

Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter which provides information on the progress of the new pre-university qualification being developed by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), part of the Cambridge Assessment Group.

Cambridge Pre-U

Cambridge Pre-U is a post-16 development which aims to prepare students with the skills and knowledge required to make a success of their subsequent studies at university. Teachers tell us that they want to be able to prepare students for higher education more effectively with exciting syllabuses that are stimulating to teach. Universities tell us they want students who are equipped to benefit from a higher education experience which calls for a more independent and self-directed style of learning. This is why we are developing Cambridge Pre-U as a coherent curriculum underpinned by a core set of educational principles. It will offer exciting syllabuses which students can take either individually or together to achieve the Cambridge Pre-U. CIE is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group which has nearly 150 years experience of curriculum and assessment design.

Working in close collaboration with teachers and with Universities

CIE is working closely with schools in the UK and internationally and with universities on the development of Cambridge Pre-U. Each subject has a development panel comprising teachers, representatives of subject associations and faculty members of universities. They are working together as experts to develop syllabuses designed to prepare students effectively for higher education and to provide stimulating educational experiences for teachers and learners. The Cambridge Pre-U development is overseen by a Liaison Committee including members of universities, UK and international schools, representatives of HMC, GSA, from Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, the Historical Association, the

Association for Science Education and the Association of Teachers of Mathematics.

Universities are showing great interest in the development. Comments from recent meetings with Admissions staff have been very encouraging:

'It has great educational benefits';

'Students who have taken the Pre-U will be attractive to universities';

'We like the linear approach and educational values';

'Impressive to have the whole award';

'The Curriculum Extension will be important and could be a deciding factor';

'The Cambridge Pre-U could be a catalyst for positive change in the UK'.

Four of our development panels give an insight into progress to date.

Chemistry

Charles McCaw, leading the team, says: 'The aim is to encourage students to develop a greater appreciation of three-dimensional structure and symmetry in chemical systems. It's more problem-solving and less regurgitation of facts. We have been doing some thinking about practicals and are increasingly in favour of having these as carefully controlled internal skills assessments as an option beside a practical exam - a good compromise between the exam and coursework. We have also been thinking about examining using microscale, making organic synthesis feasible in a practical exam. There are some new topics for which we are developing resources and we have already had schools asking if they can join the pilot in 2007.'



▲ Charles McCaw, chair (Winchester College), Simon Cotton (Uppingham School), Lynne Symonds (The Association for Science Education ASE), Mike Thompson (Winchester College) and Peter Wothers (St Catharine's College, Cambridge)



Economics

'We want to make Economics relevant, using current affairs to bring the subject matter alive,' says Andrew Ireson. 'We are confident we can come up with an assessment process that challenges pupils but which is accessible to all. One main area that we are discussing is how to enable candidates to write more extensively on certain areas. Is this best done through 'set texts', through publication of pre-release material, or through candidates writing about their own research in the exam? Designing the Cambridge Pre-U syllabus is enabling us to explore many fundamental issues in Economics teaching and learning.'



▲ Tim Mason (King Edward's School, Birmingham, representing The Economics & Business Education Association EBEB), Mark Ronan (Trent College), Andrew Ireson, chair (Oundle School). Not pictured: Esmond Tweedie (Oundle School), and Mike Keep (Repton School).

Mathematics

The development panel is finalising the first draft of the final syllabuses. Panel chair Katharine Henson, from Downe House, says: 'The syllabus philosophy is to build mathematical thinking of the type which would most support a number of undergraduate programmes, emphasising the way in which Mathematics can be applied in a wide range of situations.'

The Mathematics syllabus will offer Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Application papers at each level.



▲ Katharine Henson, chair (Downe House), David Forster (Abingdon School), Robert Teague (Magdalen College School), and Peter Hall (Association of Teachers of Mathematics ATM)

Cambridge Pre-U Development Stages

First drafts of Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses will be available for consultation with schools and universities in October 2006. A Heads' Conference and Heads of Department meetings are planned for the Autumn term.

Feedback from the Consultation will shape the final Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses which will be with schools in September 2007 and will be supported during the first half of the 2007- 2008 academic year with a programme of INSET and guidance meetings. Schools have expressed interest in piloting the qualification in 2007-8 and first teaching will begin in September 2008.

Physics

It's a design that meets university requirements for the sound building blocks needed for undergraduate Physics, but with contexts that are stimulating and motivating to young physicists. Context proposals currently include: materials, nanotechnology, biophysics, robotics and space explorations.

The Physics development panel comprises: Nick Fisher (Rugby School), Martin Hollis and Lynne Symonds (Association for Science Education); Steve Adams and Anton Machacek (Shrewsbury School); and Tony Ayres (Winchester College).

Cambridge Pre-U subjects currently under development

Mathematics
Further Mathematics
Economics
Chemistry
Physics
Biology
English
History
Geography
Business Studies
Chinese
German
French
Spanish
Classical Heritage
Art History
Latin
Greek
Sport Science

Contact us

Let us know your views and receive updates on Cambridge Pre-U.

Contact: consultation@cie.org.uk