



## Cambridge IGCSE overview July 2011 Media Information

### What is Cambridge IGCSE?

The International GCSE was developed by University of Cambridge International Examinations more than 20 years ago. It was developed as an international alternative to the UK GCSE and is now the world's most popular international qualification for 14 – 16 year olds.

Cambridge IGCSE is taken by students in more than 144 countries and has been developed in partnership with schools and governments around the world.

Cambridge qualifications are renowned for their breadth of subject choice, academic rigour and the highest standards of assessment.

University of Cambridge International Examinations is recognised as an awarding body by OFQUAL, the regulator of examinations in England.

### Worldwide recognition

Cambridge IGCSE is accepted by UK universities as directly equivalent in standard to UK GCSE – one of the key qualifications needed to meet the entry requirements for some universities and many vocational higher education institutes.

Cambridge IGCSE is listed in UCAS publications which state: 'The qualification is equivalent in standard to the GCSE and may be considered acceptable at Grades A\*, A, B or C in lieu of GCSE on a subject for subject basis.'

While most universities will require passes at International A or AS Level for admission, five Cambridge IGCSE passes at grade C or higher are accepted for freshman level courses in some US universities.

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language at grade C or above is recognised by almost all UK universities - and many in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as evidence of adequate competence in the English language for university entrance purposes.

### IGCSE in the UK

More than 200 state schools and 300 independent schools in the UK currently teach Cambridge IGCSE.

Nineteen of the most popular Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses have received OFQUAL accreditation at Levels 1 and 2 on the National Qualifications Framework and are directly comparable in standard to the UK GCSE. The accreditation provided independent and official confirmation of equivalence both in the design and implementation of the qualification. The accredited Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses are listed on the UK National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) as Cambridge International Certificates. They are funded for use in state maintained schools under Section 96.

### Benchmarking standards

Cambridge's Principal Examiners have extensive experience of teaching UK GCSE students and of marking GCSE examinations. This ensures that the standards of Cambridge IGCSE, both in terms of the knowledge, skills and understanding to be assessed, and the rigour with which they are assessed, are in line with UK GCSE.

We carry out regular comparability studies. Experienced senior examiners, who are familiar with GCSE and Cambridge IGCSE, compare the standard of work submitted in examinations by candidates who gained the same grade in particular subjects in each of these qualifications.

### Worldwide growth

Growth in recent years has been impressive. Worldwide entries in 2010 - 11 were up by 17 per cent.

By working with schools and educators globally, we have created a balanced international curriculum that develops successful learners through a skills-based approach to teaching and assessing. Cambridge IGCSE was developed to help schools provide both international and local contexts for teaching and learning. Syllabuses use international examples and avoid terminology only used in one country.



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### Bilingual education programmes

There has been significant growth in the number of schools offering Cambridge programmes in a bilingual context.

In every instance, Cambridge works in partnership with schools and ministries of education to ensure that Cambridge programmes fit in with national requirements.

For us, 'bilingual education' refers to the practice of studying typical school subjects - like Geography and Maths - through a second or additional language. This understanding of bilingual education is linked to other educational concepts such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and dual-language education.

On a bilingual programme, students may study some subjects in their first language and other subjects in an additional language, or the same subject may be studied in two languages. Bilingual teaching methods can vary, but the Cambridge approach is very flexible.

Schools can easily adapt Cambridge IGCSE to suit their needs. This means that schools with bilingual programmes can integrate Cambridge programmes alongside their national curriculum.

### How does Cambridge IGCSE differ from UK GCSE?

The structure of Cambridge IGCSE is very different from GCSE:

- Courses are linear and assessment tends to take place at the end of the course.
- Content is not split up into modules and examination papers cover content from the whole course.
- The course is not interrupted by regular assessment points.
- The examination is not unitised, so students do not retake individual parts.

Cambridge IGCSE is internationally recognised as being equivalent to the UK GCSE but offers a far greater range of subjects.

There are also significant differences in content and assessment:

- Most Cambridge IGCSE subjects have an optional coursework element, whereas with many GCSE subjects it is compulsory.
- The content of Cambridge IGCSE subjects is tailored to the multi-cultural, multi-lingual student-body they serve, in a way the UK GCSE is not.
- Cambridge IGCSE subjects can be taken as individual subjects or as qualifications towards the International Certificate of Education, unlike UK GCSEs.

### Benefits for students

Cambridge IGCSE programmes provide an excellent foundation for further study. Apart from offering an internationally recognised qualification taught and assessed in the medium of English, Cambridge IGCSE rewards students for showing what they know, understand and can do. They help students develop a range of skills that have value throughout their lives:

- Ability to study, work and communicate with others
- Subject knowledge and understanding
- Flexibility and responsiveness to change
- Intellectual enquiry
- Ability to apply understanding to unfamiliar situations
- Research and critical thinking
- Communication and influencing skills
- Multi-cultural awareness
- Personal and social responsibility

#### Media Contact

**Geraldine Seymour**  
**International Communications Manager**  
Tel: +44 (0) 1223 553554  
Email: [seymour.g@cie.org.uk](mailto:seymour.g@cie.org.uk)