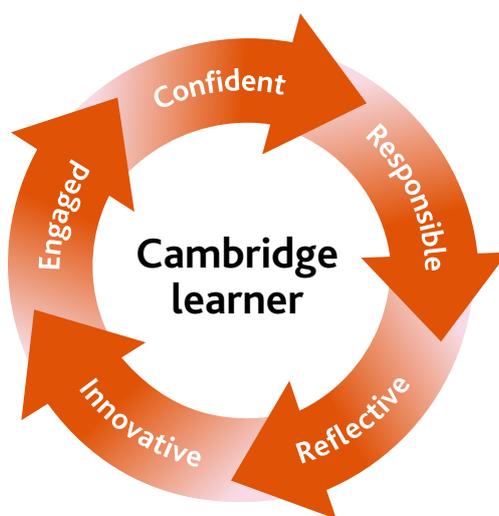
Students can choose from 70 subjects in any combination – it is taught by over 4700 schools in 150 countries.

Our programmes balance a thorough knowledge and understanding of a subject and help to develop the skills learners need for their next steps in education or employment.

**Cambridge IGCSE Religious Studies** aims to promote an enquiring, critical and sympathetic approach to the study of religion. Learners will reflect on religious responses to moral issues, identify and explore questions about the meaning of life, and recognise the contribution of religion to patterns of belief and behaviour.

Students study Christianity, Islam and Judaism, providing an introduction to the challenging and varied nature of religion.

Our approach in Cambridge IGCSE Religious Studies encourages learners to be:



'The strength of Cambridge IGCSE qualifications is internationally recognised and has provided an international pathway for our students to continue their studies around the world.'

Gary Tan, Head of Schools and CEO, Raffles International Group of Schools, Indonesia

## International recognition and acceptance

Our expertise in curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment is the basis for the recognition of our programmes and qualifications around the world. The combination of knowledge and skills in Cambridge IGCSE Religious Studies gives learners a solid foundation for further study. Candidates who achieve grades A\* to C are well prepared to follow a wide range of courses including Cambridge International AS & A Level Divinity, Islamic Studies, Religious Studies, or the equivalent.

Cambridge IGCSEs are accepted and valued by leading universities and employers around the world as evidence of academic achievement. Many universities require a combination of Cambridge International AS & A Levels and Cambridge IGCSEs or equivalent to meet their entry requirements.

UK NARIC, the national agency in the UK for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills, has carried out an independent benchmarking study of Cambridge IGCSE and found it to be comparable to the standard of GCSE in the UK. This means students can be confident that their Cambridge IGCSE qualifications are accepted as equivalent to UK GCSEs by leading universities worldwide.

Learn more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition)



Cambridge Assessment International Education is an education organisation and politically neutral. The content of this syllabus, examination papers and associated materials do not endorse any political view. We endeavour to treat all aspects of the exam process neutrally.

**'Cambridge IGCSE is one of the most sought-after and recognised qualifications in the world. It is very popular in Egypt because it provides the perfect preparation for success at advanced level programmes.'**

Managing Director of British School in Egypt BSE

## Supporting teachers

We provide a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance, and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your students the best possible preparation for Cambridge IGCSE.

### Teaching resources

- School Support Hub  
[www.cambridgeinternational.org/support](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/support)
- Syllabuses
- Schemes of work
- Learner guides
- Discussion forums
- Endorsed resources

### Exam preparation resources

- Question papers
- Mark schemes
- Example candidate responses to understand what examiners are looking for at key grades
- Examiner reports to improve future teaching

### Support for Cambridge IGCSE

### Training

- Introductory – face-to-face or online
- Extension – face-to-face or online
- Enrichment – face-to-face or online
- Coursework – online
- Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications

Find out more at  
[www.cambridgeinternational.org/profdev](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/profdev)

### Community

You can find useful information, as well as share your ideas and experiences with other teachers, on our social media channels and community forums.

Find out more at  
[www.cambridgeinternational.org/social-media](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/social-media)

---

## 2 Syllabus overview

---

### Aims

The aims describe the purposes of a course based on this syllabus.

The aims are to:

- promote an enquiring, critical and sympathetic approach to the study of religion, especially in its individual and corporate expression in the contemporary world
- introduce students to the challenging and varied nature of religion, and to the ways in which this is reflected in experience, belief and practice
- help students to identify and explore questions about the meaning of life, and to consider such questions in relation to religious traditions
- encourage students to reflect on religious responses to moral issues
- enable students to recognise and appreciate the contribution of religion in the formation of patterns of belief and behaviour.

### Content overview

Candidates study **two** from:

- Christianity
- Islam
- Judaism



#### Support for Cambridge IGCSE Religious Studies

The School Support Hub is our secure online site for Cambridge teachers where you can find the resources you need to deliver our programmes, including schemes of work, past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports. You can also keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community through our online discussion forums.

[www.cambridgeinternational.org/support](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/support)

## Assessment overview

All candidates take two papers.

### All candidates take:

**Paper 1** 1 hour 45 minutes  
80 marks 50%

Candidates answer questions from **two** sections.

Each section has **two** compulsory structured questions. The second question is based on stimulus material.

Externally assessed.

### and:

**Paper 2** 1 hour 45 minutes  
80 marks 50%

Candidates answer questions from **two** sections.

Each section has three questions. Candidates answer **two** questions from the sections they have chosen.

Externally assessed.

Information on availability is in the **Before you start** section.

## Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

### AO1 Knowledge

Candidates should be able to:

- use knowledge in order to describe the religious practices, experiences and beliefs of others
- select and deploy relevant knowledge of the religions studied.

### AO2 Understanding and interpretation

Candidates should be able to:

- show understanding of religious beliefs and practices by explaining their significance for believers
- demonstrate awareness and understanding of religious responses to contemporary issues, both personal and social.

### AO3 Evaluation

Candidates should be able to:

- evaluate different views on issues arising from religious belief and practice by using evidence and argument.

## Weighting for assessment objectives

The approximate weightings allocated to each of the assessment objectives (AOs) are summarised below.

### Assessment objectives as a percentage of the qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in IGCSE %
AO1 Knowledge	35
AO2 Understanding and interpretation	35
AO3 Evaluation	30
Total	100

### Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %	
	Paper 1	Paper 2
AO1 Knowledge	35	35
AO2 Understanding and interpretation	35	35
AO3 Evaluation	30	30
Total	100	100

---

## 3 Subject content

---

Candidates are required to make a study of **two** of the following three world religions:

- Christianity
- Islam
- Judaism.

### Introduction

The syllabus content is divided into sections, each of which is based upon central ideas within Religious Studies. All five topics will be assessed by both Paper 1 and Paper 2.

The curriculum is set out in terms of central ideas, key questions and associated concepts. A consideration of the central ideas and key questions is essential for the purpose of this curriculum.

Candidates will be expected to understand how the significance of the main beliefs and major figures of a religion is expressed through the topics listed. However, no questions will be set directly on these beliefs and figures, unless they are specified in the topics.

Candidates will be expected to be familiar with the key technical terms used within a religion. In Topics 1–5 such terms are listed, with the meaning given in brackets. Where a term is widely used, but knowledge of it is not required of candidates, it has been put in brackets.

### Topics

Each religion will be examined according to the inter-related topics listed below. The topics have been numbered purely for purposes of reference, and there is no intention that the order should be seen as a suitable sequence for study.

Candidates should be aware that the importance attached to particular themes will vary from religion to religion.

**Topic 1: Worship**

**Topic 2: Beliefs and sacred writings**

**Topic 3: Festivals, fasts, pilgrimage / historic places**

**Topic 4: Religion and the family; rites of passage**

**Topic 5: Religion and social action**

## Christianity

### Topic C1: Worship

- Church: altar / communion table, font / baptistery, pulpit, lectern, cross, crucifix.
- Public and private worship: Eucharist / Holy Communion / Mass; Sunday and daily worship; private devotion; blessings; Bible services; services of reconciliation.
- Role and significance of bishop, priest / vicar / minister: the meaning of hierarchy, the difference between a bishop and an archbishop.

### Topic C2: Beliefs and sacred writings

- The Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Apostles' Creed; beliefs about Jesus' mother Mary; the Communion of Saints.
- Jesus of Nazareth: beliefs about Jesus of Nazareth as reflected in Topic 3; birth narratives; last supper; death and resurrection of Jesus, the ascension, the effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- Salvation and resurrection: what Christians mean by the term salvation; the Old Testament as a history of salvation.
- The Ten Commandments.
- The Bible: its place in worship; the basis of its authority; Old and New Testaments; the significance of the different types of literature it contains: history, myth, psalms, songs and prophecy.

### Topic C3: Festivals, fasts, pilgrimage / historic places

- Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent including Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost: how they are celebrated; what the different major festivals of Christianity teach about Christian beliefs.
- Sunday: the Eucharist and ideas of thanksgiving.
- Places of pilgrimage: e.g. Lourdes, Rome or local places of pilgrimage; the reasons why Christians go on pilgrimage.
- Historic places: e.g. Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Lourdes, Rome; what these historic places teach about Christian beliefs.

### Topic C4: Religion and the family; rites of passage

- Baptism: infant baptism / dedication, believers' baptism.
- First communion; confirmation; marriage ceremonies; funeral rites.
- Traditional religious teaching on the roles and responsibilities of men, women and the family; nurture of the young; care of the elderly; the challenges experienced by trying to preserve traditional teaching and accepting change.

### Topic C5: Religion and social action

- Teachings about love and concern for others: the Two Greatest Commandments.
- Tithing and personal giving.
- Organisation of the religious community for the relief of poverty, e.g. Christian Aid, Tearfund, CAFOD, missionary activities; the relief of poverty within local communities.

## Islam

### Topic I1: Worship

- Mosque, minaret, dome, quiblah (direction), mihrab (niche), minbar (steps for sermon), architecture and calligraphy.
- Public and private worship: salah, the times and sequence of movements (rak'ahs); du'a (private devotion); wudu (ablution); artefacts used in worship: compass, prayer mat, tisbah (prayer beads).
- Adhan (call to prayer); muezzin.
- Jummah (Friday mid-day prayer).
- The role and significance of the Imam, including their role in the Islamic community.

### Topic I2: Beliefs and sacred writings

- Articles of Faith: Tawhid (unity of God); risalah (Prophets), akhirah (life after death), Angels.
- Five Pillars: shahadah, salah, sawm, zakah, hajj.
- Muhammad (pbuh), revelation, hijrah, Seal of the Prophets; early life and character; persecution in Makkah.
- Qur'an, Sunnah (Ahadith); the reasons why the Qur'an is a sacred text for Muslims; the ways in which it is used in private and public worship.
- Jihad (greater and lesser).
- Origins of Sunni and Shi'ah.

### Topic I3: Festivals, fasts, pilgrimage / historic places

- Ramadan: observance of the fast, those excused from fasting and the significance of the last ten days; Lailat ul-Qadr (Night of Power); Id al-Fitr (the end of Ramadan).
- Performance of hajj; the meaning and significance of each stage, Id al-Adha (feast of sacrifice).
- Makkah and Madinah, as places of pilgrimage and their historic significance in Islam.

### Topic I4: Religion and the family; rites of passage

- Birth rites: adhan (call to prayer) and iqamah (command to worship), Aqeeqah (sacrifice), naming rituals.
- Marriage ceremonies; nikkah (marriage contract), mahr (dowry), walimah (wedding feast); funeral rites.
- Traditional religious teaching on the roles of men, women and the family; nurture of the young, care of the elderly; the challenges experienced by trying to preserve traditional teaching and accepting change.

### Topic I5: Religion and social action

- Ummah, the religious community, local and worldwide.
- Shariah (law): as a code of behaviour for Muslims and a legal system; the concepts of halal (rightful) and haram (wrongful) thought and actions.
- Teachings about love and concern for others; use of zakah and sadaqah (voluntary contributions).
- Organisations of the religious community for the relief of poverty, e.g. Muslim Aid, Red Crescent; the relief of poverty within local communities.

## Judaism

### Topic J1: Worship

- Synagogue: ark (aron ha-kodesh), Sefer Torah (Torah scrolls), bimah (reading desk), Ner Tamid (eternal light), Ten Commandments (tablets of the law), menorah (seven-branched candlestick), Magen David (star of David); absence of any representations of God; different uses of the synagogue by the community.
- Public and private worship in the synagogue: minyan (number required for public worship), daily and Shabbat (Sabbath) services. In the home: daily prayer, Kiddush; the use of symbols and artefacts in worship.
- Shema (statement of faith); mezuzah; mikvah.
- Ritual dress: tallit (prayer shawl), tefillin (phylacteries), kippah/yarmulka (skull cap).
- Role and significance of rabbi, chazan (cantor) and congregation.

### Topic J2: Beliefs and sacred writings

- The unity of God; the Covenant relationship between God and his people (Abraham and Moses), the background and details of the terms of the Covenants, and their importance and significance to the development of Judaism today.
- The Torah as the revelation of God's will; the centrality of the mitzvot in the Torah.
- The Tenakh: Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), Ketuvim (Writings); their impact upon behaviour, attitudes and lifestyle today.
- The Mishnah (oral law), its content and origins; the Talmud (commentary on the Mishnah).

### Topic J3: Festivals, fasts, pilgrimage / historic places

- Shabbat (Sabbath) in the home and synagogue.
- High Holy Days: Rosh Hashanah (New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Simchat Torah (rejoicing the Torah).
- Pilgrim festivals: Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Feast of Weeks), Sukkot (Tabernacles).
- Historic places: Jerusalem (Western Wall), Yad Vashem (Holocaust Memorial); the ways the memory of the Temple is kept alive in Judaism today.

### Topic J4: Religion and the family; rites of passage

- Birth rites: Brit Milah (circumcision); naming ceremonies.
- Bar / Bat Mitzvah; Bat Chayil; marriage ceremonies: chuppa (canopy), ketubah (marriage contract), blessings; funeral rites, chevra kaddisha (burial society), Shiva (mourning ritual).
- Kashrut (kosher): food and clothes; treyfah (forbidden) as applied to food and clothes.
- Traditional and religious teaching on the role and responsibilities of men, women and the family; nurture of the young, care of the elderly; the challenges experienced by trying to preserve traditional teaching and accepting change.

### Topic J5: Religion and social action

- Teachings about love and concern for others: tzedaka (righteous giving), pushkes (collection boxes), gemilut hasadim (kind actions).
- Organisations of the religious community for the relief of poverty, e.g. Tzedek, Jewish Care, World Jewish Relief; the relief of poverty within local communities.

---

## 4 Details of the assessment

---

### Paper 1

1 hour 45 minutes, 80 marks

Candidates answer **four** questions.

This paper consists of three sections:

- A Christianity
- B Islam
- C Judaism

Candidates answer questions in **two** of these sections.

Each section consists of two compulsory structured questions worth 20 marks each. Candidates answer **all** the questions in the sections they have chosen.

This written paper is an externally set assessment, marked by Cambridge International.

### Paper 2

1 hour 45 minutes, 80 marks

Candidates answer **four** questions.

This paper consists of three sections:

- A Christianity
- B Islam
- C Judaism

Candidates answer questions in **two** of these sections.

Each section consists of three structured questions worth 20 marks each. Candidates answer **two** questions in the sections they have chosen.

This written paper is an externally set assessment, marked by Cambridge International.

---

## 5 What else you need to know

---

This section is an overview of other information you need to know about this syllabus. It will help to share the administrative information with your exams officer so they know when you will need their support. Find more information about our administrative processes at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

### Before you start

#### Previous study

We do not expect learners starting this course to have previously studied Religious Studies.

#### Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses based on learners having about 130 guided learning hours for each subject during the course but this is for guidance only. The number of hours a learner needs to achieve the qualification may vary according to local practice and their previous experience of the subject.

#### Availability and timetables

All Cambridge schools are allocated to one of six administrative zones. Each zone has a specific timetable. This syllabus is **not** available in all administrative zones. To find out about availability check the syllabus page at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse)

You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables)

You can enter candidates in the November exam series.

Check you are using the syllabus for the year the candidate is taking the exam.

Private candidates can enter for this syllabus.

#### Combining with other syllabuses

Candidates can take this syllabus alongside other Cambridge International syllabuses in a single exam series. The only exceptions are:

- Cambridge O Level Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge) (2048)
- Cambridge O Level Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge, Singapore) (2049)
- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) and Cambridge O Level syllabuses are at the same level.

#### Group awards: Cambridge ICE

Cambridge ICE (International Certificate of Education) is a group award for Cambridge IGCSE. It allows schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum by recognising the achievements of learners who pass examinations in a range of different subjects.

Learn more about Cambridge ICE at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/cambridgeice](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/cambridgeice)

## Making entries

Exams officers are responsible for submitting entries to Cambridge International. We encourage them to work closely with you to make sure they enter the right number of candidates for the right combination of syllabus components. Entry option codes and instructions for submitting entries are in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*. Your exams officer has a copy of this guide.

### Exam administration

To keep our exams secure, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as administrative zones. We allocate all Cambridge schools to one administrative zone determined by their location. Each zone has a specific timetable. Some of our syllabuses offer candidates different assessment options. An entry option code is used to identify the components the candidate will take relevant to the administrative zone and the available assessment options.

### Support for exams officers

We know how important exams officers are to the successful running of exams. We provide them with the support they need to make your entries on time. Your exams officer will find this support, and guidance for all other phases of the Cambridge Exams Cycle, at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

### Retakes

Candidates can retake the whole qualification as many times as they want to. This is a linear qualification so candidates cannot re-sit individual components.

### Equality and inclusion

We have taken great care to avoid bias of any kind in the preparation of this syllabus and related assessment materials. In compliance with the UK Equality Act (2010) we have designed this qualification to avoid any direct and indirect discrimination.

The standard assessment arrangements may present unnecessary barriers for candidates with disabilities or learning difficulties. We can put arrangements in place for these candidates to enable them to access the assessments and receive recognition of their attainment. We do not agree access arrangements if they give candidates an unfair advantage over others or if they compromise the standards being assessed.

Candidates who cannot access the assessment of any component may be able to receive an award based on the parts of the assessment they have completed.

Information on access arrangements is in the *Cambridge Handbook* at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

### Language

This syllabus and the related assessment materials are available in English only.

## After the exam

### Grading and reporting

Grades A\*, A, B, C, D, E, F or G indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge IGCSE.

A\* is the highest and G is the lowest. 'Ungraded' means that the candidate's performance did not meet the standard required for grade G. 'Ungraded' is reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate. In specific circumstances your candidates may see one of the following letters on their statement of results:

- Q (pending)
- X (no result)
- Y (to be issued)

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

## How students and teachers can use the grades

Assessment at Cambridge IGCSE has two purposes.

- to measure learning and achievement;
  - The assessment:
    - confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus, to the levels described in the grade descriptions.
- to show likely future success
  - The outcomes:
    - help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful
    - help students choose the most suitable course or career.

## Grade descriptions

Grade descriptions are provided to give an indication of the standards of achievement candidates awarded particular grades are likely to show. Weakness in one aspect of the examination may be balanced by a better performance in some other aspect.

Grade descriptions for Cambridge IGCSE Religious Studies will be published after the first assessment of the IGCSE in 2020. Find more information at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse)

## Changes to this syllabus for 2022 and 2023

The syllabus has been updated. This is version 1, published September 2019.

There are no significant changes which affect teaching.

**You are strongly advised to read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme.**

'While studying Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International A Levels, students broaden their horizons through a global perspective and develop a lasting passion for learning.'

**Zhai Xiaoning**, Deputy Principal, The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China

Cambridge Assessment International Education  
The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)1223 553554 Fax: +44 (0)1223 553558  
Email: [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org) [www.cambridgeinternational.org](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org)

Copyright © UCLES September 2019