Cambridge IGCSE English
The value of Cambridge IGCSE English for higher education
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We work with schools worldwide to build an education that shapes knowledge, understanding and skills. Together, we give learners the confidence they need to thrive and make a positive impact in a changing world.

As part of the University of Cambridge, we offer a globally trusted and flexible framework for education from age 3 to 19, informed by research, experience, and listening to educators like you.

With recognised qualifications, high-quality resources, comprehensive support and valuable insights, we help schools prepare every student for the opportunities and challenges ahead. Together, we help Cambridge learners be ready for the world.
What is Cambridge IGCSE™ English?

The Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), awarded by Cambridge International Education, is a two-year single-subject secondary qualification for learners typically aged 14–16, with the aim of preparing them for work and further study.

Cambridge IGCSE is recognised as the international version of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) taken in the United Kingdom. We commit in our Code of Practice to align the standard of IGCSE with the equivalent qualifications in England; we do this by using statistical evidence and comparability studies.

UK NARIC (now Ecctis), the national UK agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications, carried out independent benchmarking studies, which found Cambridge IGCSE to be comparable to the standard of the GCSE. Read the studies at: www.cambridgeinternational.org/research-and-insights

Cambridge IGCSE is available in over 70 subjects, including 30 languages. Full-time Cambridge International students commonly take 5–8 subjects.

Read more about Cambridge IGCSE and download our qualification guides for universities at www.cambridgeinternational.org/guidance-for-universities

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**Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Designed for</th>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommended 130 teaching hours over two years.</td>
<td>Learners aged 14 to 16, but also available for any ages above.</td>
<td>A*–G, or 9–1 (same syllabus content).</td>
<td>Grades A*–C: level 2 Grades D–G: level 1, as per UK Qualification Framework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Domain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllabus</th>
<th>Language skills</th>
<th>Grading and CEFR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English First Language *&lt;br&gt;English as a Second Language **</td>
<td>Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking (optional for English First Language)</td>
<td>Grades are mapped to the CEFR, see relevant section in this document</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* aimed at students who speak English at home
** aimed at students who speak another language at home but may be studying in an English-language setting

Cambridge International offers a number of IGCSE syllabuses in subject English. This document refers to IGCSE English First Language (syllabuses 0500/0990) and IGCSE English as a Second Language (syllabuses 0510/0511/0993/0991).
Cambridge IGCSE English: a valuable indicator of English language proficiency

Your university can trust IGCSE English as a reliable proficiency assessment, based on evidence every step of the way, from qualification design to external recognition.

**Design**
- Summative assessment
- CEFR-mapped
- Engaging syllabus
- 4-skill assessment

**Use**
- Together with other subjects in English
- English proficiency integrated with English as a medium of instruction

**Track record**
- Appreciated for building language skills as a former school-leaving exam

**Recognition**
- Widely recognised as proficiency assessment, standing for English-taught education, in the UK and worldwide
Design

Summative assessment mapped to the CEFR

Cambridge IGCSE English is a summative B2-level qualification. This is reflected in the syllabus design, from the learning and assessment objectives to the alignment of grades to the CEFR. One of its primary purposes is to support learners in confidently passing exams in different subjects in English.

The topics, as well as the language and study skills in the syllabus reflect the B2-level CEFR descriptors. While teachers are advised to select materials suitable for their students, the syllabus does not limit the scope of the qualification to teenagers.

If you need to find out which CEFR level students are at, please use this information as a guide:

IGCSE English First Language (syllabus 0500/0990):
- CEFR level B2 for grade E/3 or above, with a grade 2/Merit or above in Speaking
- CEFR level C1 for grade B/6 or above, with a grade 1/Distinction in Speaking

IGCSE English as a Second Language (syllabuses 0511/0991 and 0510/0993):
- CEFR level B2 for grade C/4 or above, with 2/Merit in Speaking
- CEFR level B1 for grade E/3 or above, with 3/Pass in Speaking

Working with schools around the world for 160 years


**Syllabus:** engaging and relevant for work and study

- Analyse, evaluate and develop ideas and opinions using appropriate support from the text
- Demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers
- Demonstrate understanding of explicit and implicit meanings & attitudes
- Organise and structure ideas for deliberate effect
- Communicate clearly and purposefully using fluent language
- Articulate experience of what is thought, felt and imagined

Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses are created especially for international students. For over 30 years, we have worked with schools and teachers worldwide to develop syllabuses that are suitable for different countries, different types of schools and for learners with a wide range of abilities. You can download any IGCSE English Language and Literature syllabus at www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse

The learning and assessment objectives below are only a few examples that may highlight the qualification’s relevance for study.

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**Assessment**

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language covers all four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Listening & Speaking (tested together) are optional in Cambridge IGCSE English First Language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IGGSE English First Language</th>
<th>IGGSE English as a Second Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Writing</td>
<td>Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking all in one grade (“count-in speaking”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>optional: Listening and Speaking with a separate grade (“separately endorsed”)</td>
<td>OR: Reading, Writing, Listening, plus Speaking with a separate grade (“separately endorsed”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can download the IGCSE English syllabuses on our www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse.
Examples of assessment tasks

Here are examples of assessment tasks that illustrate assessment objectives and their level of demand in Cambridge IGCSE English First and Second Language.

**Cambridge IGCSE English First Language, Reading & Writing.**

You want to help reduce pollution in your local area and you are thinking about doing the following:

- not using plastic
- walking or cycling to school

Discuss how easy or difficult these options would be for you. Say which option you would prefer, and why.

**Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language, Speaking.**

**Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language, Reading and Writing.**

IGCSE English as a Second Language, Reading and Writing.
Assessment components and grading: **Cambridge IGCSE English First Language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compulsory</th>
<th>Optional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1: Reading (50%)</td>
<td>Paper 2: Directed Writing and Composition (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 input texts, 5 tasks</td>
<td>2 writing tasks, one compulsory and one from a choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally assessed (by Cambridge)</td>
<td>Externally assessed (by Cambridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coursework Portfolio (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 extended writing assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internally assessed (by school), externally moderated (by Cambridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking and Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10–12 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual talk and conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>marks do not contribute to the overall grade, but are entered separately on the certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internally assessed (by school), externally moderated (by Cambridge)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The assessment is made up of:

**Reading & Writing**

2 hours
6 tasks: matching, short responses, note-making etc.; two writing tasks, externally assessed

**Listening**

50 minutes
5 tasks: short answers, gap-fill, matching etc., externally assessed

**Speaking**

10–15 minutes
conversation on a particular topic internally assessed, externally moderated


Assessment components and grading: **Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language**

All students take three papers: Reading & Writing, Listening, and Speaking.

The skills carry different weights in each of the syllabus versions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllabus number</th>
<th>Reading &amp; Writing</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0510</td>
<td>70% (35% Reading, 35% Writing)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Separate grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(speaking separately endorsed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0511</td>
<td>60% (30% Reading, 30% Writing)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(count-in speaking)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The assessment is made up of:

**Reading & Writing**

2 hours
6 tasks: matching, short responses, note-making etc.; two writing tasks, externally assessed

**Listening**

50 minutes
5 tasks: short answers, gap-fill, matching etc., externally assessed

**Speaking**

10–15 minutes
conversation on a particular topic internally assessed, externally moderated


If separately endorsed: grades 1 (high) to 5 (low)
Cambridge International developed Cambridge IGCSE to be taught internationally, and it is designed to be accessible and fair to students whose first language is not English. In schools where English is the medium of instruction, students typically study at least 5 Cambridge IGCSE subjects.

Recently, an increasing number of state schools, in countries such as Italy, Spain, and France, are using Cambridge IGCSE as part of a bilingual curriculum. Students may study two to four syllabuses alongside the national curriculum. This is mainly because IGCSE English:

- is the world’s most popular international curriculum for 14-to-16-year olds;
- is taught in English; this has advantages for learners, but also for schools, who can develop their CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) capacities;
- has a single-subject structure, which means that each subject is certified separately, giving schools flexibility to choose how many subjects they offer.

As a single-subject qualification, Cambridge IGCSE English is taught alongside other Cambridge IGCSE subjects in English. In bilingual settings, English is the most commonly selected Cambridge IGCSE subject, as it helps boost English overall proficiency, and thus enables students to pass their compulsory national curriculum English exams more successfully. Other Cambridge IGCSE subjects commonly chosen by schools in the bilingual framework are Sciences, Business, History, Geography, Global Perspectives, and IT.

Cambridge International has run a research study on the English language requirements posed by non-language IGCSE courses, specifically History, Geography, and Biology. The study found that the syllabuses, teaching materials and assessment formats and rubrics require language proficiency on CEFR level B2 or higher, in order to complete the courses successfully.

Cambridge IGCSE English can therefore be trusted not only as a proficiency assessment in itself, but also because it reflects competences related to English both as a language subject and as a medium of instruction, at level B2 and above.
Cambridge IGCSE helps students develop deep subject knowledge and skills for the future.

The summative assessment approach of Cambridge IGCSE can be traced back to the fact that its UK counterpart, the GCSE, was designed as a school-leaving exam at 16. Although the school-leaving age in the UK is no longer 16, the GCSE has retained its summative character and is a recognised level 2 qualification by employers and universities in the UK.

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language used to be offered for many years in the UK to non-British pupils in school year 10 to prepare them for the domestic GCSE in year 11. Empirical observation found that IGCSE English as a Second Language equipped the students not just with the necessary language skills, but also built their overall confidence using English and passing their GCSE.

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language also used to be authorised as a Secure English Language Test for visa purposes, on a par, for example, with IELTS.
Recognition and acceptance by universities – various models

Cambridge IGCSE English, whether First or Second Language, is recognised as proof of English proficiency by most UK universities, and widely accepted in Europe and worldwide. Below you can find various ways in which universities choose to accept this qualification:

- IGCSE English is accepted by most universities in the UK and many others worldwide as proof of English language proficiency.
- Sometimes, universities accept IGCSE English as a Second Language by evaluating it together with other factors, such as:
  - How many/what other IGCSE subjects were completed.
  - Number of classes per week taught in English.
  - Evidence of other English-taught courses after the IGCSE stage.
- Requirement exemption: universities may exempt students from the requirement of producing an English language certificate if:
  - they have completed an all-English curriculum in the final 2 school years;
  - if they are an English first-language speaker.

Contact the Recognitions team: recognitions@cambridgeinternational.org to advise the best policy for accepting Cambridge IGCSE English as proof of English proficiency in the admission process to your university’s degree programmes.

Learn more! about our Cambridge IGCSE English suite at: www.cambridgeinternational.org/english
Learn more

Getting in touch with us is easy.

Email info@cambridgeinternational.org
Call +44 1223 553554
Visit www.cambridgeinternational.org

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Cambridge Assessment International Education
The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge, CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
t: +44 1223 553554
www.cambridgeinternational.org

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