

Cambridge Pre-U: A Guide for Parents

Cambridge
Pre-U

Developing successful students



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

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

This is an innovative and stimulating qualification. It has been developed by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), the largest provider of international qualifications for 14-19 year olds, and a department of the University of Cambridge.

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

Cambridge Pre-U 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, Croydon, said recently: 'We believe our girls have high aspirations and want to succeed. As a school we believe the Cambridge Pre-U offers a 'gold standard' qualification in terms of stretch and challenge.'

In giving formal recognition to Cambridge Pre-U, the University of Durham drew attention to 'the academic rigour of the linear approach, the retention of subject specialism and the expanded reporting scale at the top end of achievement.'

A red banner is displayed, featuring the Cambridge Pre-U logo in white text on a red background. Below the logo is a photograph of three graduates in black gowns, celebrating and throwing their caps into the air. The banner is part of a larger display, with a blurred figure of a person in a dark suit visible in the foreground on the left.

Cambridge
Pre-U

UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

What will students enjoy about Cambridge Pre-U?

- Less stress from exams during the two-year course: students take their exams only once, and at the end, when they are more able to cope.
- Freedom to choose their own subject combination.
- Greater reward from being able to study chosen subjects in depth.
- Emphasis on the study skills, as well as the knowledge, that will make them successful – both as applicants to university and as students once they are there.
- Knowing that universities value and understand Cambridge Pre-U and the skills it develops.

Developing successful students

Cambridge Pre-U has been specifically designed to prepare students for university study. It develops both deep understanding and independent learning skills – so students should have a head start once they're at university, making it easier for them to achieve their academic goals.

Universities have told us they find it difficult to select the best students, those who are going to do well at university. They have welcomed Cambridge Pre-U and the skills of independent study it promotes.

Universities have also 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.

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, freed from the need to hold exams at frequent intervals. Students benefit from seeing the subject as a whole, instead of studying isolated modules and missing the links between them.

Teachers tell us that a linear structure will help them plan teaching better, to meet the needs of the class and its individual students. It gives teachers the chance to decide the order, the pace and the depth of teaching and learning most appropriate for their students.

“Cambridge Pre-U is a very exciting and interesting initiative. We have been impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm of the examination board’s staff and the teachers involved in planning the syllabuses, together with their willingness to listen to our suggestions.”

Paul Chapman, Director of Studies,
Yarm School.

“More scope to ‘prove yourself’ – fewer ‘hoops’ to jump through. Better to be judged on the merit of your thinking and creativity than against a rigid mark scheme.”

- History student during Cambridge Pre-U trialling

Educational expertise

CIE has developed Cambridge Pre-U through extensive collaboration with schools and university specialists.

Educationalists who are experts in their field have seized this opportunity to develop an entirely new curriculum, to share their passion for their subjects and to make a significant and lasting contribution to education as a whole.

Principal Subjects

There are currently 26 subjects available at Principal Subject level – each involving a two-year course, examined at the end, and certificated separately. The syllabuses are innovative, rigorous, stretching and accessible. There are also Short Courses available in Modern Foreign Languages.

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.

Or they can complete the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma, by taking any three Principal Subjects (two can be swapped for A Levels), and the GPR core: Global Perspectives and the Independent Research Report.

GPR: Global Perspectives and Independent Research Report

The core of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma is Global Perspectives and Independent Research (GPR), which prepares students for the independent thinking and research work they do at university. GPR is also available as a separate certificate that can be taken with A Levels.

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

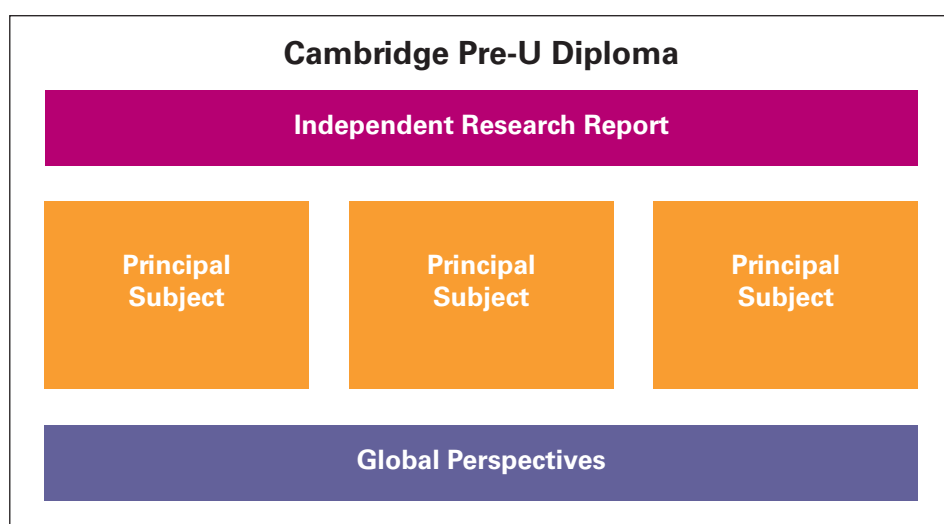
Students choose from within five broad themes: Practical Ethics, Economics, Environment, Technology, and Politics and Culture. The emphasis is on giving them the tools to identify, evaluate and explore competing arguments and perspectives.

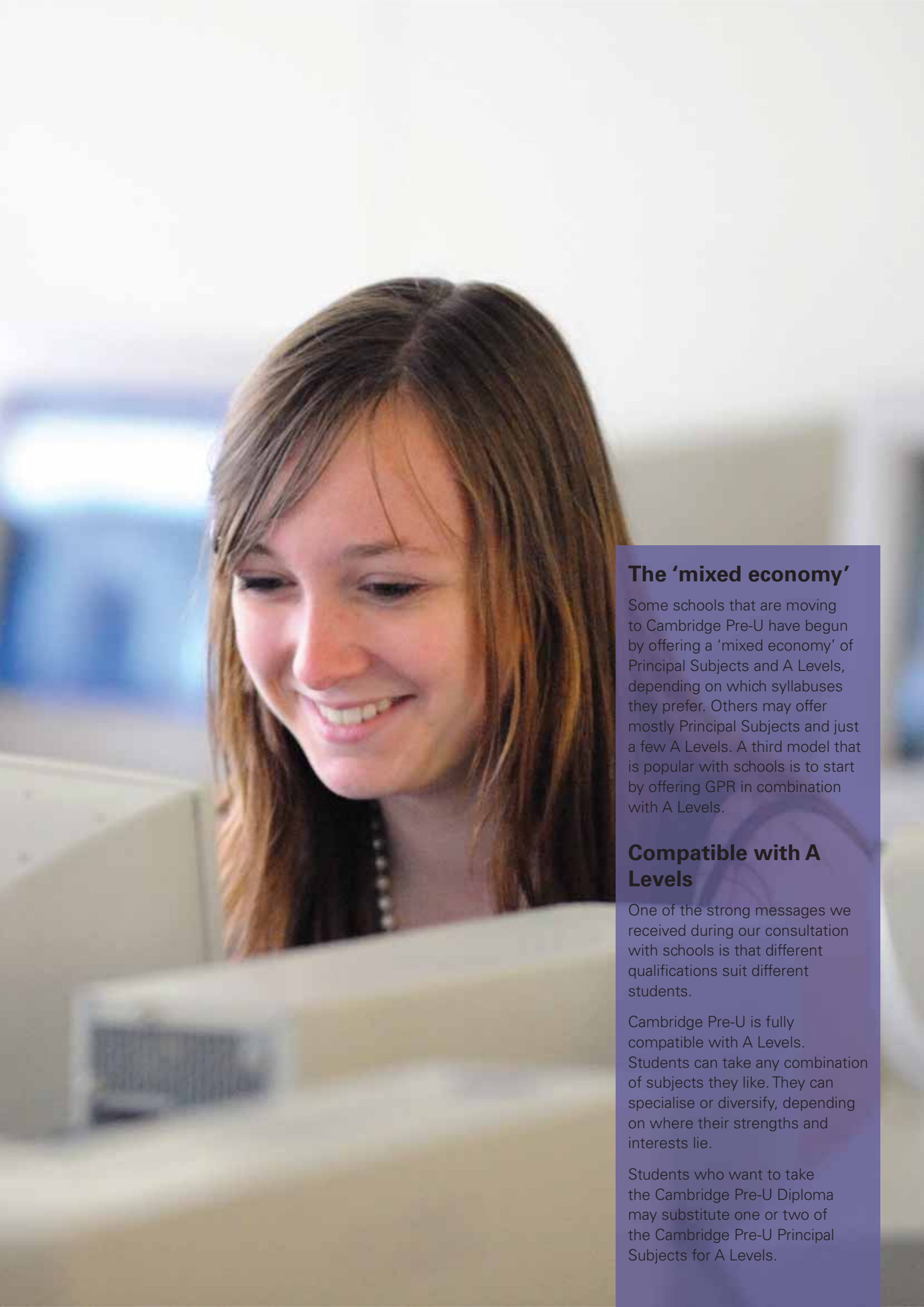
Mastering these tools involves high-level skills which are valued in all subjects and indeed in employment.

The Independent Research Report will give 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 end product will be a single piece of extended writing, based on individual reading and research on a topic students can choose themselves.





The 'mixed economy'

Some schools that are moving to Cambridge Pre-U have begun by offering a 'mixed economy' 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 that is 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 will be graded on the scale below.

Cambridge Pre-U is widely suitable for all students who currently achieve a pass at A Level. For the very brightest students, Cambridge Pre-U has an extra grade (Distinction 1) above the new A Level A*. Students who would currently get a low pass grade at A Level could expect a pass at Cambridge Pre-U, as shown at the E/U boundary on the scale.

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.

Distinction

If your child receives a Cambridge Pre-U Distinction 2 grade, that is equivalent to an A Level A* – an excellent mark. Distinction 1 is even higher.

Access

Cambridge Pre-U has been accredited by QCA and is funded for teaching in maintained schools.

University recognition

More than 50 universities have now given formal written acceptance of Cambridge Pre-U, including Oxford and Cambridge, provided other entry requirements, such as English Language assessment, have been met.

The most selective universities have told us they will find the Cambridge Pre-U grades Distinction 1 – Distinction 3 very useful as a basis for selection.

The Russell Group of universities (Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Imperial College London, King's College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queen's Belfast, Sheffield, Southampton, University College London, Warwick) has welcomed the academic rigour of Cambridge Pre-U's linear approach.

The updated list of university recognition is on the CIE website at www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu

Grading Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects

Showing likely equivalence with A Level grades.

Distinction	D1	Likely A* grade
	D2	
	D3	
Merit	M1	← A/B boundary
	M2	
	M3	
Pass	P1	← E/U boundary
	P2	
	P3	



A fair tariff score

Increasing numbers of new qualifications are becoming available for 16 – 19 year olds. In light of this, our discussions with the University and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) will ensure a fair tariff score for the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma, and recognition for students who complete it.

We are expecting to announce the new tariff score for Cambridge Pre-U in September 2008.

Cambridge Pre-U in the long term

The first group of Cambridge Pre-U students sit their exams in June 2010.

CIE will continue to work with schools in developing new Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses. We have a long-term commitment to building a community of Cambridge Pre-U schools, teachers, markers and assessors.

More information

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

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

Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects

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

University of Cambridge International Examinations is the world's largest provider of international qualifications for 14 – 19 year olds.

University of Cambridge International Examinations
1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1223 553554 Fax: +44 (0)1223 553558
international@cie.org.uk www.cie.org.uk

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CIE is part of Cambridge Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge and is a not-for-profit organisation.

It celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2008. CIE qualifications are taken in 150 countries and recognised by universities, educational providers and employers across the world.



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