



**Cambridge Assessment
International Education**

Syllabus

**Cambridge International
AS & A Level
Islamic Studies 9488**

Use this syllabus for exams in 2024, 2025 and 2026.
Exams are available in the June series.



Version 1

Please check the syllabus page at www.cambridgeinternational.org/9488 to see if this syllabus is available in your administrative zone.

For the purposes of screen readers, any mention in this document of Cambridge IGCSE refers to Cambridge International General Certification of Secondary Education.

**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 students to progress from one stage to the next, and are well supported by teaching and learning resources.

We review all our syllabuses regularly, so they reflect the latest research evidence and professional teaching practice – and take account of the different national contexts in which they are taught.

We consult with teachers to help us design each syllabus around the needs of their learners. Consulting with leading universities has helped us make sure our syllabuses encourage students to master the key concepts in the subject and develop the skills necessary for success in higher education.

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.

School feedback: ‘We think the Cambridge curriculum is superb preparation for university.’

Feedback from: 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

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Important: Changes to this syllabus

For information about changes to this syllabus for 2024, 2025 and 2026, go to page 36.

The latest syllabus is version 1, published September 2021.



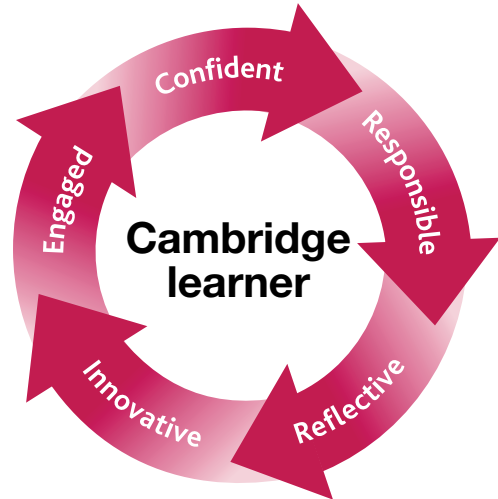
1 Why choose this syllabus?

Key benefits

The best motivation for a student is a real passion for the subject they're learning. By offering students a variety of Cambridge International AS & A Levels, you can give them the greatest chance of finding the path of education they most want to follow. With over 50 subjects to choose from, students can select the ones they love and that they're best at, which helps motivate them throughout their studies.

Following a Cambridge International AS & A Level programme helps students develop abilities which universities value highly, including:

- a deep understanding of their subjects
- higher order thinking skills – analysis, critical thinking, problem solving
- presenting ordered and coherent arguments
- independent learning and research.



Cambridge International AS & A Level Islamic Studies develops a set of transferable skills. These include a reflective understanding of different values, opinions and attitudes and the ability to present and analyse differing perspectives and the concepts and values that underpin them.

Our approach in Cambridge International AS & A Level Islamic Studies encourages learners to be:

confident, understanding complex social, religious and/or philosophical concepts and expressing views, opinions and judgements around these

responsible, recognising the complexity and sensitivity of issues that give rise to religious debate

reflective, considering the diversity of views (including personal ones) and the ways in which they are supported and justified

innovative, exploring the role and significance of religion for Muslims in the contemporary world

engaged, by the complexity and diversity of religion and its responses to the challenges of the contemporary world.

School feedback: 'Cambridge students develop a deep understanding of subjects and independent thinking skills.'

Feedback from: Principal, Rockledge High School, USA

Key concepts

Key concepts are essential ideas that help students develop a deep understanding of their subject and make links between different aspects. Key concepts may open up new ways of thinking about, understanding or interpreting the important things to be learned.

Good teaching and learning will incorporate and reinforce a subject's key concepts to help students gain:

- a greater depth as well as breadth of subject knowledge
- confidence, especially in applying knowledge and skills in new situations
- the vocabulary to discuss their subject conceptually and show how different aspects link together
- a level of mastery of their subject to help them enter higher education.

The key concepts identified below, carefully introduced and developed, will help to underpin the course you will teach. You may identify additional key concepts which will also enrich teaching and learning.

The key concepts for Cambridge International AS & A Level Islamic Studies are:

- **Beliefs, faith, teachings and sources**
Interpreting teachings, sources, authorities and ways of life in order to understand religion, beliefs and faith. Appreciating and responding critically to beliefs, faith and attitudes.
- **Practices, application and ways of life**
Exploring the impact of religion, beliefs and faith on how people live their lives. Appreciating that religious practices and ethics are diverse, change over time and are influenced by locations and cultures.
- **Expression**
Acknowledging that individuals and cultures express their beliefs, faith, ethics and values through many different forms. Appreciating that expression can develop and maintain individual and community faith

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. Every year thousands of students with Cambridge International AS & A Levels gain places at leading universities worldwide. Our programmes and qualifications are valued by top universities around the world including those in the UK, US (including Ivy League universities), Europe, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

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 International AS & A Level and found it to be comparable to the standard of AS & A Level in the UK. This means students can be confident that their Cambridge International AS & A Level qualifications are accepted as equivalent, grade for grade, to UK AS & A Levels by leading universities worldwide.

Cambridge International AS Level Islamic Studies makes up the first half of the Cambridge International A Level course in Islamic Studies and provides a foundation for the study of Islamic Studies at Cambridge International A Level. Depending on local university entrance requirements, students may be able to use it to progress directly to university courses in Islamic Studies or some other subjects. It is also suitable as part of a course of general education.

Cambridge International A Level Islamic Studies provides a foundation for the study of Islamic Studies or related courses in higher education. Equally it is suitable as part of a course of general education.

For more information about the relationship between the Cambridge International AS Level and Cambridge International A Level see the 'Assessment overview' section of the Syllabus overview.

We recommend learners check the Cambridge recognition database and university websites to find the most up-to-date entry requirements for courses they wish to study.

Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition

School feedback: 'The depth of knowledge displayed by the best A Level students makes them prime targets for America's Ivy League universities.'

Feedback from: Yale University, USA

Supporting teachers

We provide a wide range of resources, detailed guidance and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your students the best possible preparation for Cambridge International AS & A Level. To find out which resources are available for each syllabus go to www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

The School Support Hub is our secure online site for Cambridge teachers where you can find the resources you need to deliver our programmes. You can also keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community through our online discussion forums.

Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

Support for Cambridge International AS & A Level			
Planning and preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next steps guides. • Schemes of work. • Specimen papers. • Syllabuses. • Teacher guides. 	Teaching and assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsed resources. • Online forums. • Support for coursework and speaking tests. 	Learning and revision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example candidate responses. • Past papers and mark schemes. • Specimen paper answers. 	Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate Results Service. • Principal examiner reports for teachers. • Results Analysis.

Sign up for email notifications about changes to syllabuses, including new and revised products and services at www.cambridgeinternational.org/syllabusupdates

Professional development

We support teachers through:

- Introductory Training – face-to-face or online
- Extension Training – face-to-face or online
- Enrichment Professional Development – face-to-face or online

Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/events

- Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications

Find out more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/profdev



Supporting exams officers

We provide comprehensive support and guidance for all Cambridge exams officers.

Find out more at: www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide

2 Syllabus overview

Aims

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

The aims are to enable students to:

- develop knowledge and understanding appropriate to a specialist study of Islam
- develop an understanding and appreciation of Islamic thought and practice and its contribution to individuals, communities and societies
- develop an interest in a rigorous study of Islam and relate it to the wider world and their own experiences
- reflect on and develop their own values, opinions and attitudes in the light of their study of Islam
- engage with scholarly debate about Islam and develop an ability to express and justify their own opinions
- adopt an enquiring and reflective approach to the study of Islamic religion which will form a solid foundation for further study.



Cambridge Assessment International Education is an education organisation and politically neutral. The contents 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.



Support for Cambridge International AS & A Level Islamic Studies

Our School Support Hub www.cambridgeinternational.org/support provides Cambridge schools with a secure site for downloading specimen and past question papers, mark schemes, grade thresholds and other curriculum resources specific to this syllabus. The School Support Hub community offers teachers the opportunity to connect with each other and to ask questions related to the syllabus.

Content overview

This table gives an overview of the syllabus content for Cambridge International AS & A Level Islamic Studies.

Paper 1 – Islamic beliefs and practices

The Qur'an and Sunnah

- The life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
- A study of set texts from the Qur'an
- A study of set Hadith texts

Islamic beliefs, practices and ceremonies

- Main beliefs
- Purification and intention
- Acts of devotion and commitment
- Putting faith into action

Paper 2 – Islamic law (*shariah*) and its application

Schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)

- Worship
- Family life
- Finance and employment
- Application of Islamic law (*shariah*)
- Sources of Islamic law (*shariah*)

Diversity of schools of thought

- The oneness of God (*tawhid*)
- The role of religious leaders
- Judgement and the afterlife (*'akhirah*)
- Distinctive positions of Islamic schools of thought

Paper 3 – Heritage of Islam

The Umayyads and the 'Abbasids

- The Heritage of the Umayyads
- The Heritage of the 'Abbasids

Islamic world heritage

- Literature and philosophy
- Architecture and design

Paper 4 – Islam in the modern world

Women in Islam

Islam and pluralism

Leadership of the Muslims

School feedback: 'Cambridge International AS & A Levels prepare students well for university because they've learnt to go into a subject in considerable depth. There's that ability to really understand the depth and richness and the detail of a subject. It's a wonderful preparation for what they are going to face at university.'

Feedback from: US Higher Education Advisory Council

Assessment overview

AS Level candidates take Papers 1 and 2. A Level candidates take Papers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Paper 1

Islamic beliefs and practices
1 hour 30 minutes

50 marks

Structured questions

Candidates answer **one** compulsory question based on the prescribed Qur'anic and Hadith texts and **one** additional question from a choice of two.

Externally assessed

50% of the AS Level

25% of the A Level

Paper 3

Heritage of Islam
1 hour 30 minutes
50 marks

Section A: Structured questions. Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two. Part (a) of each question will be based on source material printed on the question paper.

Section B: Structured questions. Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two.

Externally assessed

25% of the A Level

Paper 2

Islamic law (*shariah*) and its application
1 hour 30 minutes

50 marks

Section A: Structured questions. Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two.

Section B: Structured questions. Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two.

Externally assessed

50% of the AS Level

25% of the A Level

Paper 4

Islam in the modern world
1 hour 30 minutes
50 marks

Extended response essays

Candidates answer **two** questions from a choice of three.

Externally assessed

25% of the A Level

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

There are three routes for Cambridge International AS & A Level Islamic Studies:

Route	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
1 AS Level only (Candidates take all AS components in the same exam series)	Yes	Yes	No	No
2 A Level (staged over two years) Year 1 AS Level*	Yes	Yes	No	No
Year 2 Complete the A Level	No	No	Yes	Yes
3 A Level (Candidates take all components in the same exam series)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

* Candidates carry forward their AS Level result subject to the rules and time limits described in the *Cambridge Handbook*.

Candidates following an AS Level route will be eligible for grades a–e. Candidates following an A Level route are eligible for grades A*–E.

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

AO1 Knowledge and understanding

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Islamic teachings, texts, beliefs and practices including their relevance for individual Muslims and communities.

AO2 Analysis and evaluation

Analyse, evaluate and discuss evidence, points of view and issues in Islam.

Weighting for assessment objectives

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

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in AS Level %	Weighting in A Level %
AO1 Knowledge and understanding	50	45
AO2 Analysis and evaluation	50	55
Total	100	100

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %			
	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
AO1 Knowledge and understanding	50	50	40	40
AO2 Analysis and evaluation	50	50	60	60
Total	100	100	100	100

3 Subject content

Candidates for Cambridge International AS Level study the AS Level content for Paper 1 and Paper 2.

Candidates for Cambridge A Level study all the syllabus content for Paper 1, Paper 2, Paper 3 and Paper 4.

The content for each paper is detailed below.

Paper 1 Islamic beliefs and practices

This paper introduces the origins of Islam and the main beliefs and practices of Islam.

The exemplification of good character in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) is the focus of Section A. Candidates study examples of good character and trace these from the key texts given for study. Candidates are required to discuss and debate how good character could be applied in certain situations in the lives of Muslims today.

The main beliefs of Islam are introduced in Section B. Candidates study what the main beliefs are and consider how they affect the everyday lives of believers. They are required to explore the variety of beliefs held by Muslims.

Section A: The Qur'an and Sunnah

An introduction to the main sources of Islam through examples from the Qur'an and Sunnah and their application as a model for good conduct for Muslims.

1.1 The life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Content

- his early years and first proclamation to 622 CE
- his challenges to Meccan beliefs
- the Hijrah and its significance
- his administration and leadership roles (religious, political and military)
- his morals, manners and character as an example to Muslims.

1.2 A study of set texts from the Qur'an

Content

- 3:144 The Prophet
- 4:12 Inheritance
- 5:89–90 Intoxicants
- 10:99–100 Freedom of belief
- 13:3–4 Signs
- 17:31–34 Orphans
- 17:35 Fairness
- 25:68–70 Punishment
- 31:14–15 Parents
- 31:17–19 Prayer and arrogance

Candidates should be able to:

- explain the teachings in these sources in relation to the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
- show how the teachings from these sources might be applied in the lives of Muslims today
- discuss how the Prophet (pbuh) is a perfect example for Muslims to follow with reference to these sources.

Specified text for study:

A Yusuf Ali, *An English interpretation of the Holy Qur'an with full Arabic Text*: <http://tanzil.net>

The Qur'an passages printed on the question paper will be taken from the version of the specified texts prescribed in the syllabus. If schools wish to use other versions of the translated texts, they are welcome to do so, but teachers should make candidates aware that there may be differences with the translations that appear on the question papers.

1.3 A study of set Hadith texts

Content

- 1 Sincerity
- 18 Repentance
- 27 Perseverance
- 54 Truthfulness
- 73 Piety
- 75 Firm belief
- 85 Steadfastness
- 199 Hypocrites
- 309 Neighbours
- 316 Parents

Candidates should be able to:

- explain the themes in these Hadith in relation to the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
- show how these Hadith might be applied in the lives of Muslims today
- discuss how the Prophet (pbuh) is a perfect example for Muslims to follow with reference to the set Hadith texts.

Specified text for study:

Riyad as-Salihin, *Book 1, The Book of Miscellany*: <https://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen>

The Hadith passages printed on the question paper will be taken from the version of the specified texts prescribed in the syllabus. If schools wish to use other versions of the translated texts, they are welcome to do so, but teachers should make candidates aware that there may be differences with the translations that appear on the question papers.

Section B: Islamic beliefs, practices and ceremonies

Candidates will study Islamic beliefs and practices and how these help Muslims to realise, proclaim and develop their faith in daily life. Candidates may be required to make connections between the content areas in Section B.

1.4 Main beliefs

Content

- belief in a single Creator God (*tawhid*)
- the role of prophets as human messengers, delivering revelations (*risalah*)
- angels as deliverers of books and recorders of human actions (*malaikah*)
- the revealed word of God as guidance to humankind (*wahy*)
- the Day of Judgement and the afterlife (*'akhirah*)
- life as a test within the bounds of fate and predestination (*qadar*).

Candidates should be able to:

- consider how the main beliefs are strengthened and realised through a Muslim's actions
- make links between beliefs and actions and reference examples from the Five Pillars of Islam.

1.5 Purification and intention

Content

- the rituals of purification for prayer, preparation for pilgrimage (*Hajj*) and purification in Islamic birth and death rituals
- purification of the mind from worldly thoughts and the importance of making the right intention (*niyyah*) and purification of the heart through the statement of faith (*shahadah*)
- fasting in Ramadan (*sawm*) as a form of physical and spiritual renewal
- almsgiving (*zakat*) as a means of purification of wealth.

1.6 Acts of devotion and commitment

Content

- daily and occasional prayer rituals, including the five daily prayers, Eid prayers and prayers on special occasions
- the importance of acts of worship (*ibadah*) and developing God-consciousness (*taqwa*)
- the role of the family in developing faith; marriage (*nikah*) as an act of commitment
- diversity of acts of devotion carried out by different Muslims, including Ashura, the 10th of Muharram and personal prayers (*du'a*) for guidance.

1.7 Putting faith into action

Content

- support for the poor through almsgiving (*zakat*), voluntary donations and charitable giving
- creation of equality in the Islamic community (*ummah*) through acts of devotion including the rituals of pilgrimage (*Hajj*)
- the inclusion of everyone in the Eid festivals; importance of sacrifices made for God and rewards shared in family and community
- the relationship between intentions, actions and belief in judgement and the afterlife.

Paper 2 Islamic law (*shariah*) and its application

The origins of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) are the focus of Section A. Candidates develop an understanding of why each source of authority is important and how they are used together to form Islamic teachings. This study gives candidates an opportunity to debate different interpretations of law applied to moral and ethical issues.

Section B focuses on the study of three areas of Islamic belief: the oneness of God (*tawhid*), the role of religious leaders and judgement and the afterlife (*'akhirah*). The study will build on Section B of Paper 1 to involve a discussion of a variety of points of view and perspectives.

Section A: Schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)

Candidates will focus on the study of some specific aspects of Islamic law (*shariah*): worship, family life and finance and employment. They will trace how opinions regarding their application are formed using sources of authority and their interpretation by different schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

2.1 Worship

Content

- opinions regarding purification (*wudu*) before prayer
- the timing and conditions for the daily prayer services, conditions for combination of prayers and the timings of dawn (*fajr*), afternoon (*asr*) and sunset (*maghrib*) prayers
- the conditions for the Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*).

2.2 Family life

Content

- opinions regarding marriage (*nikah*) to relatives and those of other faiths
- freedom of choice of marital partners and conditions for divorce (*talaq*)
- questions of inheritance, in particular shares for female family members.

2.3 Finance and employment

Content

- the principles of trade and business transactions
- issues of handling debt, usury and interest (*riba*); mortgages
- employment in different local contexts according to Islamic principles.

2.4 Application of Islamic law (*shariah*)

Content

- for 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 the opinions from **two** schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) should be studied. These are to be chosen from:
 - **one** of the four Sunni Imams and their Madhab: Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali
 - and **one** from:
 - another of the four Sunni Imams and their Madhab
 - OR a Shi'i School of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), such as the Twelvers or Ismailis
 - OR a perspective from outside the traditional schools, such as reformist or Salafi.

Candidates should be able to:

- make comparisons between the content areas and between interpretations of the two schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) which have been chosen for study.

2.5 Sources of Islamic law (*shariah*)

Content

- sources used to derive opinions; why they are important and how they are used together in order of priority:
 - primary sources of Islamic law (*shariah*), the Qur'an and Sunnah; the progressive revelations from Mecca to Medina; issues of strong (*sahih*) and weak (*da'if*) Hadith
 - secondary sources including consensus (*ijma'*), analogy (*qiyas*) or reasoning (*'aql*) and variation in opinion about their use
 - references to the habits of the people of Medina; local cultural practices (*'urf*); the companions (*sahaba*) of the Prophet (pbuh) and their followers.

Section B: Diversity of schools of thought

Candidates will make a study of three areas of Islamic belief and analyse the variety of opinions and perspectives about them.

2.6 The oneness of God (*tawhid*)

Content

- interpretation of the anthropomorphic references to God: literal and metaphorical perspectives and the implications of this for the authority of the Qur'an
- the statement of faith and the position of 'Ali for Shi'i Muslims
- opinions regarding the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet (pbuh)
- the extent to which Muslims may develop a spiritual relationship with God as expressed in mystical poetry and the controversy regarding the claims of Mansur al-Hallaj.

2.7 The role of religious leaders

Content

- the Sunni Caliph, as religious and political leader, and Sunni Imams appointed by merit of education and piety
- the importance of the Shi'i Imam, in Muhammad's family line, to make interpretations without error
- the role of a Sufi master (*murshid*) who is given allegiance by followers within a Sufi order (*tariqa*) and guides practices of remembrance (*dhikr*)
- the extent to which individuals may interpret teachings (*ijtihad*) for the modern world, based on their own understanding and the practices of the companions (*sahaba*).

2.8 Judgement and the afterlife ('*akhirah*)

Content

- interpretations of the Mahdi, the return of the twelfth Imam for Shi'i Muslims
- Sufi focus on rising through the spiritual stations towards union with God, to be fully achieved in the afterlife ('*akhirah*)
- the Mu'tazilah and application of rationalism to achieve justice in the afterlife ('*akhirah*)
- the extent to which humans have free will or whose fate is predestined (*qadar*); the possibility of adjustment to the Divine plan.

2.9 Distinctive positions of Islamic schools of thought

Content

- comparison of the Sunni beliefs to the alternative positions of **all** the following:
 - the Shi'i, Party of 'Ali, and leadership descended from the Prophet's family
 - the Mu'tazilah, the party of Divine Unity, in comparison to the views of al-Ash'ari
 - the mystical approach of Sufism with examples from Sufi orders (*tariqa*)
 - modern Salafi and reformist positions: literal reinterpretations of sources of authority compared to modernist application of the original principles.

Candidates should be able to:

- compare distinctive positions taken by the different schools of thought about the oneness of God (*tawhid*), the role of religious leaders and the afterlife ('*akhirah*).

Paper 3 Heritage of Islam

In Section A, candidates will study the rich heritage of the Umayyads and 'Abbasids. Candidates will study aspects of their rule and their scientific and cultural achievements. Candidates will critically evaluate the contribution of these caliphates to the development of education, science and other cultural aspects; and reflect on the influence of their legacy for Muslims and the wider world today.

In Section B, candidates will have the opportunity to discuss the extent to which Islam encourages rational scientific enquiry in comparison to acceptance of revelation.

The origins of Islamic art from the removal of idols, to the creation of new works of art and architecture, are also covered. Candidates study famous mosques and compare their styles and features.

Section A: The Umayyads and 'Abbasids

3.1 The Heritage of the Umayyads

Content

- leadership of the Umayyad caliphs
- religious, educational and trade policies
- a critical assessment of their rule according to the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah
- the change in art and culture from the days of pre-Islamic Arabia to the Umayyads; how far the Umayyads accommodated earlier traditions and how far they introduced changes
- the development of the minaret and architecture to reflect distinct Islamic beliefs
- the architectural achievements of the Umayyads including **one** of the following:
 - The Grand Mosque of Damascus
 - Masjid al-Aqsa, Jerusalem
 - The Grand Mosque and Palace of Córdoba
- the legacy of interfaith relations in Muslim Spain.

3.2 The Heritage of the ‘Abbasids

Content

- leadership under the ‘Abbasid caliphs
- religious, educational and trade policies
- a critical assessment of their rule according to the principles of the Qur’an and Sunnah
- the importance of openness to the translation movement
- the development of science, observation and evidenced conclusions, and the differences and similarities with the modern scientific approach
- the scientific achievements of the Golden Age of Islam including **one** of the following:
 - Al-Khwarizmi’s development of algebra
 - Ibn Sina’s Canon of Medicine
 - Ibn al-Haytham’s development of optics
- the legacy of safeguarding knowledge and progress in science.

Candidates should be able to:

- make comparisons between the leadership and policies of the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphs
- compare the extent to which the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphates followed the Qur’an and Sunnah
- analyse the contribution of the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphates to the development of a studied area such as education, or the promotion of religious facilities
- evaluate the influence of the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid legacies for Muslims today.

Section B: Islamic world heritage

Candidates will study how Islamic beliefs are reflected in literature and philosophy and expressed through architecture.

3.3 Literature and philosophy

Content

- the concept that God sends people knowledge through revelations and through signs in the natural world that may be studied and understood through philosophy (*falsafah*)
- the ways in which Islamic philosophy was similar to and differed from the writings of the ancient Greeks in pre-Islamic times
- a comparative study of **two** significant writings, their contribution to learning and the perspective taken on Islamic beliefs. These must be chosen from:
 - Ibn Tufayl’s work *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*
 - Al-Ghazali’s *Incoherence of the Philosophers*
 - Ibn Khaldun’s work on social science, *The Muqaddimah*
 - the mystical poetry of Rabi’a al-‘Adawiyya
 - Al-Biruni’s work on comparative religion, *History of Religions*
 - a published work chosen by the candidate
- a comparison of the different ways of deriving beliefs through interpretation of revelations
- observation of the created world; philosophical reasoning and mystical meditation
- evaluation of the different ways in which Muslims might explain to others their main beliefs (*da’wah*) today.

3.4 Architecture and design

Content

- expressions of Islamic beliefs through art and architecture, including God as Creator expressed through geometrical patterns and domes; and the Garden of Paradise expressed in the design of Islamic gardens
- the ways in which Islamic art and architecture differs from pre-Islamic Arabia in the removal of idols and the creation of calligraphy to express the 99 names
- a comparative study of **two** mosques, their main distinctive features and how they reflect Islamic beliefs. These must be chosen from:
 - Timurid *Bibi Khanum Mosque*, Samarkand
 - Ottoman *Sultan Ahmed Mosque*, Istanbul
 - Mughal *Jama Mosque*, Delhi
 - *The Great Ming Mosque*, Xi'an
 - Safavid *Shah Mosque*, Isfahan
 - *The Great Mosque*, Djenne
 - a mosque, such as a local mosque, chosen by the candidate
- discussion of the extent to which artistic expression and cultural diversity should be embraced by Muslims
- the extent to which environmental stewardship and preservation of architecture should be an obligation upon Muslims.

Candidates should be able to:

- compare how an Islamic belief, such as the oneness of God (*tawhid*), is expressed through philosophy and through architecture
- compare the influence of philosophy with architecture for Muslims today
- compare the expression of beliefs in one philosophical text with one mosque chosen for study.

Paper 4 Islam in the modern world

This paper focuses on three contemporary aspects of Islam in the world today: Women in Islam, Islam and pluralism and Leadership of the Muslims. Candidates will consider the current position in each content area; make evaluations of how far this reflects the teachings from the Qur'an and Sunnah and consider examples from the history of the Muslims. They will discuss a range of issues and consider the responses of Muslims in modern times.

4.1 Women in Islam

Content

- an analysis of the position of Muslim women in society in the modern world; how far they are treated equally to men and the challenges they face
- different Muslim opinions about the role of women and their rights within Islamic law (*shariah*)
- women's rights within married relationships and their roles in family life
- discussion regarding issues of religion and culture, including women's dress, greeting and social relations, professional careers, prejudice and discrimination
- evaluation of how far the position of Muslim women today is in accordance with the teachings in the Qur'an and Sunnah
- the extent to which the rights of women improved with the coming of Islam and how far these improvements have been applied in the modern world
- the influence of Khadija and Aisha, wives of the Prophet (pbuh), and his daughter Fatima, as role models
- a historical perspective of the contributions made by **two** Muslim women at different times, including:
 - Lubna of Córdoba, librarian and secretary of Caliph Al Hakam II
 - missionary Ruqayyah bint Ali
 - Queen Arwa al-Sulayhi of Yemen
 - Razia Sultana of Delhi
 - Mughal Noor Jahan
- a study of **one** influential contemporary Muslim woman; evaluation of her contribution to the position of women in Islam and issues she faced, chosen from:
 - a Muslim woman campaigner for human rights (such as Malala Yousafzai) or social issues, **or**
 - a contemporary or recent Muslim woman who has held political office, such as a president, prime minister or member of parliament, **or**
 - an influential Muslim woman chosen by the candidate.

4.2 Islam and pluralism

Content

- an analysis of the position of minorities within Muslim societies and Muslims living as minorities within mixed societies; how they are treated and the challenges they face
- opinions about the position of people of other faiths living among Muslims and their rights within Islamic law (*shariah*)
- the extent of rights to freedom of individual thought, belief and expression
- discussion regarding issues of religion and culture, prayer during working hours, taking time off for festivals, difficulties establishing mosques
- evaluation of how far the treatment of people of other faiths by Muslims today follows the model of the early Medina community, the Sunnah and the teachings in the Qur'an
- the extent to which the rights of non-Muslims improved with the coming of Islam and how far these improvements have been applied in the modern world
- the influence of Caliph Umar and the Dhimmi contract with those of other faiths living under Muslim rule
- a historical perspective of different approaches taken by Muslims towards those of other faiths, including **either** the contrasting policies of Mughal Emperors Akbar and Aurangzeb **or** the approaches taken towards those of other faiths during the period of Muslim rule in Spain
- a study of **two** countries or communities to evaluate issues of Islam and pluralism, inter-faith and community relations; these may be where Muslims form a minority or are in a majority living alongside others. Examples might include, but are not limited to:
 - Muslims living as a minority in Mauritius
 - Muslim minorities living in secular France
 - other faiths living in majority Muslim Malaysia.

4.3 Leadership of the Muslims

Content

- an analysis of the position of leadership of Muslims in Muslim majority countries and communities where Muslims form a minority in the world today
- different opinions about the qualities and characteristics required for eligibility to be a leader
- human rights for Muslims and their responsibilities to their leaders
- discussion regarding issues of just rule, provision for the less fortunate and responses to corruption and oppression
- evaluation of how far leadership of Muslims today follows the teachings in the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's example of leadership in the city of Medina
- the extent to which leadership improved with the coming of Islam compared to the leadership of the Shaykh in pre-Islamic Arabia
- how far Muslims support the principles of democracy and consultation in exercising leadership and policy-making, including reference to examples from the time of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and 'Ali
- a historical perspective of the contribution of **two** Muslim leaders in the development of Muslim practice in the modern world, chosen from:
 - Muhammad 'Abduh
 - Syed Abul A'la Maududi
 - Hasan al-Banna
 - Syed Ahmad Khan
 - Allama Iqbal
- a study of **one** influential contemporary or recent Muslim leader. Candidates should be able to evaluate them in line with the principles of leadership in Islam
 - a Muslim who has held political leadership such as a president, prime minister or member of parliament **or**
 - a religious or spiritual leader, such as a famous Imam or preacher, **or**
 - an influential Muslim leader, religious **or** political, chosen by the candidate.

Candidates should be able to (for 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3):

- draw comparisons and make evaluations between the content areas in 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 such as:
 - a comparison of an influential Muslim woman (studied for Section 4.1) with a Muslim leader (studied for Section 4.3)
 - how do Muslims leaders approach living with people of other faiths
 - issues faced by Muslim women compared to issues faced by faith minorities.

4 Details of the assessment

Across the assessment of all four papers, candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Islam and to evaluate and analyse differing points of view, providing supporting evidence for these.

Candidates will be required to present their response using well-structured continuous prose.

For all four papers the levels of response marking grids are published in the specimen papers which accompany the syllabus. These are available on our public website and our school support hub.

Paper 1 Islamic beliefs and practices

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This paper assesses the prescribed syllabus content for Paper 1.

Candidates answer one compulsory question (**Question 1**) and one additional question out of a choice of two (**Question 2 or 3**).

Question 1

Candidates answer Question 1, a compulsory question based on printed textual material from both or either the Qur'anic and Hadith prescribed texts specified in the syllabus. Question 1 will be divided in three part questions totalling 25 marks:

- Q1 (a) 5 marks assessing AO1 knowledge and understanding of the prescribed Qur'anic and/or Hadith text. This part question will ask candidates to describe the main teachings of the Qur'anic and/or Hadith texts printed on the question paper.
- Q 1(b) 10 marks assessing AO1 knowledge and understanding of the prescribed Qur'anic and/or Hadith text. Although in this part question candidates are required to refer to the passages, candidates are encouraged to go wider than the words from the passages printed on the question paper.
- Q1 (c) 10 marks assessing AO2 analysis and evaluation.

Candidates must answer **all** the parts of Question 1.

The Qur'anic and Hadith passages printed on the question paper will be taken from the version of the specified texts prescribed in the syllabus (translated into English). If schools wish to use other versions of the translated texts, they are welcome to do so, but teachers should make candidates aware that there may be differences with the translations that appear on the question papers.

The texts printed on the question paper could be two or three short extracts from both or either the Qur'an and Hadith prescribed texts.

Questions 1(b) and 1(c) will be marked using the levels of response marking grids printed on the specimen mark scheme for Paper 1. Part (b) questions are marked using the AO1 knowledge and understanding marking grid and part (c) questions using the AO2 analysis and evaluation marking grid.

Question 2 or 3

Candidates also answer **either** Question 2 or 3 (25 marks). The questions will be in two parts:

- Part (a) 10 marks assessing AO1 knowledge and understanding
- Part (b) 15 marks assessing AO2 analysis and evaluation.

Candidates must answer both parts from the question they have chosen.

Questions 2 and 3 will be marked using the levels of response marking grids printed on the specimen mark scheme for Paper 1. Part (a) questions are marked using the AO1 knowledge and understanding marking grid and part (b) questions using the AO2 analysis and evaluation marking grid.

Paper 2 Islamic law (*shariah*) and its application

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This paper assesses the prescribed syllabus content for Paper 2.

The paper comprises of two sections: Section A and Section B:

- Questions from Section A will sample content from Section A of Paper 2: Schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). (25 marks)
- Questions from Section B will sample content from Section B of Paper 2: Diversity of schools of thought. (25 marks)

Section A

Candidates answer **either** Question 1 or 2 (25 marks). The questions will be in three parts:

- Part (a) 5 marks assessing AO1 knowledge and understanding of the prescribed syllabus content
- Part (b) 10 marks assessing AO1 knowledge and understanding of the prescribed syllabus content
- Part (c) 10 marks assessing AO2 analysis and evaluation. Part (c) questions will require candidates to consider different points of view.

Candidates must answer **all** three parts from the question they have chosen.

Part (b) questions are marked using the AO1 knowledge and understanding marking grid and part (c) questions using the AO2 analysis and evaluation marking grid published on the specimen mark scheme for Paper 2.

Questions may ask candidates to make comparisons between the content areas and between interpretations of the two schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) which have been chosen for study.

Section B

Candidates answer **either** Question 3 or 4 (25 marks). The questions will be in two parts:

- Part (a) 10 marks assessing AO1 knowledge and understanding of the prescribed syllabus content
- Part (b) 15 marks assessing AO2 analysis and evaluation. Part (b) questions will require candidates to consider different points of view.

Candidates must answer both parts from the question they have chosen.

Part (a) questions are marked using the AO1 knowledge and understanding marking grid and part (b) questions using the AO2 analysis and evaluation marking grid published on the specimen mark scheme for Paper 2.

Questions may ask candidates to compare different positions taken by the different groups within one content area or between any combinations of content areas in Section B.

Paper 3 Heritage of Islam

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This paper assesses the prescribed syllabus content for Paper 3. Candidates are also required to evaluate and analyse different points of view, providing supporting evidence and a conclusion.

The paper comprises of two sections: Section A and Section B:

- Questions from Section A will sample content from Section A of Paper 3: The Ummayyads and the 'Abbasids. (25 marks)
- Questions from Section B will sample content from Section B of Paper 3: Islamic world heritage. (25 marks)

Section A

Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two.

Each question is worth 25 marks and consists of two parts:

- Part (a) 10 marks assessing AO1 knowledge and understanding of the prescribed syllabus content
- Part (b) 15 marks assessing AO2 analysis and evaluation.

Candidates must answer both parts from the question they have chosen.

Part (a) questions are marked using the AO1 knowledge and understanding marking grid and part (b) questions using the AO2 analysis and evaluation marking grid published on the specimen mark scheme for Paper 3.

There will be a source stimulus for part (a) of each question, which may be a picture, short text and/or image showing architectural or scientific achievement. Candidates should refer to the source stimulus in their response.

In addition to making reference to the source stimulus, candidates will be also expected to apply their own knowledge and understanding to answer the part (a) question.

Section B

Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of two.

Each question is worth 25 marks and consists of two parts:

- Part (a) 10 marks assessing AO1 knowledge and understanding of the prescribed syllabus content
- Part (b) 15 marks assessing AO2 analysis and evaluation.

Candidates must answer both parts from the question they have chosen.

Part (a) questions are marked using the AO1 knowledge and understanding marking grid and part (b) questions using the AO2 analysis and evaluation marking grid published on the specimen mark scheme for Paper 3.

Paper 4 Islam in the modern world

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 50 marks

This paper assesses knowledge and understanding from the prescribed syllabus content for Paper 4. Candidates are also required to evaluate and analyse differing points of view, providing supporting evidence and a conclusion. Wider reading of the Qur'an and Hadith will be credited.

Questions may be set from within one content area of the syllabus content for Paper 4 (Women in Islam, Islam and pluralism or Leadership of the Muslims) or across one or more content areas, encouraging candidates to draw comparisons and make evaluations between aspects from the different content areas.

Candidates answer **two** questions out of a choice of three. These are essay questions worth 25 marks each:

- 10 marks will be assessed against the levels of response marking grid for AO1 knowledge and understanding published in the Paper 4 specimen mark scheme
- 15 marks will be assessed against the levels of response marking grid for AO2 analysis and evaluation published in the Paper 4 specimen mark scheme.

Command words

Command words and their meanings help candidates know what is expected from them in the exam. The table below includes command words used in the assessment for this syllabus. The use of the command word will relate to the subject context.

Command word	What it means
Analyse	examine in detail to show meaning, identify elements and the relationship between them
Assess	make an informed judgement
Comment	give an informed opinion
Compare	identify/comment on similarities and/or differences
Consider	review and respond to given information
Contrast	identify/comment on differences
Define	give precise meaning
Describe	state the points of a topic/give characteristics and main features
Discuss	write about issue(s) or topic(s) in depth in a structured way
Evaluate	judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount, or value of something
Examine	investigate closely, in detail
Explain	set out purposes or reasons/make the relationships between things evident/provide why and/or how and support with relevant evidence
Give	produce an answer from a given source or recall/memory
Identify	name/select/recognise
Justify	support a case with evidence/argument
Outline	set out main points
State	express in clear terms
Suggest	apply knowledge and understanding to situations where there are a range of valid responses in order to make proposals
Summarise	select and present the main points, without detail

Phrases such as 'To what extent ...?' may also be seen in the assessment for this syllabus.

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

Before you start

Previous study

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

Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge International AS & A Level syllabuses based on learners having about 180 guided learning hours for each Cambridge International AS Level and about 360 guided learning hours for a Cambridge International A Level. 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/alevel

You can enter candidates in the June exam series. You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables

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:

- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

Group awards: Cambridge AICE

Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) is a group award for Cambridge International AS & A Level. It allows schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum by recognising the achievements of learners who pass exams in a range of different subjects.

Learn more about Cambridge AICE at www.cambridgeinternational.org/aice

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

Retakes and carry forward

Candidates can retake Cambridge International AS Level and Cambridge International A Level as many times as they want to. Cambridge International AS & A Levels are linear qualifications so candidates cannot re-sit individual components. Information on retake entries is in the *Cambridge Handbook* at www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsOfficers

Candidates can carry forward the result of their Cambridge International AS Level assessment from one series to complete the Cambridge International A Level in a following series, subject to the rules and time limits described in the *Cambridge Handbook*.

Language

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

Accessibility and equality

Syllabus and assessment design

Cambridge International works to avoid direct or indirect discrimination in our syllabuses and assessment materials. We aim to maximise inclusivity for candidates of all national, cultural or social backgrounds and with other protected characteristics. In addition, the language and layout used are designed to make our materials as accessible as possible. This gives all learners the opportunity, as fairly as possible, to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding and helps to minimise the requirement to make reasonable adjustments during the assessment process.

Access arrangements

Access arrangements (including modified papers) are the principal way in which Cambridge International complies with our duty, as guided by the UK Equality Act (2010), to make 'reasonable adjustments' for candidates with special educational needs (SEN), disability, illness or injury. Where a candidate would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a candidate with no SEN, disability, illness or injury, we may be able to agree pre-examination access arrangements. These arrangements help a candidate by minimising accessibility barriers and maximising their opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in an assessment.

Important:

- Requested access arrangements should be based on evidence of the candidate's barrier to assessment and should also reflect their normal way of working at school; this is in line with *The Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide
- For Cambridge International to approve an access arrangement, we will need to agree that it constitutes a reasonable adjustment, involves reasonable cost and timeframe and does not affect the security and integrity of the assessment.
- Availability of access arrangements should be checked by centres at the start of the course. Details of our standard access arrangements and modified question papers are available in *The Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide
- Please contact us at the start of the course to find out if we are able to approve an arrangement that is not included in the list of standard access arrangements.
- Candidates who cannot access parts of the assessment may be able to receive an award based on the parts they have completed.

After the exam

Grading and reporting

Grades A*, A, B, C, D or E indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge International A Level. A* is the highest and E is the lowest grade.

Grades a, b, c, d or e indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge International AS Level. 'a' is the highest and 'e' is the lowest grade.

'Ungraded' means that the candidate's performance did not meet the standard required for the lowest grade (E or e). '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).

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

If a candidate takes a Cambridge International A Level and fails to achieve grade E or higher, a Cambridge International AS Level grade will be awarded if both of the following apply:

- the components taken for the Cambridge International A Level by the candidate in that series included all the components making up a Cambridge International AS Level
- the candidate's performance on the AS Level components was sufficient to merit the award of a Cambridge International AS Level grade.

On the statement of results and certificates, Cambridge International AS & A Levels are shown as General Certificates of Education, GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level (GCE AS Level) and GCE Advanced Level (GCE A Level).

School feedback: 'Cambridge International A Levels are the 'gold standard' qualification. They are based on rigorous, academic syllabuses that are accessible to students from a wide range of abilities yet have the capacity to stretch our most able.'

Feedback from: Director of Studies, Auckland Grammar School, New Zealand

How students, teachers and higher education can use the grades

Cambridge International A Level

Assessment at Cambridge International A Level 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.

Cambridge International AS Level

Assessment at Cambridge International AS Level 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 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
- help decide whether students part way through a Cambridge International A Level course are making enough progress to continue
- guide teaching and learning in the next stages of the Cambridge International A Level course.

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 International A Level Islamic Studies will be published after the first assessment of the A Level in 2021. Find more information at www.cambridgeinternational.org/alevel

Changes to this syllabus for 2024, 2025 and 2026

The syllabus has been updated. This is version 1, published September 2021.

You must read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme.

Changes to availability

- This syllabus is no longer available for exams in the November series. This syllabus is available for exams in the June series only.
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School feedback: ‘While studying Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International A Levels, students broaden their horizons through a global perspective and develop a lasting passion for learning.’

Feedback from: Zhai Xiaoning, Deputy Principal, The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China

We are committed to making our documents accessible in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 Standard. We're always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems or you think we're not meeting accessibility requirements, contact us at info@cambridgeinternational.org with the subject heading: Digital accessibility. If you need this document in a different format, contact us and supply your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.

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