

Cambridge Pre-U

A guide for parents

Cambridge
Pre-U

Cambridge Advanced



UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

Excellence in education

“ Cambridge Pre-U has been designed to inspire, challenge and reward students. ”



Overview

About University of Cambridge International Examinations

University of Cambridge International Examinations is the world's largest provider of international education programmes and qualifications for 5–19 year olds.

Our qualifications are taken in over 160 countries and recognised by universities, education providers and employers across the world.

We are part of the Cambridge Assessment Group, a not-for-profit organisation and a department of the University of Cambridge. We share in their mission of providing excellence in education.

Our programmes and qualifications develop successful learners and support the economic performance of countries where we work at national level.

Learn more! Visit www.cie.org.uk

Cambridge Pre-U is an exciting new qualification for 16–19 year olds who want to go to university.

Cambridge Pre-U is innovative and stimulating. It has been developed by University of Cambridge International Examinations, the world's largest provider of international education programmes and qualifications for 5–19 year olds, and a department of the University of Cambridge.

Cambridge Pre-U prepares students with the knowledge, skills and in-depth understanding they need to make a success of their studies at university.

The qualification has been designed to inspire, challenge and reward students. It takes individual learning seriously and enables students to study a programme tailored to suit their own interests, enthusiasms and expertise.

Andrew Corish, Deputy Headteacher, Coloma Convent Girls' School, said: 'We believe our girls have high aspirations and want to succeed. We believe that Cambridge Pre-U offers a "gold standard" qualification in terms of stretch and challenge.'

What do students enjoy about Cambridge Pre-U?

- **Fewer exams:** Students prepare for exams at the end of the two-year course. This means they can spend more time exploring topics that really interest them in class, instead of preparing for modular exams; they have longer to mature and develop subject knowledge before they are examined; and exam stress is reduced.
- **Choice:** Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses give students freedom to choose some of their own topic areas, so they can develop their own interests and ideas.
- **Greater reward:** Subjects are explored over two years. Every syllabus has been carefully designed with schools to enthuse students and teachers alike.
- **Emphasis on skills:** Students develop lifelong skills such as enquiry, critical thinking and independent research. They are better prepared to reach their future goals.
- **Fair grading:** Cambridge Pre-U has a grade scale that represents students across the full ability range. The most able students can gain grades above A* grade at A Level.
- **Recognition:** Students gain confidence from knowing that universities helped to develop Cambridge Pre-U. UK universities accept and welcome Cambridge Pre-U applicants.

“ Teachers provide us with articles and after explaining their opinion on the topic, they will open the floor to discussions. Most of the time students tend to take the lead in the discussions. ”

Cambridge Pre-U GPR student

“ The benefits of the linear structure have been very clear with all our candidates – weaker ones have had time to grow and develop without undue pressure – and stronger ones have had more time for reading around the text – and wider reading in general. ”

A distinctive approach

Cambridge Pre-U is linear, unlike modular UK A Level. Students taking Cambridge Pre-U will prepare for one set of exams at the end of the two years, rather than for module exams throughout the two years.

This means schools can teach subjects in depth, without having to hold exams at frequent intervals. Students start to see the subject as a whole, instead of studying isolated modules and missing the links between them.

Teachers find that the linear structure helps them plan teaching better, to meet the needs of the class and individual students. Teachers decide the order, the pace and the depth of teaching and learning most appropriate for their students.

Educational expertise

We have developed Cambridge Pre-U through extensive collaboration with schools, university specialists and subject experts.

Principal Subjects

There are currently 27 subjects available at Principal Subject level.

Each Principal Subject is a two-year course, examined at the end, and gaining a separate certificate. The syllabuses are innovative, stretching and accessible. There are also one-year Short Courses available in Modern Foreign Languages, and a Mathematics Short Course is in development. Principal Subjects are the equivalent of A Levels.

What students study

Students will typically take up to four Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects. They can be taken in combination with A Levels. Students have a free choice of subjects, so they can follow a course tailored to their own interests. As well as subjects like Mathematics or History, Cambridge Pre-U also offers Psychology, Sport Science, Literature in English, Latin, and Business and Management.

Students can complete the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma by taking any three Principal Subjects (or a combination of A Levels and Principal Subjects) and Global Perspectives and the Independent Research Report (GPR).

Cambridge Pre-U subjects available

Art and Design	French	Philosophy and Theology
Biology	Further Mathematics	Physics
Business and Management	Geography	Psychology
Chemistry	German	Russian
Chinese Mandarin	Global Perspectives and Independent Research	Spanish
Classical Greek	History	Sport Science
Classical Heritage	History of Art	Short Courses
Comparative Government and Politics	Latin	Modern Foreign Languages
Drama and Theatre	Literature in English	Mathematics
Economics	Mathematics	Further Mathematics
	Music	



“ The pupils doing Cambridge Pre-U Economics are really enjoying it – we are in such interesting times at the moment, as far as Economics is concerned. The whole linear nature of the course has allowed us to look at recent events without any fear of ‘getting behind’ with the syllabus. ”



Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives and Independent Research

The core of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma is the Global Perspectives and Independent Research (GPR) course, which prepares students for the independent thinking and research work they will do at university.

The Global Perspectives element of the course helps students to explore the challenges that will face them as young people – wherever they live and work.

Students choose from within five broad themes: Ethics, Economics, Environment, Technology, and Politics and Culture. The emphasis is on giving them the tools to identify, evaluate and explore competing arguments and perspectives.

Mastering these tools involves high-level skills, which are valued in all subjects and in employment.

The Independent Research Report gives students a number of options:

- Digging deeper – going into a chosen topic in greater detail.
- Crossing boundaries – focusing on a topic that overlaps several school subjects.
- New departures – looking into non-school subjects, for example, anthropology.

The Independent Research Report is a single piece of extended writing, based on individual reading and research on a topic that students can choose themselves.

To gain the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma students can study any three Principal Subjects with GPR. Alternatively, up to two A Levels may be substituted for Principal Subjects.

Cambridge Pre-U GPR is also available as a standalone qualification that can be taken with A Levels.

“ I am studying in the UK but come from a different culture. I believe in the idea of looking at different views and considering other people’s opinions about them before developing my own. I think it’s a very good course to take up. ”

Cambridge Pre-U GPR student

Cambridge Pre-U Diploma



“ 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. ”

The ‘mixed portfolio’

Some schools that are moving to Cambridge Pre-U have begun by offering a ‘mixed portfolio’ of Principal Subjects and A Levels, depending on which syllabuses they prefer. Others may offer mostly Principal Subjects and just a few A Levels. A third model popular with schools is to start by offering GPR in combination with A Levels.

Compatible with A Levels

One of the strong messages we received during our consultation with schools is that different qualifications suit different students.

Cambridge Pre-U is fully compatible with A Levels. Students can take any combination of subjects they like. They can specialise or diversify, depending on where their strengths and interests lie.

Students who want to take the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma may substitute one or two of the Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects for A Levels.

Grading

Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects have three grade bands: Distinction, Merit and Pass. On the table on page 9, you will see how each grade, from Distinction 1 to Pass 3, relates to the six A Level grades A* to E.

Cambridge Pre-U is suitable for all students who currently achieve a pass at A Level. For the very brightest students, Cambridge has an extra grade (Distinction 1) above the new A* Grade at A Level. Students who would currently get a D or E Grade at A Level could expect a Pass 2 or Pass 3 for Cambridge Pre-U.

The full Cambridge Pre-U Diploma mark will be based on the total of scores for three Principal Subjects or A Level substitutions and the core component, GPR.

University recognition

Universities were involved at every stage in the development of Cambridge Pre-U and helped shape the qualification. They value the knowledge and independent study skills it develops.

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

TYPICAL OFFERS FROM SELECTIVE UNIVERSITIES 2009–10			
Oxford - Medicine			
Standard A Level Offer:	A	A	A
Mixed portfolio:	D3	A	A
Nottingham - Geography			
Standard A Level Offer:	A	A	B
Mixed portfolio:	D3	A	B
Warwick – Chemistry			
Standard A Level Offer:	A	B	B
Mixed portfolio:	D3	M2	B
Cambridge - History			
Standard A Level Offer:	A*	A	A
Mixed portfolio:	D2	A	A

They told us that it is 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, which allows the most selective universities to distinguish between students who may receive the same grade at A Level.

Universities across the UK and internationally recognise and accept Cambridge Pre-U and we are working closely with UK and US university admission staff to explain the distinctive features of Cambridge Pre-U. In addition, we work with schools to support the applications of Cambridge Pre-U students. We ensure that the universities to which they apply have all the information they need about the qualification.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) has awarded a tariff value to Cambridge Pre-U. UCAS tariffs help universities to understand how one qualification compares to another, for example, Cambridge Pre-U and A Levels. The table below illustrates this comparison.

The UCAS Board will award a tariff for Distinction 1 passes at their next review. At our Cambridge Pre-U Admissions Conference in September 2010, UK universities told 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 3 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.

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

“ We are happy to accept Cambridge Pre-U for entry to the School of Medical Education... we believe it will offer an appropriate preparation for university-level study. ”
University of Liverpool

“ 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

“ 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



For more information about UK and international universities' admission policies for candidates with Cambridge Pre-U grades, and details of conditional offers, please go to our recognition database at www.cie.org.uk/recognition

More information

Ask your school about their plans for post-16 education.

Learn more about Cambridge Pre-U at www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu



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