

Cambridge Pre-U: A Guide for Schools

Liberating learning

Developing successful students

2008 - 2010

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Summary

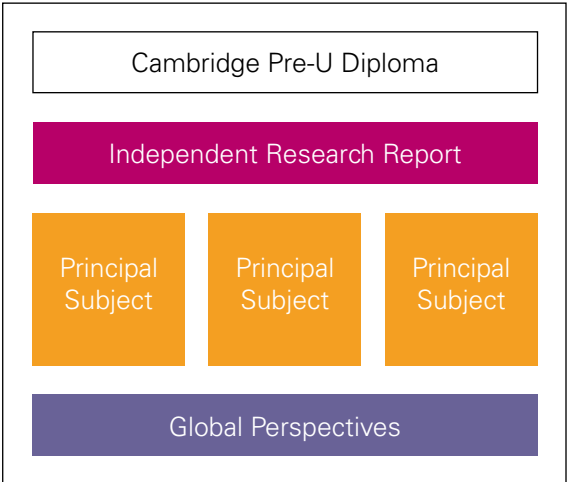
Cambridge Pre-U equips students with the skills they need to make a success of their studies at university.

It is a solid and coherent grounding in specialist subjects at an appropriate level, and develops the ability to undertake independent and self-directed learning and to think laterally, critically and creatively.

An exciting and distinct alternative to A Levels and the IB

Cambridge Pre-U is an alternative to current educational provision at 16-19. It has been developed in collaboration with schools and in consultation with universities and subject associations.

It promotes the development of successful students, equipped to succeed at university, through a focus on independent thinking, study skills and in-depth subject knowledge.



Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

Full award for candidates gaining five components: three Principal Subjects and the core GPR (Global Perspectives and Independent Research) components. Up to two A Levels may be substituted for Principal Subjects.

Cambridge Pre-U Certificate

Available in 26 individual Principal Subjects, certificated separately, assessed at the end of a two-year programme of study. Short Courses (one-year) available for Modern Languages.

Cambridge Pre-U GPR

Global Perspectives and Independent Research together constitute the compulsory core of the Diploma, but they can be taken as a freestanding package, and a separate qualification.

Strength in subject depth

Each subject syllabus has been written by a team of practising teachers, supported by university lecturers and other subject specialists, taking account of the outcomes 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, i.e. the assessment takes place at the end of the programme of study. It therefore offers a framework which allows teachers to develop coherent courses, 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, offered as individual subjects – and also as a full Diploma with free choice of subjects, promoting subject depth and curriculum breadth. It is designed to be suitable across the ability range.

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 rapidly changing world in which students live, study and work.

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 will benefit greatly from this qualification, and will rise to the challenges set. 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
- Twenty-six Principal Subjects, each available separately
- Full Diploma and Short Course options
- Funded in state-maintained schools
- Free INSET

1. The aims of Cambridge Pre-U

Common aims of Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects

- Encouraging the development of well-informed, open- and independent-minded individuals
- Promoting deep understanding through subject specialisation, with a depth and rigour appropriate to progression to higher education
- Helping learners to acquire specific skills of problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, team-working, independent learning and effective communication
- Recognising the wide range of individual talents and interests
- Promoting an international outlook and cross-cultural awareness.

The aims of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

The full Cambridge Pre-U Diploma shares these common aims. It also seeks to add value in terms of coherence, depth and breadth, and to prepare students for life in a rapidly changing and increasingly interconnected world, through:

- Providing a platform for subject specialisation
- Allowing students choice to tailor programmes to meet their individual needs
- Permitting further depth through the Independent Research Report
- Encouraging additional breadth through the Global Perspectives component.

2. Cambridge Pre-U Qualifications

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 Cambridge Pre-U GPR.

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

A separate one-year Short Course Certificate is available in each of the Modern Foreign Languages. Short Courses allow students to broaden their programmes beyond their major subject specialisms.

Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject Syllabuses

Mathematics	Geography	Italian*	Comparative Government and Politics
Further Mathematics	History of Art	Russian*	Philosophy & Theology
Physics	Literature in English	Mandarin Chinese*	Music
Chemistry	History	Classical Heritage	Art & Design
Biology	French*	Sports Science	Psychology
Economics	German*	Classical Greek	
Business & Management	Spanish*	Latin	

* Certificated Short Courses are also available in these subjects.

The amount of teaching and learning time required for a Principal Subject exceeds the current 'volume' of an A Level programme. Cambridge Pre-U is a linear qualification, without units or module examinations, so more time is freed up for productive study.

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 economy'**. Some of these schools are introducing Cambridge Pre-U GPR – the Diploma core component – 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

Students qualify for the full Diploma with passes in:

- Three Principal Subjects* (any combination allowed)
- Global Perspectives (a guarantee of breadth)
- Independent Research Report (an opportunity for greater depth)

*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 have made clear that the Diploma programme meets their requirements in terms of the depth, breadth and 'volume of demand' appropriate for an applicant 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/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. Initially, we also expect to 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 core components add value to a candidate's programme:

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

Global Perspectives guarantees breadth for students in the Diploma course. It is a seminar-based opportunity to explore a range of key challenges facing every young person, wherever they live or 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.

3. The Cambridge Pre-U Diploma core components

Schools report that the core components fit into existing school curricular structures without undue disruption.

The Global Perspectives course is most commonly taught over three terms, with the student building up and submitting a portfolio of evidence, including an examination paper.

Students typically begin work on the Independent Research Report towards the end of the first year. It is designed as a tutored exercise, involving mostly independent work outside the classroom. We expect it to be completed over two terms prior to submission in the year of the examinations.

Cambridge Pre-U GPR as a stand-alone package

The two core components of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma, Global Perspectives and the Independent Research Report, are available as a unified package, and can be certified as a stand-alone qualification, separate from the Diploma.

Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives and Independent Research (GPR), is an excellent alternative to A Level General Studies, Critical Thinking, or an Extended Project. Indeed, one of its principal attractions is that it covers the key elements of all three, within a coherent framework that allows progression.

Global Perspectives

Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives equips students with the critical research and study skills they need to make a successful transition to study in higher education.

Today's students live in a rapidly changing world, confronted by competing ideas, arguments and information. Everyday interactions and indeed their university studies promise to take young people out of their intellectual comfort zone, away from the relatively secure world of more sedate change and the reception of received wisdom, into an environment of competing ideas where perspectives are subject to challenge and change. Global Perspectives develops the skills-base and cognitive framework that will enable students to comprehend and manage such an environment.





Engaging with this rapidly changing world of ideas, arguments and information is a skills-set in itself. It includes the ability to follow and deconstruct arguments and assertions, to separate fact from opinion, and to assess and evaluate truth 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 intrinsic interest to young people, 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.

Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives aims to:

1. Prepare students for engagement in a rapidly changing environment by:
 - Promoting a critical, questioning approach to the 'taken for granted'
 - Developing and promoting disciplined and scholarly research methods
 - Cultivating an interdisciplinary perspective
2. Encourage students to engage constructively with issues and ideas of global significance, thus:
 - Developing an understanding of some of the key global problems and opportunities that will face them as young adults, wherever they live and work
 - Fostering awareness and understanding of, and respect for, the diversity of perspectives on particular global issues
 - Encouraging an independent outlook and self-reflection through scrutiny of assumptions

The approach taken by Global Perspectives complements and carries forward the subject-specific approaches elsewhere in the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma. The focus here is on students learning how to learn – providing them with the tools for independent, pro-active, interdisciplinary study.

The Global Perspectives Course

The course is built around a series of topics, each one representing a key global challenge that will face students as young adults, wherever they live and work.

The topics are organised into broad generic themes:

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

Schools will build their own programme by choosing at least four topics from different thematic groups. Students are encouraged to explore a topic independently (and in groups where appropriate), and engage in seminar-style discussions and presentations.

In exploring a topic, a student might be expected to produce examples of the following types of assignment, held in an e-portfolio and constituting the basis for assessment:

- Deconstruction Task: The detailed analysis of a theory, position, point of view or argument
- Reconstruction Task: Evidence of structured fact-finding and organisation of information, such as a literature review; with an evaluation of the evidence for and against competing points of view
- Reflection Task: An essay focusing on how the student's own views have been challenged
- Presentation Task: a multi-media presentation, with space for discussion and debate

The Critical Path

The approach is highly distinctive. Students are encouraged to explore each chosen topic by following a critical path marked out by a series of stages:

- start from a base in the critical analysis of arguments and assertions embedded in a particular perspective on a topic
- explore and evaluate alternative perspectives in terms of their arguments and evidence
- develop research frameworks to push the debate forward
- reflect on the development of their own attitudes and approaches.

This approach is very demanding of students more used to traditional teaching and learning styles. Students will need considerable support in their initial explorations. We envisage an introductory course, in which teachers guide students through the generic 'critical path' of enquiry. Thereafter, we expect students to become increasingly capable of initiating and carrying forward research strands using the critical path.

An introductory course

The introductory course, for which CIE provides support material, shows students how to plot a route through a topic and how to build up a portfolio of work. Students are introduced to the means of deconstructing an argument, identifying its premises and conclusions, and evaluating the coherence of the argument. The evidence base is explored, with students being asked to develop a strategy to identify, gather and evaluate relevant material. Students are then encouraged to consider alternative points of view. The conclusions will be subjected to further scrutiny – how confident can we be? How significant are they? How much do they alter the student's own assumptions?

The introductory topic encourages students to think critically about the idea that English is now the world language.

Assessing Global Perspectives

The Global Perspectives course will be 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 stimulus material pre-released by CIE.

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

Support for Global Perspectives

The proposal to include 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.'

The Independent Research Report

Universities put great value on a student's ability to engage in independent research, since it shows the direct skills of planning, collecting, handling and evaluating information, and the wider study skills of time-management, prioritisation, self-motivation, sustained concentration and communication.

Within individual Cambridge Pre-U subject syllabuses there are, where appropriate, opportunities to explore aspects of the subject to greater depth, and to submit extended written work. The Independent Research Report complements that provision.

The Independent Research Report is a compulsory core component of the full Cambridge Pre-U Diploma. Candidates submit a report based on work done beyond individual subject syllabuses, on a topic chosen by the candidate, and agreed in advance with CIE. It gives students the opportunity to take their studies in one of three directions:

1. Digging deeper, within a chosen subject specialism
2. Crossing boundaries, with an inquiry that focuses on the overlap between two academic subjects
3. New departures, exploring a non-school subject, such as Anthropology.

Students will have gained the knowledge and skills to undertake their own research project, having participated in the Global Perspectives course. Tutors may support the Independent Research Report, but the work itself will be the student's own, conducted independently with research and preparation taking place largely outside the classroom.

Students submit a single report of between 4,500 and 5,000 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. The precise nature and format of the report, and the research and reporting conventions adopted, will be those most appropriate to the subject of the enquiry. Equally, the subject matter and the approach will determine whether the work is based on primary or secondary material.

The assessment of the Independent Research Report will focus on the ability to design, plan and manage a research project; to collect and analyse information; to evaluate and make reasoned judgements; and to communicate findings and conclusions. The intended learning outcomes of the research report fall into the following categories:

- **Readiness for a way of working in higher education:** Familiarity with the research conventions that are current in higher education; understanding the different modes of research enquiry; readiness to reflect critically and respond to review; a capacity for autonomous study and self-management
- **Generic and higher order skills of research and analysis:** Ability to design research proposals; understanding and planning data collection methods; ability to interpret, analyse and base conclusions on results; ability to communicate complex findings
- **Subject specialisation and knowledge:** A deeper knowledge and understanding of the subject matter of the research

Thus the student enters 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.



4. 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 result). In this sense, the distinctive feature of Cambridge Pre-U is **linearity**.

Principal Subjects and **Short Courses** will be 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 old A Level A grade is divided into three Distinction grades, one of which reports achievement above the new 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.

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.

A candidate achieving D1 in all three Principal Subjects, and the two core components, scores 96 points.

Grading Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects		Contribution of each component to the Diploma score		
		Band	Each Principal Subject	GPR
Distinction	D1	D1	24	24
	D2	D2	22	22
	D3	D3	20	20
Merit	M1	M1	18	18
	M2	M2	16	16
	M3	M3	14	14
Pass	P1	P1	12	12
	P2	P2	10	10
	P3	P3	8	8

Monitoring progress and school-based assessment

The curriculum needs to flex to allow students to start off with four subjects and narrow down to three in the second year. Schools will also seek out opportunities for interim, formative assessment for students on the way to the full linear assessment at the end of the course. Schools will also need evidence on which to make meaningful statements of achievement to support university applications by their students. In these cases 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.

CIE offers a means of supporting and maximising the effectiveness of school-based assessment:

1. A complete set of papers for interim assessment, building into a bank of questions for use by schools.
2. An exemplification booklet, giving a range of answers to the specimen questions exemplified at pass, merit and distinction level.
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.

Applications to university

Year 13 applicants to university will not have any module grades to declare on their UCAS forms. However, this will not disadvantage them in any way. Cambridge Pre-U applicants will be 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, as well as those who take AS exams in Year 12 but choose not to certificate.

The UCAS Board has awarded a tariff value for Cambridge Pre-U. The 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 an excellent preparation for undergraduate study.

Cambridge Pre-U Band	Cambridge Pre-U Grade	Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject Tariff	A Level Grade	A Level Tariff	Cambridge Pre-U GPR Tariff	Short Course Tariff
Distinction	D1	tbc	n/a	n/a	tbc	tbc
	D2	145	(A*)		140	tbc
	D3	130	A	120	126	60
Merit	M1	115			112	53
	M2	101			98	46
	M3	87			84	39
Pass	P1	73			70	32
	P2	59			56	26
	P3	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 Independent 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	Independent Research Report
Knowledge	Subject-specific	•		•
	Cross-curricular			•
Understanding	Subject-specific	•		•
	Cross-curricular			•
Skills	Subject-specific	•		
	Generic study skills	•	•	•
Dispositions	Interdisciplinary Self-reflective Critical Thinking		• • •	• •

5. The distinctiveness of Cambridge Pre-U

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 GCSE/IGCSE.

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:** Terminal assessment gives schools and teachers 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.

In the words of one teacher who took part in the consultation, it is ‘great to see “examination culture” diminished, and teaching and creativity strengthened and encouraged’.

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



Distinctive approaches

Within the common Cambridge Pre-U framework, each syllabus maintains and enhances its subject’s academic integrity, student interest and contemporary relevance.

In **Physics**, for example, the syllabus affirms mathematical reasoning yet also fosters historical and philosophical perspectives in science. **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.

Mathematics and **Further Mathematics** encourage the understanding of how the different branches of the subject interconnect.

All the **Modern Foreign Languages** share a dual focus on language and culture, and each aims to provide students with a balance of linguistic and critical skills.

Philosophy and Theology offers a choice of specialist options, with a common dual focus – first, on the theme, and second, on a sustained critical engagement with the key text for that option.

Distinctive topics

Syllabus teams have taken the opportunity to introduce new and cutting-edge topics which underscore their subjects’ relevance.

Biology now includes biotechnology, covering enzymes, cloning, stem cells, medical biotechnology and genetic engineering. **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 and the expansion of the EU.

Corporate social responsibility is one focus of the **Business and Management** syllabus. **Comparative Government and Politics** offers opportunities to study contemporary political and ideological debates in comparative context, drawing examples and evidence from different parts of the world.

Distinctive assessment

All syllabuses adopt assessment types suited to their particular requirements. The emphasis is on fitness for purpose, using a range of assessment types to reflect the range of assessment criteria.

Individual investigations are included where appropriate, as in History, Literature in English, and Physics. Geography gives students the opportunity to research a topic in depth (using primary or secondary sources), presenting the findings to an examiner in a viva voce situation.

Across the suite, there is a recognition that open-ended essay questions have a unique role to play. For example:

Physics: 'Newtonian mechanics is deterministic but quantum theory is not.' Use examples to explain what this means and to discuss whether this makes a significant difference to our ability to predict the future.

Biology: 'There is no evolutionary advantage to being multi-cellular.' Discuss this view.

Psychology: 'Individuals are not born criminal, they are made criminal.' Discuss.

Comparative Government and Politics: 'Sovereignty is an increasingly problematic concept.' Discuss.

History: 'The government of the United States set out deliberately to destroy the way of life of the native Americans.' How valid is this judgement?

Mathematics and **Chemistry**, like other syllabuses, set out to test understanding in relatively unfamiliar contexts.



6. Responses from Higher Education

University specialists have been involved in the development of Cambridge Pre-U from the beginning. They tell us that they regard the attraction of Cambridge Pre-U to be based on the promotion of deep understanding at subject level, and the inclusion of certain subject-specific skills neglected by current programmes. They consider the syllabuses well-thought out, coherent and integrated, with provision for rigorous end of course assessment. Overall, the response from universities has been that Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses are an excellent preparation for higher study.

For example, the Joint Faculty response from Imperial College, University of London, concluded:

'The detailed drafts, together with your proposals for the diploma, encourage us to believe that this examination system will be a useful method in helping us to select good quality students for our courses. We do like the idea of linear courses, the increased depth of understanding (provided that it can be taught properly), and the expanded reporting scale at the top end.'

7. Resources to support Cambridge Pre-U

In preparation for the first teaching of Cambridge Pre-U in 2008, publishers have revised their A Level texts with a view to catering for the Cambridge Pre-U syllabus content. However, they are unlikely to be able to meet the enhanced needs of Cambridge Pre-U in their entirety.

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 Pre-U 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.

8. Equity and access

Cambridge Pre-U is funded for teaching in maintained schools. It is an accredited qualification on the National Qualifications framework, and has been added to section 96.

9. Further information

Full details of Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects, Short Courses and the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma components, are available at www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu.

Alternatively, email CIE at international@cie.org.uk to learn more.

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