

# SYLLABUS

**Cambridge International AS Level  
General Paper**

**8004**

For examination in June and November 2017 and 2018

### Changes to syllabus for 2017 and 2018

This syllabus has been updated, but there are no significant changes.

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

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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Why choose Cambridge?

Cambridge International Examinations is part of the University of Cambridge. We prepare school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning. Our international qualifications are recognised by the world's best universities and employers, giving students a wide range of options in their education and career. As a not-for-profit organisation, we devote our resources to delivering high-quality educational programmes that can unlock learners' potential.

Our programmes set the global standard for international education. They are created by subject experts, are rooted in academic rigour, and provide a strong platform for progression. Over 10 000 schools in 160 countries work with us to prepare nearly a million learners for their future with an international education from Cambridge.

### Cambridge learners

Cambridge programmes and qualifications develop not only subject knowledge but also skills. We encourage Cambridge learners to be:

- **confident** in working with information and ideas – their own and those of others
- **responsible** for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others
- **reflective** as learners, developing their ability to learn
- **innovative** and equipped for new and future challenges
- **engaged** intellectually and socially, ready to make a difference.

### Recognition

Cambridge International AS and A Levels are recognised around the world by schools, universities and employers. The qualifications are accepted as proof of academic ability for entry to universities worldwide, although some courses do require specific subjects.

Cambridge AS and A Levels are accepted in all UK universities. University course credit and advanced standing is often available for Cambridge International AS and A Levels in countries such as the USA and Canada.

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

## 1.2 Why choose Cambridge International AS and A Level?

Cambridge International AS and A Levels are international in outlook, but retain a local relevance. The syllabuses provide opportunities for contextualised learning and the content has been created to suit a wide variety of schools, avoid cultural bias and develop essential lifelong skills, including creative thinking and problem-solving.

Our aim is to balance knowledge, understanding and skills in our programmes and qualifications to enable students to become effective learners and to provide a solid foundation for their continuing educational journey. Cambridge International AS and A Levels give learners building blocks for an individualised curriculum that develops their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Schools can offer almost any combination of 60 subjects and learners can specialise or study a range of subjects, ensuring a breadth of knowledge. Giving learners the power to choose helps motivate them throughout their studies.

Cambridge International A Levels typically take two years to complete and offer a flexible course of study that gives learners the freedom to select subjects that are right for them.

Cambridge International AS Levels often represent the first half of an A Level course but may also be taken as a freestanding qualification. The content and difficulty of a Cambridge International AS Level examination is equivalent to the first half of a corresponding Cambridge International A Level.

Through our professional development courses and our support materials for Cambridge International AS and A Levels, we provide the tools to enable teachers to prepare learners to the best of their ability and work with us in the pursuit of excellence in education.

Cambridge International AS and A Levels have a proven reputation for preparing learners well for university, employment and life. They help develop the in-depth subject knowledge and understanding which are so important to universities and employers.

Learners studying Cambridge International AS and A Levels have opportunities to:

- acquire an in-depth subject knowledge
- develop independent thinking skills
- apply knowledge and understanding to new as well as familiar situations
- handle and evaluate different types of information sources
- think logically and present ordered and coherent arguments
- make judgements, recommendations and decisions
- present reasoned explanations, understand implications and communicate them clearly and logically
- work and communicate in English.

### Guided learning hours

Cambridge International A Level syllabuses are designed on the assumption that learners have about 360 guided learning hours per subject over the duration of the course. Cambridge International AS Level syllabuses are designed on the assumption that learners have about 180 guided learning hours per subject over the duration of the course. This is for guidance only and the number of hours required to gain the qualification may vary according to local curricular practice and the learners' prior experience of the subject.

## 1.3 Why choose Cambridge International AS Level General Paper?

Cambridge International AS Level General Paper syllabus is multi-disciplinary, with subject matter drawn from across the curriculum. In broad terms, the syllabus encourages students to:

- be more aware of the breadth and complexity of the contemporary world.
- develop thinking and reasoning skills, and maturity of thought.
- achieve an understanding of (and ability in) the English language which enables them to express arguments, ideas and opinions in a reflective and academic manner.

Although an awareness of the wider implications of particular issues will improve the quality of students' learning, the Cambridge International AS Level General Paper is not a test of general knowledge.

### Prior learning

We recommend that candidates who are beginning this course should have previously completed a Cambridge O Level or Cambridge IGCSE course in a broad range of subjects, or the equivalent.

### Progression

Cambridge International AS Level General Paper will help to provide a suitable foundation for study in higher education. Depending on local university entrance requirements, it may permit or assist progression directly to university courses in many subjects, especially in the arts/humanities and the social sciences. It is also suitable for candidates intending to pursue careers or planning further study or as part of a course of general education.

## 1.4 Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) Diploma

Cambridge AICE Diploma is the group award of the Cambridge International AS and A Level. It gives schools the opportunity to benefit from offering a broad and balanced curriculum by recognising the achievements of candidates who pass examinations in different curriculum groups.

Learn more about the Cambridge AICE Diploma at [www.cie.org.uk/aice](http://www.cie.org.uk/aice)

## 1.5 How can I find out more?

### If you are already a Cambridge school

You can make entries for this qualification through your usual channels. If you have any questions, please contact us at [info@cie.org.uk](mailto:info@cie.org.uk)

### If you are not yet a Cambridge school

Learn about the benefits of becoming a Cambridge school at [www.cie.org.uk/startcambridge](http://www.cie.org.uk/startcambridge). Email us at [info@cie.org.uk](mailto:info@cie.org.uk) to find out how your organisation can register to become a Cambridge school.

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## 2. Teacher support

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### 2.1 Support materials

We send Cambridge syllabuses, past question papers and examiner reports to cover the last examination series to all Cambridge schools.

You can also go to our public website at [www.cie.org.uk/alevel](http://www.cie.org.uk/alevel) to download current and future syllabuses together with specimen papers or past question papers and examiner reports from one series.

For teachers at registered Cambridge schools a range of additional support materials for specific syllabuses is available from Teacher Support, our secure online support for Cambridge teachers. Go to <http://teachers.cie.org.uk> (username and password required).

### 2.2 Endorsed resources

We work with publishers providing a range of resources for our syllabuses including print and digital materials. Resources endorsed by Cambridge go through a detailed quality assurance process to ensure they provide a high level of support for teachers and learners.

We have resource lists which can be filtered to show all resources, or just those which are endorsed by Cambridge. The resource lists include further suggestions for resources to support teaching.

### 2.3 Training

We offer a range of support activities for teachers to ensure they have the relevant knowledge and skills to deliver our qualifications. See [www.cie.org.uk/events](http://www.cie.org.uk/events) for further information.

### 3. Assessment at a glance

#### Written examination

**2 hours**

The exam paper is divided into three sections, each section comprising four questions. See section 5.1 for possible topic areas.

Candidates must choose **two** questions, **each** from a **different** section.

Each essay should be about 500 to 600 words in length.

Per question, up to 30 marks are awarded for content and up to 20 marks for English.

Each question is weighted at 50% of the final mark.

Candidates are tested on their understanding and use of English, and the extent to which they are able to think maturely as appropriate for this level. They are not primarily tested on their general knowledge.

The examination time takes into account the need for candidates to study the questions and think before starting to write.

#### Availability

This syllabus is examined in the June and November examination series.

This syllabus is available to private candidates.

Detailed timetables are available from **[www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers](http://www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers)**

This syllabus is not available to Centres in Mauritius.

Centres in the UK that receive government funding are advised to consult the Cambridge website **[www.cie.org.uk](http://www.cie.org.uk)** for the latest information before beginning to teach this syllabus.

#### Combining this with other syllabuses

Candidates can combine this syllabus in an examination series with any other Cambridge syllabus, except:

- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

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## 4. Syllabus aims and assessment objectives

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### 4.1 Syllabus aims

The aims of the Cambridge International AS Level General Paper are to:

- Promote the skills of rational thought, persuasion, analysis, interpretation and evaluation.
- Promote maturity of thought and clarity of expression.
- Encourage the broad exploration and appraisal of social, cultural, economic, environmental, political, philosophical, scientific and technological issues.
- Promote understanding and appreciation of individual, societal and cultural diversity.
- Encourage independent, critical reading.

### 4.2 Assessment objectives

In the Cambridge International AS Level General Paper syllabus, assessment objectives relate to the skills of:

- evaluation
- understanding
- analysis
- application
- communication
- knowledge.

In the assessment, candidates should therefore be able to demonstrate:

- The ability to identify, select and interpret, through reasoned consideration, material (including knowledge) appropriate to a specific task.
- The ability to apply knowledge, understanding and analysis in relation to a specific task (e.g. in drawing inferences, providing explanations, constructing and developing arguments, understanding the implications of a suggested course of action or conclusion, etc.).
- The ability to exercise evaluation and discrimination in assessing evidence, ideas and opinions in order to formulate a supported conclusion.
- The ability to communicate information, ideas and opinions in a clear, concise, logical and appropriate manner.
- Knowledge and understanding in relation to the topic areas identified in the syllabus.
- Knowledge of methods and techniques appropriate to a specific task.

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## 5. Description of components

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### 5.1 Topic areas and question focus

Topic areas are cross-curricular and comprehensive, and some may appear in more than one section. Teachers do not need to cover all the topic areas when teaching the course, as candidates should be able to draw upon knowledge and understanding gained when studying other subjects. The areas for consideration listed here are **suggestions only**. They are intended to help teachers devise and plan their own broad course.

#### Section 1: Historical, social, economic, political and philosophical topics

Possible areas for consideration might include:

- The role of history and war; terrorism.
- The role of the individual in society – the family, marriage, peer pressure, class.
- Cultural changes – youth and drug culture.
- Education and welfare.
- Sport, leisure, international competition.
- Wealth; changes in work practice.
- The importance and impact of tourism on a country – implications for the economy, employment, public transport, environmental concerns.
- The provision and politics of aid.
- The State and its institutions; development of State, democracy, post-imperialism, nationalism.
- Minority groups, pressure groups.
- Freedom of speech, action, thought.
- Judiciary.
- Matters of conscience, faith, tolerance, equality, opportunity.
- Corruption.

#### Section 2: Science, including its history, philosophy, general principles and applications; environmental issues; mathematical topics

Possible areas for consideration might include:

- Medical dilemmas and issues of research and ethics; concept of progress in science.
- Drug manufacture and provision.
- Diet, health education.
- Old and new industries.
- Spin-offs from space industry; weaponry.
- Information and communications technology; the internet.
- Environmental concerns; renewable energy resources; climate change.
- Migration; population dynamics.
- Feeding the global population; farming techniques for the twenty-first century.
- Public transport and travel.
- The uses and applications of mathematics in everyday life.

### Section 3: Literature and language, arts and crafts

Possible areas for consideration might include:

- Literature, biography, diary, science fiction.
- Language – heritage, tradition, dialect.
- The global media – tv, radio, satellite; influence and controls; effects on lifestyle, culture and habits; cultural dilution and diversification; advertising; role models.
- Censorship; privacy; the right to know; freedom of the press, etc. uses and abuses.
- Traditional arts and crafts; creativity; national heritage/preservation; effects of tourism.
- Architecture; painting; fashion; photography; sculpture; music; heritage.

Questions are general in nature, demanding discussion and evaluation. In awarding marks, examiners will assess how well candidates have:

- Used their specialised knowledge to answer questions on the broad aspects of school subjects.
- Discussed general topics which are not directly related to school subjects.
- Used the English language.

**NB** Questions are not set on every topic in any single examination.

## 5.2 Level descriptors for essay marking

### Use of English

- Level 1**
- Highly fluent.
  - Very effective use of expressions/idioms.
  - Excellent use of vocabulary.
  - Near faultless grammar.
  - Excellent sentence structure and organisation of paragraphs.
  - Very few slips/errors.
  - Excellent spelling/punctuation.
- Level 2**
- Fluent.
  - Effective use of expressions/idioms.
  - Good use of vocabulary.
  - Sound grammar.
  - Good sentence structure/well-organised paragraphs.
  - Few slips/errors.
  - Good spelling/punctuation.
- Level 3**
- Reasonably fluent/not difficult to follow.
  - Generally appropriate use of expressions/idioms.
  - Fair range and apt use of basic vocabulary.
  - Acceptable grammar.
  - Simple but adequate sentence structure/paragraphing.
  - Some slips/errors, but acceptable standard overall.
  - Reasonable spelling/punctuation.
- Level 4**
- Hesitant fluency/not easy to follow at times.
  - Some inappropriate expressions/idioms.
  - Limited range of vocabulary.
  - Faulty grammar.
  - Some flawed sentence structure/paragraphing.
  - Regular and frequent slips/errors.
  - Regular spelling/punctuation errors.
- Level 5**
- Little/(no) fluency/difficult (almost impossible) to follow.
  - (Very) poor use of expressions/idioms.
  - (Very) poor range of vocabulary.
  - (Very) poor grammar.
  - (Very) poor sentence structure/paragraphing.
  - Almost every line contains (many) slips/errors.
  - (Very) poor spelling/punctuation.

## Content

- Level 1**  
 Excellent focus: totally relevant and comprehensive coverage, perceptive, strongly analytical.  
 Coherent and engaging discussion displaying sensitivity, sophistication, awareness and maturity.  
 Thoughtful, enlightening illustration using local, national and international examples to support key points.  
 Very well structured.
- Level 2**  
 Totally (near totally) relevant and good coverage, but less analytical and perceptive than Level 1.  
 Arguments well developed and discussion logical, but always sustained.  
 (Very) good range of examples/illustration to support key points.  
 Effectively structured.
- Level 3  
UPPER**  
 Largely focused on the question and relevant; reasonable coverage; fairly analytical.  
 Major points adequately developed.  
 Reasonable range of examples/illustration to support key points.  
 Reasonably structured.
- Level 3  
LOWER**  
 Less focus; less analysis and its quality more patchy.  
 Points mentioned rather than adequately developed.  
 Some digression, but generally sticks to the question.  
 Does not always support major points with apt illustration.  
 Tendency to assert/generalise rather than argue/discuss in detail.  
 May lack focus.
- Level 4**  
 Limited focus and relevance (may be implicit/ tangential); little analysis.  
 Limited argument that may be unsubstantiated; restricted material/scope; ideas vague and undeveloped.  
 Limited examples/illustration to support anything.  
 An attempt at a structure.
- Level 5**  
 Little if any relevance; no analysis.  
 (Very) vague; (totally) inadequate content with little/no substance.  
 Very little/(no) appropriate examples/illustration.  
 Very little/(no) structure.

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## 6. Other information

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### Equality and inclusion

Cambridge International Examinations has taken great care in the preparation of this syllabus and assessment materials to avoid bias of any kind. To comply with the UK Equality Act (2010), Cambridge has designed this qualification with the aim of avoiding direct and indirect discrimination.

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

Candidates who are unable to access the assessment of any component may be eligible to receive an award based on the parts of the assessment they have taken.

Information on access arrangements is found in the *Cambridge Handbook* which can be downloaded from the website [www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers](http://www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers)

### Language

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

### Grading and reporting

Cambridge International A Level results are shown by one of the grades A\*, A, B, C, D or E, indicating the standard achieved, A\* being the highest and E the lowest. 'Ungraded' indicates that the candidate's performance fell short of the standard required for grade E. 'Ungraded' will be reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate. The letters Q (result pending), X (no results) and Y (to be issued) may also appear on the statement of results but not on the certificate.

Cambridge International AS Level results are shown by one of the grades a, b, c, d or e, indicating the standard achieved, 'a' being the highest and 'e' the lowest. 'Ungraded' indicates that the candidate's performance fell short of the standard required for grade 'e'. 'Ungraded' will be reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate. The letters Q (result pending), X (no results) and Y (to be issued) may also appear on the statement of results but not 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 these components was sufficient to merit the award of a Cambridge International AS Level grade.

For languages other than English, Cambridge also reports separate speaking endorsement grades (Distinction, Merit and Pass), for candidates who satisfy the conditions stated in the syllabus.

## Entry codes

To maintain the security of our examinations, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as 'administrative zones'. Where the component entry code has two digits, the first digit is the component number given in the syllabus. The second digit is the location code, specific to an administrative zone. Information about entry codes for your administrative zone can be found in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*.

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