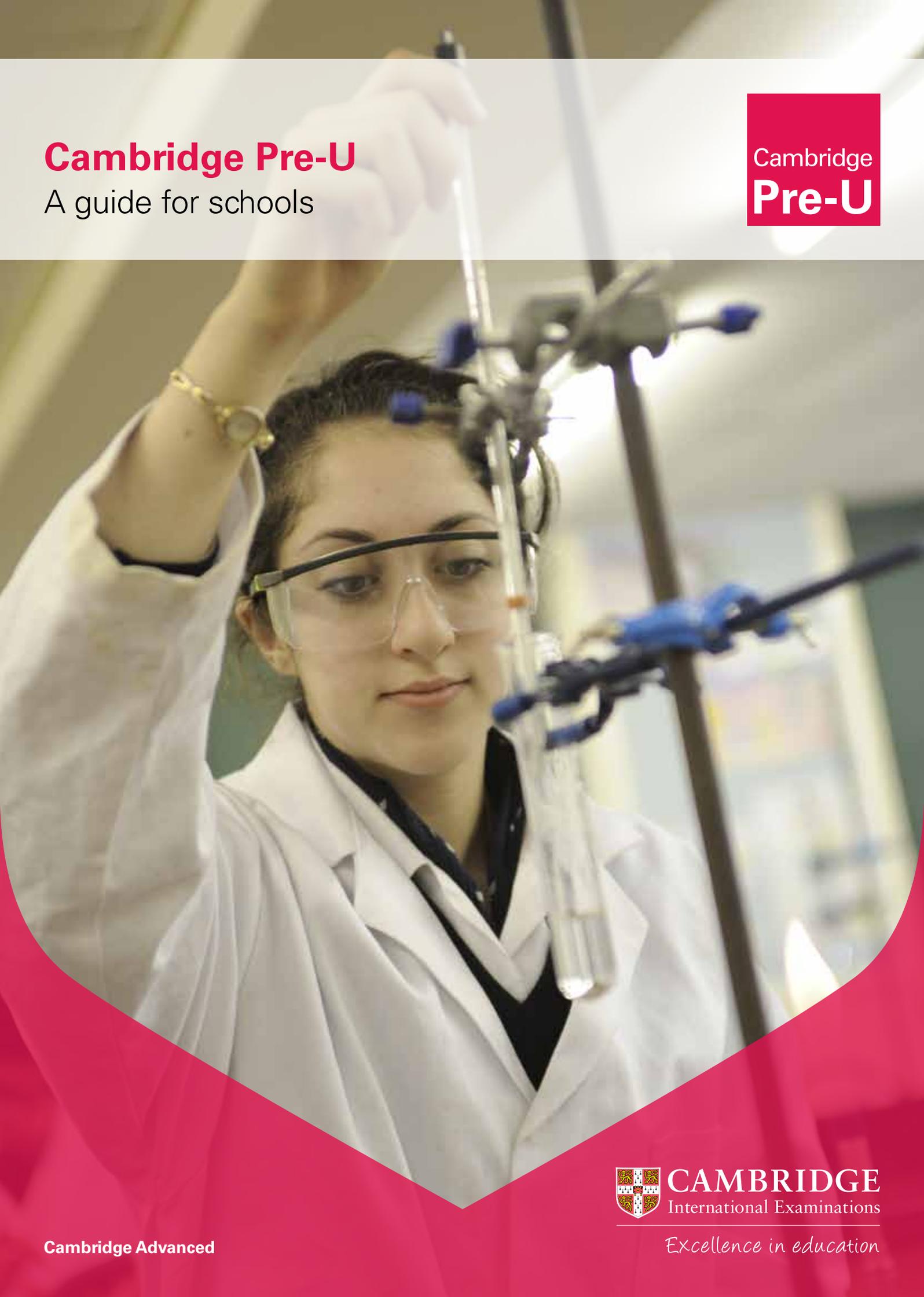


# Cambridge Pre-U

A guide for schools

Cambridge  
**Pre-U**



Cambridge Advanced



**CAMBRIDGE**  
International Examinations

*Excellence in education*

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## About us

Cambridge International Examinations is the world's largest provider of international education programmes and qualifications for 5 to 19 year olds. We are part of the University of Cambridge, one of the world's top universities and trusted for excellence in education. Our qualifications are recognised by the world's universities and employers.

We also offer Cambridge IGCSE®, the world's most popular international qualification for 14 to 16 year olds. Over 1200 schools in the UK are now teaching Cambridge IGCSE. Many of the features that schools like about Cambridge IGCSE are also features of Cambridge Pre-U. Schools tell us that students who have studied Cambridge IGCSE are well prepared for Cambridge Pre-U.

# About Cambridge Pre-U

Cambridge Pre-U equips students with the skills they need to make a success of their studies at university. It has been developed in collaboration with schools and in consultation with universities and subject associations. Cambridge Pre-U develops successful students, equipped to succeed at university, through a focus on independent thinking, study skills and in-depth subject knowledge.

Cambridge Pre-U has been available to schools since September 2008, and is an exciting and distinct alternative programme for 16 to 19 year olds.

## Strength in subject depth

Each subject syllabus has been written by a team of practising teachers, supported by university lecturers and other subject specialists. Drafts were the subject of extensive consultation. The development as a whole is based on the integrity of subject-based enquiry, as interpreted by successful educationalists.

## A linear programme

Cambridge Pre-U is a linear qualification. The assessment takes place at the end of the programme of study. It offers a framework that enables teachers to develop coherent courses, thereby taking a holistic approach to the curriculum. In that sense, it seeks to liberate learning from current constraints.

## A flexible approach

Cambridge Pre-U is a flexible qualification, designed to be suitable across the ability range. Cambridge Pre-U Certificates are offered in 26 individual Principal Subjects, and students can study any number of these, either alone or in combination with A Levels.

Cambridge Pre-U is also offered as a full Diploma. This is rooted in subject specialisation, but through its core components develops the skills necessary to deal with the complex, connected and rapidly changing world in which students live, study and work. To qualify for the Diploma students must pass any three Principal Subjects and the core components, Global Perspectives and Research. Up to two A Levels can be substituted for Principal Subjects.

For more detailed information on the Certificates and Diploma, see page 6.

## Promoting shared educational values

Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses have been designed to:

- inspire, challenge and reward students
- promote in teachers a passion for their subjects
- establish a sensible basis for assessing achievement

Schools have recognised that their students benefit greatly from this qualification. Also, many schools recognise that the values of Cambridge Pre-U – not least the stress on a coherent curriculum and on independent thinking and self-reliance – dovetail with their own expressed ethos.

Cambridge Pre-U promotes the individualised learning agenda, by allowing schools and students to plot their own courses through the qualification.

We have designed Cambridge Pre-U to be international in outlook and inclusive in its appeal, making it accessible to all.

Cambridge Pre-U:

- accredited by Ofqual
- rewarding UCAS tariff
- recognised by UK universities
- recognised by a range of US universities including all Ivy League
- 26 Principal Subjects, each available separately
- a Global Perspectives seminar course and an extended Research Report
- full Diploma and Short Course options
- funded in state-maintained schools
- free INSET

“ Cambridge Pre-U is very liberating for teachers – the two years and the scope of the syllabuses have given teachers back an opportunity to shape students’ learning to suit their strengths and weaknesses. ”

Dr James Webster, Director of Studies, Winchester College



# The aims of Cambridge Pre-U

## Common aims of Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects

- To support the development of engaged, innovative, open and independent-minded individuals.
- To retain the integrity of subject specialisms which are efficiently, effectively and reliably assessed, graded and reported to meet the needs of universities.
- To promote deep understanding with rigour appropriate to progression to higher education.
- To recognise a wide range of individual talents, interests and abilities and encourage thinking dispositions and attitudes which prepare students for university.
- To develop confident learners through the acquisition of specific skills and attributes, in particular the skills of problem solving, creativity, critical thinking, team working and effective communication.
- To help young people to understand a range of different cultures and ideas relevant to the modern world and encourage them to respond responsibly to the opportunity for international mobility.

## The aims of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

The full Cambridge Pre-U Diploma shares these common aims. The inclusion of Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives and Research (GPR) also adds value in terms of coherence, depth and breadth, and prepares students for life in a rapidly changing and increasingly interconnected world, through:

- providing a framework for subject specialisation
- allowing students choice to tailor programmes to meet their individual needs
- permitting further depth through the Research Report
- encouraging additional breadth through the Global Perspectives course
- promoting a global outlook and cross-cultural awareness.

“ We welcome applications from students who are studying towards the full Cambridge Pre-U Diploma or certain Principal Subjects within the qualification alongside A Levels. ”

University of Cambridge, UK



# Cambridge Pre-U qualifications

“ Having two years to cultivate skills and understanding...more than compensates for the leap from year 11 work. ”

Jill Milner, Head Teacher,  
Walthamstow Hall, UK

Cambridge Pre-U is offered in two forms: Certificate and Diploma.

## Cambridge Pre-U Certificate

These are free-standing qualifications, available for individual subjects, including Global Perspectives and Research (GPR).

Syllabuses for the Principal Subject Certificate (a two-year course) have been developed in 26 subjects. Each subject is certificated separately.

A separate one-year Short Course Certificate is available in some subjects. Short Courses allow students to broaden their programmes beyond their major subject specialisms.

## Characteristics of Principal Subjects

**Size:** The amount of teaching and learning time available for a Principal Subject exceeds that for an A Level because teaching time is not interrupted by modular examinations. Students can delve more deeply into the subject.

**Stretch:** There is a grade above the A\* at A Level, making it possible for the most able students to excel. Other pass grades are available for the full range of students who currently pass A Level.

**Structure:** Cambridge Pre-U is a linear qualification. Without units or modular examinations, assessment, teaching and learning can be more progressive and coherent.

## Delivery options

Schools have found that there are different ways of accommodating Cambridge Pre-U within their sixth form programmes. Some schools are adopting Cambridge Pre-U across the board, for all students in all subjects. Others are moving to Cambridge Pre-U in a particular group of subjects, at first, as part of a 'mixed portfolio'. Some of these schools are introducing Cambridge Pre-U GPR as the vehicle for curriculum extension across the cohort. Thus, all students can gain a separate qualification, while some become eligible for the full Diploma.



## Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

Full award for candidates gaining five components – comprising three Principal Subjects and the two core components. Up to two A Levels can be substituted for Principal Subjects.

## Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects

Twenty-six Principal Subjects are available, certificated separately, assessed at the end of a two-year programme of study. Short Courses are available in some subjects.

## Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives and Research (GPR)

Global Perspectives and Research together constitute the compulsory core of the Diploma, but they can be taken as a separate qualification (see page 10).

## Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

Students qualify for the full Diploma with passes in:

- three Principal Subjects\* (any combination allowed)
- Global Perspectives
- Research Report

*\*There is no limit on the number of Principal Subjects a student may take. They simply need to pass in three to be eligible for the Diploma. All subjects are reported separately, so students receive credit for the full extent of their academic programmes.*

Universities welcome the Diploma programme's depth, breadth and 'volume of demand', which they view as appropriate for admission to highly selective institutions and courses.

There is an unrestricted choice of subject combination, so a student can build up the most appropriate programme, individually tailored to suit his or her experience, enthusiasm and expertise.

A student who has achieved a broad range of qualifications at GCSE or Cambridge IGCSE has earned the right to specialise, and may, if he or she wishes, choose to focus on, say, sciences, languages, or a broader portfolio of subjects.

The Cambridge Pre-U Diploma is flexible and reports achievement at a key point on a student's individual learning trajectory. We also credit other qualifications within the Diploma, where it is possible to establish a clear equivalence. A student may substitute up to two qualifications, e.g. A Levels, for two of the three Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects, within the Diploma.

Within the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma structure, two common compulsory core components add value to a candidate's programme:

**Global Perspectives** guarantees breadth for students in the Diploma course and provides an extended project. It is a seminar-based opportunity to explore from multiple

viewpoints a range of key challenges facing every young person, wherever they live or work.

The **Research Report** enriches the educational experience by giving the student the chance to investigate a chosen topic in detail and submit a single piece of extended work.

The award of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma constitutes evidence that a student has:

- specialised in at least three subjects
- shown the ability to research and communicate at depth in a chosen subject
- shown skills of critical thinking, reflection and empathy with regard to key contemporary issues and debates in an increasingly interconnected world.



# Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects

“Cambridge Pre-U courses generate and sustain enthusiasm among students and staff alike. We get a panoramic vision and there is real variety and flexibility in how teachers can approach the challenges involved.”

Matthew Hayward, Head of History, Leweston School, UK

Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects are designed to give students the skills they need to make a success of their subsequent studies at university. Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects provide a solid grounding in each specialist subject at an appropriate level.

Cambridge Pre-U is changing the way subjects are taught at secondary school. Designed by teachers and subject experts, the two-year linear courses:

- retain the integrity of subject specialisms, which can then be efficiently, effectively and reliably assessed, graded and reported to meet the needs of universities
- encourage the acquisition of specific skills and abilities, including problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, team working and effective communication
- encourage ‘deep understanding’ in learning – where that deep understanding is likely to involve higher order cognitive abilities.

**Size:** Each Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject has 380 guided learning hours.

**Stretch:** There is one grade above A Level Grade A\*. There is also stretch in content, questions and grading. There is greater scope for the most able students to stretch themselves.

**Structure:** All Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses are linear; there are no unit retakes. Everything is assessed at full Cambridge Pre-U standard.

## Advantages of linearity

A two-year linear course at this level offers coherence in assessment. In lieu of formal assessment at the end of a short module, assessment of a Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject comes at the end of the two-year course of study, and draws from material across the whole programme – in this way, examination questions may link together topics from different parts of the syllabus. However, the assessment at the end of each Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject course draws from across the whole programme.

## Cambridge Pre-U subjects

### English

Literature in English

### Humanities

Classical Heritage

Geography

Global Perspectives\*

History

Philosophy and Theology

### Languages

Classical Greek

French\*

German\*

Italian\*

Latin

Mandarin Chinese\*

Russian\*

Spanish\*

### Mathematics

Mathematics\*

Further Mathematics\*

### Science

Biology

Chemistry

Physics

### Social Sciences

Business and Management

Comparative Government and Politics

Economics

Psychology

### The Arts

Art and Design

Art History

Drama and Theatre

Music

\*Certified Short Courses are also available in these subjects

The linear structure of Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects also allows increased teaching and study time, as teachers and students can continue to explore the course content until the end of Year 12, without the interruption of final examinations.

A two-year programme allows the freedom to build individual teaching and learning programmes paced according to the needs of students. Cambridge Pre-U teachers also have far more control over the content of their courses which are designed to allow far more autonomy for teachers to pursue their own academic interests.

Above all, with a linear course, there is freedom from a 'retake culture' which interrupts real learning.

### Benefits for students

Cambridge Pre-U students enjoy a much richer educational experience. Immersion in a two-year, coherent course offers students many benefits, including:

- time for wider reading
- the opportunity to develop and pursue their own interests
- the development of independent and self-directed learning skills.

Linearity doesn't only inspire the most able. Students can work at their own pace, and more time is available to support students of all abilities.

### Cambridge Pre-U Short Courses

A number of Cambridge Pre-U subjects are available as certified Short Courses – one-year courses, designed to follow Cambridge IGCSE or GCSE. They are for students who want to continue with a subject in the first year of sixth form, and offer an advanced qualification which they can use as part of their application to university.

Where a Short Course is available, it can also be used if a student decides to opt out of the Principal Course after one year of study but wishes to gain certification. However, a Cambridge Pre-U Short Course is separate from, and cannot contribute towards, a Principal Subject result.

Cambridge Pre-U Short Courses allow students to broaden their learning beyond their major subject specialisms and can be used to support their study of other subjects. For example, a Short Course in languages can encourage a move

away from 'classroom language' and help prepare students who wish to travel or study overseas. The Cambridge Pre-U Mathematics (Statistics with Pure Mathematics) Short Course supports students studying sciences, economics, geography and business.

Cambridge Pre-U Short Courses should be delivered through 180 hours of guided learning. For comparison, a Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject should be delivered through 380 hours of guided learning.



# Cambridge Pre-U: Global Perspectives and Research (GPR)

Beyond subject specialism, universities put great value on a range of study skills. A balanced curriculum at 16 to 19 seeks to complement subject knowledge and skills with opportunities to develop thinking and reasoning skills as well as research and communication skills.

Cambridge Pre-U GPR is a specially designed stand-alone programme that may be taken and certificated on its own alongside A Levels and other 16 to 19 qualifications, or taken to complete the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma (see page 7 for further information). Global Perspectives and Research is an excellent alternative to Critical Thinking, or an Extended Project. One of its principal attractions is that it covers the key elements of both, within a coherent framework that allows progression.

Cambridge Pre-U GPR consists of two articulated components and focuses on the development of:

- critical thinking
- independent study and extended writing
- reflection on learning
- presentation skills
- transdisciplinary study
- a global outlook.

## The structure of teaching

Cambridge Pre-U GPR is generally taught in two successive one-year courses:

In their first year of study, learners study Global Perspectives. They choose four or more global topics and develop their skills in research, analysis, critical thinking and communication through their study. Generally, students take the assessment for the Global Perspectives components at the end of the first year of study.

In the second year, students choose a specialist area and prepare an extended project – the Research Report. This allows them to use the skills introduced and developed during their earlier study as a foundation for a deeper investigation. This could involve an interdisciplinary enquiry or taking a new departure into a non-school subject, perhaps one that the learner plans to study at university. Generally, the assessment is taken at the end of the second year of study.

## Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives Short Course

The Cambridge Pre-U Short Course allows students to broaden their learning beyond their major subject specialisms. They are one-year courses (180 learning hours) designed to follow GCSE or Cambridge IGCSE.

The Cambridge Pre-U Short Course in Global Perspectives has been designed to cover the Global Perspectives components of Cambridge Pre-U GPR. Students take the Written Paper, Essay and Presentation components in one examination session.





## Global Perspectives

Today's students live in a rapidly changing world, confronted by competing ideas, arguments and information. They need to be able to deal with information and ideas critically and constructively if they are to make a successful transition to study in higher education.

Global Perspectives encourages students' ability to follow and deconstruct arguments and assertions, to separate fact from

opinion, and to assess and evaluate the truth of claims. Related skills involve knowing where to look for information, how to construct arguments, and how to assemble and handle evidence.

The need to be able to deal with information and ideas critically and constructively transcends academic subjects, yet is fundamental to developing successful students. Global Perspectives prioritises these

skills, but recognises that they cannot be taught in a vacuum. Students need to develop them in an authentic environment of real-world challenges and debates.

Global Perspectives takes key themes of global relevance and encourages students to explore them in an open, critical, disciplined way. Students can bring their own subject specialisms to bear on issues of wider concern.

### Aims of Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives

- Promote a critical, questioning approach to the 'taken for granted'.
- Develop and promote disciplined and scholarly research methods.
- Cultivate an interdisciplinary perspective.
- Develop an understanding of some of the key global problems and opportunities that will face students as young adults, wherever they live and work.
- Foster awareness and understanding of, and respect for, the diversity of perspectives on particular global issues.
- Encourage an independent outlook and self-reflection through scrutiny of assumptions.

“ One of the most encouraging aspects of Cambridge Pre-U GPR was the obvious and steadily increasing confidence of many students. The structure of the course meant that vital skills and techniques were developed in the first year and subsequently demonstrated in the Research Report. Students are now better prepared for Higher Education. ”

Steve Wright, Teacher, Ford Pitt Grammar School, UK

### The course

Schools build their own programme by choosing at least four topics from different thematic groups. The topics provide meaningful and stimulating contexts through which students can develop the skills required to participate as active, global citizens and prepare them for their Research Report and further study.

Theme	Topic
<b>Ethics</b>	Genetic engineering Medical ethics and priorities Standards of living vs quality of life Ethical foreign policies Religious–secular divide
<b>Economics</b>	Globalisation of economic activity Migration and work Impact of the internet Global trade Ethics and economics of food Economic role of women
<b>Environment</b>	Science and politics of climate change Industry and pollution Biodiversity Challenge of genetic modification Urbanisation and the countryside
<b>Technology</b>	Alternatives to oil Artificial intelligence Futures Technology and intelligent buildings Online and interactive communities
<b>Politics and Culture</b>	China as an emerging superpower Endangered cultures International law Supra-national organisations (UN, etc.) New nationalisms Integration and multiculturalism





“ Having studied Cambridge Pre-U, I had an extra edge in getting to grips with the level of independent study required of us on my law course. The Cambridge Pre-U course’s rigour meant that I have entered university with in-depth study skills, intellectual curiosity, and self-directed learning skills that are proving invaluable to my success here. ”

Former Cambridge Pre-U student now at university

### Assessing Global Perspectives

The Global Perspectives course is assessed in three ways:

1. An examination, testing skills of critical analysis of arguments and issues.
2. Submission of a piece of work from the student's e-portfolio, covering reconstruction of the context of an argument or issue (comparing, evaluating and reflecting on different perspectives).
3. A presentation, undertaken and submitted within a defined window near the end of the course, and based on pre-released stimulus material.

Work is assessed mainly in terms of the skills shown, including the critical analysis of arguments, interpretation and evaluation, presentation and communication. Work is assessed in terms of dispositions – judgement, reason, reflection and empathy.



“The students have flourished with Cambridge Pre-U GPR. It's made them more mature and I think it is really going to set them up for university.”

Claire Oxley-Hughes, Teacher, Norton Hill School, UK

## Research Report

Universities place a great value on the ability to engage in independent research because it demonstrates the direct skills of collecting, handling and evaluating information of various types. Additionally, wider skills are developed including planning, time-management, prioritisation, self-motivation, sustained concentration and communication.

The Research Report focuses on the ability to design, plan and manage an extended research project, allowing students to develop skills in:

- collecting and analysing information
- evaluating and making reasoned judgements
- communicating findings and conclusions.

Students submit a single report of between 4500 and 5000 words. It is a single piece of extended writing in the form of a dissertation or a report based on an investigation or field study.



## University support for Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives and Research

The inclusion of a core Global Perspectives component in the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma met with considerable support from universities.

The University of Cambridge welcomes it as a means of developing coherent breadth. University College London considers it to be a 'welcome and relevant inclusion' in the Diploma. Bristol University identifies two of the key aims of the component: "This should encourage students to be more aware of the international context, and will also allow them to hone their research skills."

It is also valued by US universities. The Dean of Undergraduate Admissions from Duke University said: "One of the advantages of Cambridge Pre-U GPR is the degree to which it addresses not just multiple subjects, but the relationships between subjects. It has a practical element to it, a global element to it, a writing-intensive element to it, a critical element. So what GPR represents is a synthesis and an analytical tool that I know professors like to see and they like to see their students well prepared in those areas. We are very happy with it."

Students enter higher education not just with study skills, but also with enhanced knowledge of the subject and a more general self-discipline in independent self-directed study. This is reflected in the tariff awarded by UCAS for Cambridge Pre-U GPR, which is higher than A Level (see page 18 for more details).

# Grading and reporting achievement

The Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject syllabuses are examined at the end of the two-year programme of study. The Short Courses are examined at the end of the one-year programme of study. (A Short Course outcome cannot, however, contribute to a Principal Subject result.) In this sense, the distinctive feature of Cambridge Pre-U is linearity.

Principal Subjects and Short Courses are reported on a nine-grade scale, reflecting three broad bands of achievement: Distinction 1, 2, 3; Merit 1, 2, 3; and Pass 1, 2, 3. The A Level A grade is divided into three Distinction grades, one of which reports achievement above the A\* grade at A Level. The intention is to differentiate more finely, as well as extending reporting at the top end.

However, the grading scale remains accessible to the full range of ability currently achieving passes at A Level. Cambridge Pre-U is accessible to all students who aspire to academic courses in higher education.

Cambridge Pre-U exists in a clear relationship with A Level: the boundary between the lowest Distinction grade (D3) and the highest Merit grade (M1) is aligned to the standard of work at the A Level grade A/B boundary. The boundary between the lowest Pass grade (P3) and Ungraded is aligned to the standard of work at the A Level E/U boundary.

The full Cambridge Pre-U Diploma is given a separate score, derived by weighting and adding up the scores for each component, as in the table below.

Each grade achieved contributes points to the Pre-U Diploma score as indicated in the table below. The maximum Cambridge Pre-U Diploma score is 96; the minimum Diploma score is 32.

## Monitoring progress and school-based assessment

The removal of high-stakes subsidiary exams at the end of Year 12 allows schools to reinstate interim, formative assessment, providing evidence

for teachers to make meaningful statements of achievement to support university applications. There is a role for school-based assessment, customised to reflect the school's own programme of study, but standardised in terms of assessment criteria, marking and reporting.

We offer support to maximise the effectiveness of school-based assessment:

1. A complete set of papers and mark schemes for interim assessment, building into a bank of questions for use by schools.
2. Exemplification material, giving a range of answers to specimen questions exemplified at Pass, Merit and Distinction level; supported by a moderation service for schools submitting marked work.
3. INSET courses, giving teachers guidance on setting, marking and reporting on interim assessment. The focus is on giving teachers the confidence to apply the Cambridge Pre-U standard in their internal assessments.

## Grading Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects

Distinction	1
	2
	3
Merit	1
	2
	3
Pass	1
	2
	3

## Contribution of each component to the Diploma score

	Band	Principal Subject	GPR
Distinction	1	24	24
	2	22	22
	3	20	20
Merit	1	18	18
	2	16	16
	3	14	14
Pass	1	12	12
	2	10	10
	3	8	8

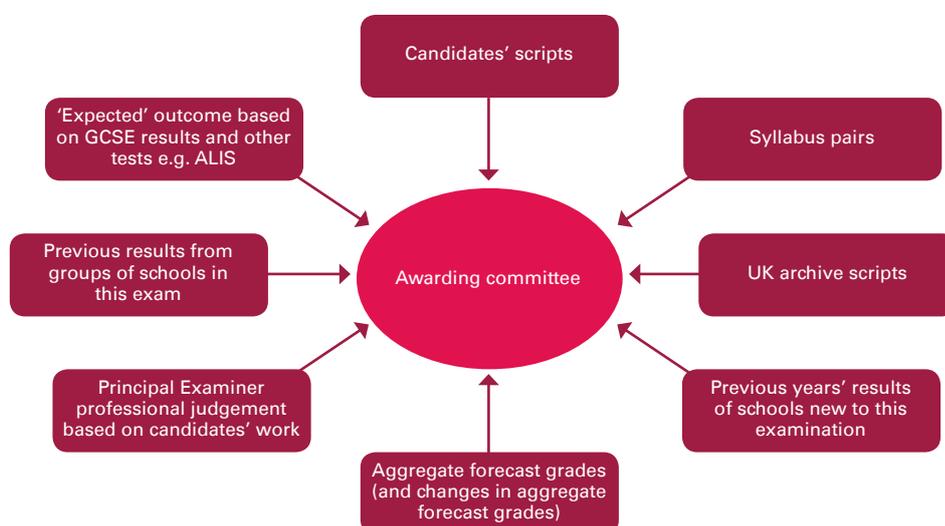
## Securing the Cambridge Pre-U standard

A great deal of work goes into ensuring the Cambridge Pre-U examination results are secure and reliable.

- All examiners are familiar with both Cambridge Pre-U and A Level standards of work, to ensure alignment between the two qualifications.
- All examiners are thoroughly trained and meet regularly to ensure they share a common understanding of the standard expected.
- No examiner marks the work of candidates who are known to him or her, and there are sufficient examiners available to provide a valid second or third opinion in case of results enquiries.
- The Principal Examiner verifies the marking of all other examiners to ensure consistent marking standards are being adhered to.
- Ofqual and UCAS provide independent affirmation that the design of Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses and assessments meets reliability requirements.
- Contextual information (such as forecast grades, Cambridge IGCSE or GCSE performances, previous results from groups of schools in the appropriate subject) is used to ensure examination results are reliable.



## Grading Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects



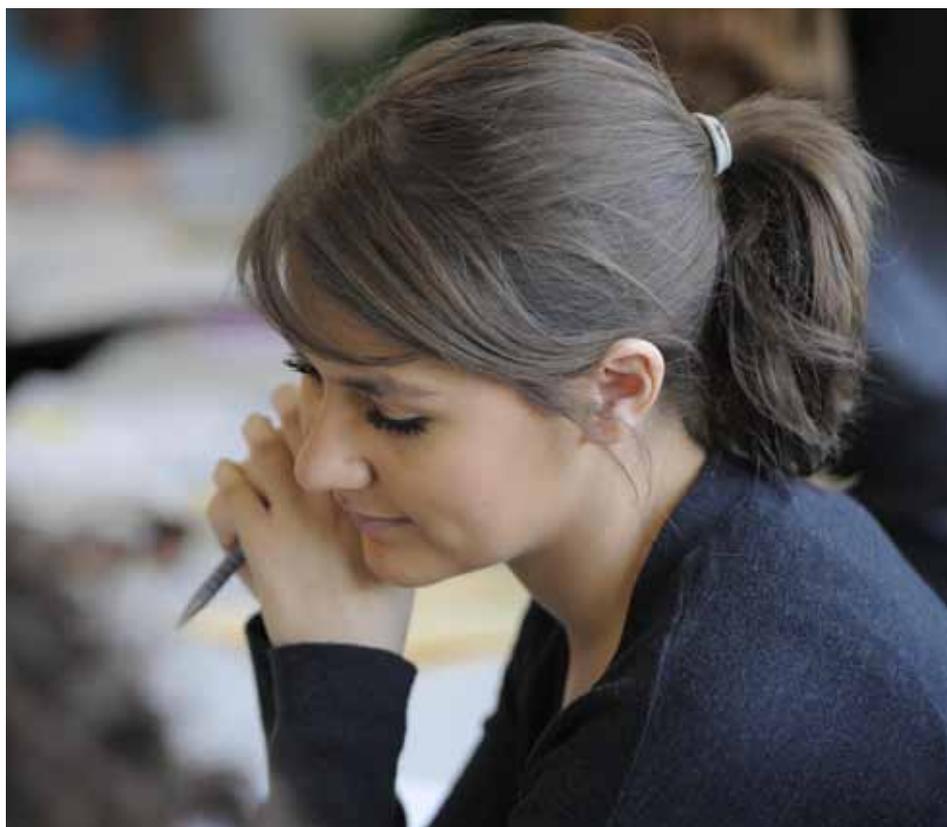
## Grading and reporting achievement continued

### Applying to university

Applicants to university do not have any module grades to declare on their UCAS forms. However, this does not disadvantage them in any way. Cambridge Pre-U applicants are able to describe the full programme of study. The school reference records the level of achievement in school-based assessments, and indeed in any subject that the applicant has dropped after a year.

Many university applicants (including international students and IB candidates) do not have results to declare from the end of Year 12.

The UCAS tariff for Cambridge Pre-U is a pleasing reflection of the university sector view that Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects, in terms of their content and structure, represent excellent preparation for undergraduate study.



### Cambridge Pre-U UCAS tariff points

Cambridge Pre-U band	Cambridge Pre-U grade	Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject UCAS tariff	Equivalent A Level UCAS tariff	Cambridge Pre-U GPR UCAS tariff	Short Course UCAS tariff
Distinction	1	tbc	n/a	tbc	tbc
	2	145	(A*) 140	140	tbc
	3	130	(A) 120	126	60
Merit	1	115		112	53
	2	101	(B) 100	98	46
	3	87	(C) 80	84	39
Pass	1	73		70	32
	2	59	(D) 60	56	26
	3	46	(E) 40	42	20

## Assessment objectives

Cambridge Pre-U assesses a candidate's knowledge, understanding and skills in the context of particular academic subjects. The Research Report assesses generic study skills at a high level, while also giving credit for advanced subject (and, where appropriate, interdisciplinary) knowledge and understanding.

The Global Perspectives component of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma assesses generic skills and dispositions relating to critical thought and enquiry.

Assessment objective	Detail	Subject syllabuses	Global Perspectives	Research Report
Knowledge	Subject-specific	•		•
	Cross-curricular		•	•
Understanding	Subject-specific	•		•
	Cross-curricular		•	•
Skills	Subject-specific	•		
	Cross-curricular	•	•	•
Dispositions	Interdisciplinary		•	•
	Self-reflective		•	•
	Critical thinking		•	•

“Yale University would be pleased to consider applications from students with Cambridge Pre-U examination results according to their merits, as is the case with A Level applicants. On the basis of high scores in the Principal Subjects, students may be placed in advanced courses in some subjects in the freshman year. Such students may be granted acceleration credits at the end of the freshman year if during the year they successfully complete appropriate advanced courses. These acceleration credits are in addition to course credits earned.”

Yale University



# The distinctiveness of Cambridge Pre-U

“The main difference that I have found in learning is that I get a lot more enthusiasm from my Cambridge Pre-U class and I think that is largely to do with the fact that they know that they don't have an exam just around the corner...they are more open to asking more explorative questions.”

James Stewart Cox, Teacher,  
Norton Hill School, UK

## A flexible Diploma qualification

Cambridge Pre-U offers the advantages of a diploma structure combined with flexibility in allowing individuals to tailor their own programme to suit their interests, enthusiasms and expertise. Cambridge Pre-U takes the individualised learning agenda seriously.

The Cambridge Pre-U Diploma is rooted in subject specialisation, but through its core components it develops the skills necessary to deal with the complex, connected and changing world in which students live, study and work. Cambridge Pre-U gives students the skills they need to succeed in higher education and helps to prepare them for life and work in the modern world.



## Syllabus characteristics

The aims of Cambridge Pre-U are achieved through syllabuses that share the following characteristics:

- **Coherence:** A joined-up approach to assessment, making possible a coherent approach to teaching (e.g. examination questions may link together topics from different parts of a syllabus).
- **Stretch:** Built into syllabus content (challenging concepts), assessment (open-ended questions) and reporting outcomes (finer differentiation at the top end).
- **Innovation:** New approaches to subjects, new topics, new methods of delivery and new forms of assessment.
- **Progression in learning:** Prior knowledge is assumed and built on in most subjects from Cambridge IGCSE or GCSE.

The vehicle to drive all four characteristics forward is:

- **Linearity:** Assessment of all components at the end of the course.

## Advantages of linearity

Linear assessment is not the end in itself, merely the means to an end, that of the liberation of learning and the development of successful students.

This is achieved through the many ways in which linear assessment interacts with other aspects of the process of teaching and learning. In particular, linearity brings:

- **Coherence in assessment:** Because the assessment takes place at the same time, the various papers do not have to be isolated from each other, but can function as a whole. Questions can make links between different parts of the syllabus content. A variety of forms of assessment can be used, ranging from multiple choice to open-ended essay questions.
- **Clarity in reporting achievement:** Since candidates cannot inflate their grades through retaking units several times, linear assessment offers greater authenticity and transparency in how a candidate achieved a particular grade.

- **Increased teaching and study time:** In the absence of multiple re-sits and the need to take units at the end of Year 12, a lot of time currently given over to revision and exam practice can be used more productively in teaching and learning. The summer term of Year 12 presents a more exciting prospect, giving greater space for exploration and innovation at a critical time in a student's intellectual development.
- **Freedom in building teaching and learning programmes:** Schools and teachers have the freedom to develop appropriate programmes, allowing them to teach topics in whichever order, and at whatever pace, they consider most appropriate for their particular students.

For these reasons, linearity permeates not just assessment, but teaching and learning as well – liberating teachers and students, and providing them with a vehicle for the development of high-level knowledge, understanding and skills to stand them in good stead at university and beyond.

Individual subject syllabuses are characterised by distinctive approaches to their subjects, distinctive curriculum content and distinctive forms of assessment.

“One of our big success stories has been those students who are not natural high fliers. They have enjoyed being able to study a subject and grow into it, without worrying about an imminent exam.”

Adrian Aylward, Headmaster, Leweston College, UK

## The distinctiveness of Cambridge Pre-U continued

### Distinctive approaches and topics

Within the common Cambridge Pre-U framework, each syllabus maintains and enhances its subject's academic integrity, student interest and contemporary relevance. Syllabus teams have seized the opportunity to introduce new and cutting-edge topics that underscore their subjects' relevance to today's students.

Cambridge Pre-U is changing the way subjects are being taught.

**Art and Design** students have time for gallery and artist workshop visits, and for drawing trips.

**Biology** includes modern applications of this science, e.g. uses of enzymes, cloning, stem cells, medical biotechnology and genetic engineering.

**Business and Management** students are much more commercially aware. Concepts are studied in more depth, and there is time to discuss UK

business in context. Corporate Social Responsibility is an important focus.

**Chemistry** offers a longer-term approach to the teaching of organic chemistry, with modern analytical techniques, less factual recall, and a more mathematical approach (reaction kinetics). The Chemistry syllabus contains some completely new topics, which have not been examined at this level before, including Van Arkel diagrams, functional group level, Carbon-13 NMR and antibonding molecular orbitals. They allow candidates to develop an important insight into chemical processes and should help to rationalise new and unfamiliar compounds and reactions.

**Comparative Government and Politics** offers opportunities to study contemporary political and ideological debates in comparative context, drawing examples and evidence from different countries of the world.

**Classical Heritage** offers the opportunity to study the ways in

which ancient Greece and Rome have been received, interpreted and appropriated by subsequent periods, including our own.

**Economics** introduces Game Theory, and offers opportunities for the detailed study of China in the global economy. Students have enjoyed the freedom to study the global effects of the credit crunch, without fear of 'falling behind' with the syllabus.

**Geography** is based on the premise that engagement with key geographical issues must be built on a sound theoretical understanding of both physical and human aspects of the subject.

**History** students are more engaged, reading more and more widely, and making the most of the additional time to explore links between topics.

**Literature in English** encourages students to become more intellectually curious and offers far more freedom to pursue special

“ The pupils doing Cambridge Pre-U Economics are really enjoying it. The linear nature of the course has allowed us to look at recent economic events without any fear of 'getting behind' with the syllabus. ”

Andrew Ireson, Teacher,  
Oundle School, UK



“The Cambridge Pre-U Literature in English course is very adaptable to all our literary enthusiasms and ambitions: pupils and teachers want to read far more during a course like this.”

Richard Pyatt, Teacher,  
Westminster School, UK

interests. Many more texts are covered from a broader range of literary genres, periods and movements.

#### **Mathematics and Further**

**Mathematics** encourage the understanding of how the different branches of the subject connect, and include mechanics and statistics.

**Modern Foreign Languages** have a dual focus on language and culture, and each aims to provide students with a balance of linguistic and critical skills. The transition from Cambridge IGCSE or GCSE is easier to manage and there is more time to expand working vocabulary and grammar. Cambridge Pre-U Modern Foreign Language courses build oral confidence through increased contact with authentic material.

**Physics** affirms mathematics reasoning yet also fosters historical and philosophical perspectives in science. The syllabus offers greater depth and breadth and reintroduces calculus, making Cambridge Pre-U Physics better preparation for the study of Engineering at university.

**Psychology** students retain the option to plan, design and execute their own practical experiment.



# Responses from Higher Education

## Development

Cambridge Pre-U has been designed to prepare students for academic study at university. We consulted with universities at every stage of development, and continue to work closely with teachers and specialists in higher education.

Higher education lecturers contributed towards the development of the various Cambridge Pre-U subject groups, and academics gave their responses to the draft syllabuses. We also held Cambridge Pre-U seminars at universities across the country. We continue to present at UCAS conferences to ensure that university admissions staff remain well informed about recent developments to the qualification.

From the beginning, individual universities and organisations such as the Russell Group (representing the more selective research-based universities) have given their support to Cambridge Pre-U.

“We’ve been very supported by a tremendous amount of the top universities and it’s made a difference to some of these students getting in. One of our students got into Birmingham University on the strength of her Cambridge Pre-U result, which we were really thrilled about.”

Andrew Corish, Assistant Head Teacher, Coloma Convent Girls’ School, UK

Following accreditation by Ofqual, the qualification was scrutinised by higher education expert groups in order to establish a UCAS tariff (see page 18).

## UK admissions

Universities told us that they have found it difficult to select the best students – those who are going to do well at university. They have welcomed the clarity of the Cambridge Pre-U grading system, especially the finer differentiation at the top end.

UCAS tariffs (see page 18) help universities to understand how one qualification compares to another. The table below illustrates how universities make offers to students taking a combination of A Level and Cambridge Pre-U.

In 2012, 2005 Cambridge Pre-U students applied for university places. This represents 58% increase on 2011. Cambridge Pre-U university applicants applied to 155 different universities through UCAS in 2012. Following their UCAS applications, 1615 Cambridge Pre-U students accepted places at university in 2012.

**Top five subjects chosen for study by students with at least one Cambridge Pre-U subject (who accepted a place at a UK university for entry in 2012).**

1. English Studies
2. History by Period
3. Economics
4. Pre-clinical Medicine
5. Law by Area

*Data source: UCAS*

The Russell Group welcomed Cambridge Pre-U’s academic rigour, retention of subject specialism and linear approach.

Typical offers from UK universities 2011–12			
<b>Oxford – Law</b>			
Standard A Level offer:	A	A	A
Mixed portfolio:	A	D3	D3
<b>York – Politics</b>			
Standard A Level offer:	A	A	B
Mixed portfolio:	A	A	M2
<b>Bristol – Mathematics</b>			
Standard A Level offer:	A	A	A
Mixed portfolio:	A	A	D3
<b>Exeter – Sociology</b>			
Standard A Level offer:	A	B	B
Mixed portfolio:	A	M2	M2
<b>Leicester – Chemistry</b>			
Standard A Level offer:	B	B	B
Mixed portfolio:	B	M2	M2
<b>Cambridge – English</b>			
Standard A Level offer:	A*	A	A
Mixed portfolio:	D2	A	A

UK universities tell us they are making offers as flexible as possible to include Cambridge Pre-U.

For example, for admission a student could obtain:

- grades ABB in three A Level subjects including Chemistry
- or grades BB at A Level in two subjects including Chemistry and a D3 in Cambridge Pre-U
- or grades AB at A Level in two subjects including Chemistry and an M2 in Cambridge Pre-U.

### US admissions

More students than ever are now looking to the USA for higher education opportunities, and so we have ensured that admissions directors at the major US universities are briefed on Cambridge Pre-U.

Our Higher Education Advisory Council (HEAC), consisting of admissions directors from US universities, meets twice a year to extend recognition. We also have consultants in the USA who work with admissions staff to ensure understanding of the qualification.

The Dean of Admissions from MIT in the USA, Stu Schmill, praised the educational values of Cambridge Pre-U, saying that they are similar to MIT values:

- deep understanding with depth and rigour
- problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, team-work, independent learning and effective communication
- promoting an international outlook and cross-cultural awareness.



“When our students go to university in September they are going to be well prepared for undergraduate life.”

*Louise Mitchell, Teacher, Simon Langton Grammar School, UK*

### Global admissions

Many universities around the world accept the Cambridge Pre-U as equivalent to other pre-university qualifications including universities in the USA, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands.

### Who accepts Cambridge Pre-U?

A full list of universities who have confirmed their recognition of Cambridge Pre-U can be found at <http://recognition.cie.org.uk> by searching on Country, Higher Education and Cambridge Pre-U.

# Further information



## Resources to support teachers of Cambridge Pre-U

We hold a variety of Cambridge Pre-U events throughout the year, including introductory seminars and INSET courses.

We also offer support in setting interim assessments through providing materials and mark schemes, so that schools can assess their students' progress and set predicted grades at the end of the first year of teaching.

Each syllabus is supported by a detailed teaching guide. Additional resources for extension and

enhancement will continue to be published on the dedicated Cambridge Pre-U website, aimed at not just those teaching and studying Cambridge Pre-U, but those wanting to go beyond A Level studies in particular subjects.

The Cambridge online subject communities are a unique feature, acting as a dynamic vehicle for supporting teachers in delivering Cambridge Pre-U, and providing them with a forum in which to develop and share best practice.

## Equity and access

Cambridge Pre-U is funded for teaching in maintained schools. It is included in the Register of Regulated Qualifications and has been added to section 96.

UK schools do not pay a Centre registration fee to offer Cambridge courses. In terms of other costs, Cambridge Pre-U is priced in line with A Levels.

## Cambridge Pre-U outside the UK

Schools outside the UK who wish to offer Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses need to gain approval ahead of first teaching and should contact us.

**Learn more!** Getting in touch with Cambridge is easy. Full details about Cambridge Pre-U are available on our website at [www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu](http://www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu) or email us at [info@cie.org.uk](mailto:info@cie.org.uk) or call **01223 553554** to learn more.



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