

Update
May 2009



CAMBRIDGE PRE-U FIRST YEAR REPORT

The benefits of a linear structure

Enormous. Pupils' learning is much, much less disrupted than by the constant retaking of modules

Students developing independent learning skills

Students are constructing much more complex essays and reading much more difficult material on their own than they would otherwise

Teachers regaining control over the curriculum

Our teachers are so enthused by the opportunities presented. They are clearly motivated by the scope of the course...

Stretch for the most able

The flexibility and choice within the courses allow the most able to utilize their talents to the full.

Suitability for all abilities

One of our biggest success stories has been those students who are not natural high fliers.

Integration into the school curriculum

There have been no problems with integrating Cambridge Pre-U into the curriculum offered. Every subject has benefited from the extra teaching time released...

Read more of schools' views on pages 2-3



Excellent reports from Cambridge Pre-U Schools

We invited three Cambridge Pre-U schools, Walthamstow Hall, Sevenoaks, Winchester College and Leweston School, to give us their assessment of the first year of teaching. Here's what they told us:

Benefits of a linear structure

'Enormous... Pupils' learning is much, much less disrupted than by the constant taking of modules. There is a much greater sense of development over the course of the two years, two years which, in terms of academic maturity, are absolutely critical. We hope to have begun to develop students who can see the larger vistas of learning which university studies will require.'

'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.'

'Our students have welcomed the opportunity to study a course in depth, without worrying about the next exam coming up. They are enjoying making connections between topics and have clearly demonstrated an increasing maturity in their analysis skills and essay writing.'

'The whole department was keen to teach a linear course in the Sixth

Form, as we feel that it produces better mathematicians. It enables girls to gain a deeper understanding of the subject as a whole and make links between different areas of the syllabus.

Students really mature over the course of the Sixth Form and concepts that were challenging in the Lower Sixth often seem less daunting in the Upper Sixth. Having the time to let more demanding concepts settle and become more familiar is very helpful.'

'We have covered a great deal more history this year than we would be able to do at AS, and the knowledge that exams are at the end of two years has allowed girls the opportunity to develop skills gradually in the knowledge that things will not get any harder than they currently are.'

Developing independent learning skills

'The [GPR] course improves independent study skills by allowing students to think in a more cross-curricular fashion. The girls see links between subjects now that would otherwise have passed them by.'

There is every opportunity for this. The scope of the specifications is sufficiently broad that pupils need to become independent learners to do full service to all eras of study. The various forms of personal investigation reinforce this process.



Regaining control over the curriculum

'Our teachers are so enthused by the opportunities presented. They are clearly motivated by the scope of the course, and the flexibility to choose topics of interest and which suit their expertise. The teachers are regularly seen carrying out their own research to develop their range of resources.'

'We have been able to plan the course for the 'Overview of English Literature' and for the unseen paper (25% of the assessment). Very satisfying and enjoyable.'

'I wouldn't be able to teach my British course (1760 – 1846) as it stands



under any of the conventional AS syllabuses, and therefore I really appreciate the freedom to pick out the bits of history that interest me and my colleagues.'

'It's very liberating for teachers, the two years and the scope of the syllabuses have given teachers back an opportunity to shape students' learning to suit their strengths and weaknesses. Options are generous but allow a coherent programme of study to be created.'

Stretch for the most able

'The flexibility and choice within the courses allow the most able to utilise their talents to the full. They

have found that they are not limited by restricted short answer exam questions. Above all, they have been stimulated to think.'

'The whole [GPR] course extends gifted students – in a sense the sky really is the limit... Our students are genuinely looking forward to and are really excited by the prospect of being able to undertake an in-depth study next year, and see it as more of an undergraduate year than an A2 equivalent year.'

Suitability for all abilities

'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.'

'Weaker candidates have had the time to develop reading stamina and explore larger texts, eg Xxxxx has become passionate about Hardy's *The Woodlanders* (read independently) – which she will be able to use for her independent study. A year ago at GCSE she would have balked at the idea!'

Although the Cambridge Pre-U specifications are undoubtedly challenging enough for the very ablest, they have proved accessible to a broader spectrum of students than may commonly be imagined...

having two years to cultivate skills and understanding, and the released extra teaching time available more than compensates for the challenge of making the leap from Year 11 work. Students have the bonus of knowing that the standard of work required will not get harder in Year 13 and they appreciate this.

Integration into the school curriculum

'All but one of the subjects which we take in the Sixth Form, for which there is a Pre-U exam has opted for Cambridge Pre-U. Integrating the remaining AS/A2 has been more of a problem!'

'There have been no problems with integrating Cambridge Pre-U into the curriculum offered. Every subject has benefited from the extra teaching time released by not having AS modules in January of the Lower Sixth Year... [Students] clearly feel an increased sense of achievement and I am sure it is significant that next year, Cambridge Pre-U subjects are amongst the most popular. The 'student voice' has spoken!'

Would you like to write a report card on Cambridge Pre-U?
Email it to seymour.g@cie.org.uk or share it with the Cambridge Pre-U online community.

Support for interim assessment

Teachers appreciate the fact that they do not have to prepare their Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects students for examinations this month, but they have expressed a need for a checkpoint of progress at the midpoint of the first year of teaching Cambridge Pre-U.

Because Cambridge Pre-U is in its first year of teaching, CIE has provided interim assessment material to inform teaching and learning in the second year. This will also support HE applications as universities have indicated that in the absence of a certified AS grade, they will be looking for a predicted grade and the applicant's place in the school's rank order for each subject.

Interim assessment material

Interim assessment material is now available for teachers currently teaching Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects. Although different arrangements have been made on a subject-by-subject basis, generally the assessment materials include PDF files of interim assessment question papers and Word documents of both the mark schemes and question papers. We have provided the interim assessments in this format to enable centres to customise question papers according to course content covered to date.

Feedback for teachers

A feedback service is available for



those teaching Cambridge Pre-U. Schools are invited to send in candidates' answers to whole papers or individual items included in the assessment material provided this term. Teachers will mark and annotate the scripts and give the rank order. CIE Examiners will then respond with reports on the application of the mark scheme and general patterns of performance.

It is not possible to assign Cambridge Pre-U grades for these assessments, as grades can only be awarded on the basis of evidence across the whole assessment. However, Examiners will identify features that exemplify the kinds of performance they will be looking for in awarding marks for Pass, Merit and Distinction.

Reports will be specific to individual schools, with an overall summary published after all the

schools have submitted their candidates' work.

INSET

Subject-specific Cambridge Pre-U INSET was held in May. The INSET focused on assessment and standard setting. This helps teachers set and mark papers and apply the Cambridge Pre-U standard. Marked exemplars were available and there were opportunities for teachers to discuss mark schemes, using live scripts.

The next INSET, *Getting Started*, will be available in the Autumn term. It is specifically designed for those who have started teaching Cambridge Pre-U subjects, and for those thinking of starting in September 2010. For further details of the Autumn INSET, please contact Linda Oubridge at oubridge.l@cie.org.uk

Support for university applications

CIE is providing ongoing support for university applications. We are holding a one-day seminar for schools on university applications at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, on 30 June. The seminar will provide members of staff who are responsible for advising on university applications with an opportunity for discussion with university admissions tutors.

Cambridge Pre-U students are expected to apply for places at a wide range of universities and faculties. CIE Consultant, Christine Cayley, will collect detailed information about their applications from schools in the autumn and send additional information on Cambridge Pre-U, including relevant syllabuses and specimen papers to the admissions tutors at faculty level. She will support the applications in terms of dealing with queries and liaising with the universities.

Christine is also tracking the progress of the first cohort of students taking Cambridge Pre-U. She will contact schools in the autumn to gather historical data on where their typical cohorts have gone on to higher education, as well as compiling information about current applications.

A PowerPoint presentation by Dr Kevin Stannard is available on the University of Cambridge website at www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/teachers

International recognition

CIE is also working with universities in

the US to promote the recognition and acceptance of Cambridge Pre-U. After the UK, the US is the most popular destination for UK school-leavers who want to go to university. Recently, CIE formed a Higher Education Advisory Council to advise on progression into Higher Education for students with Cambridge qualifications. The group comprises representatives from prestigious US universities including Duke, Notre Dame and Yale. Duke and Yale universities have already published admission policies on Cambridge Pre-U (see below).

We have also appointed additional Regional Representative based in the US to work on university recognition of Cambridge Pre-U - Kris Palfrey joins our US representative Sherry Reach, and Recognition Consultants Bill Kolb and Paula Johnson.

Briefing meetings have been held for Admissions Officers at the AACRAO conferences in Orlando and Chicago. More than 2000 participants from admissions offices at US universities attend the conferences.

Kevin Stannard, Val Sismey, Qualifications Development Manager, and US team members have given briefings at Harvard, Yale, MIT, Brown, Columbia, Rice, Northwestern and Chicago Universities, which were also attended by participants from Princeton, Cornell, Boston, New York, Stony Brook, and Amherst. Further briefing meetings are planned by Val and the US team at conferences for international admissions staff

in Georgia in June and California in July as well as a series of briefing meetings across the US.

A full list of US universities can be found at <http://recognition.cie.org.uk> by searching on US, Higher Education and Cambridge Pre-U.

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. All candidates must submit complete applications to be considered for admission to Yale. Yale is in the process of reviewing what academic credit might be awarded for particular Pre-U grades.

Duke University accepts Cambridge Pre-U for entry to Undergraduate courses.

In order to qualify for and receive Duke International Placement Credit (IPC), students must present with grades of A or B (or the equivalent). Accordingly, a student presenting with grades of M3 or higher (M2, M1, D3, D2, or D1) in acceptable subjects in the Cambridge Pre-U program would be eligible to receive IPA credit, up to our defined limit of 2 such IPC credits.

Learn more!

CIE invites schools to learn more about Cambridge Pre-U at a free half-day seminar at the end of June.

The Learn More! seminars are aimed at Principals, Deputy Heads and Curriculum Developers. They provide an introduction to the qualification and the opportunity to have questions answered by CIE. Delegates will also be updated on the progress of schools that began teaching Cambridge Pre-U in 2008.

The interactive seminars cover key questions about Cambridge Pre-U, including:

- QCA accreditation
- University recognition
- Funding
- Models of adoption

You will also learn more about:

- the resources available to teachers
- the innovative Cambridge Pre-U online community – a forum where teachers can share knowledge and expertise.

Manchester, 23 June

London, 25 June

York, September (tbc)

London, 28 September

To reserve a place for yourself or a colleague, please contact the CIE Events Team. This is a free event.

Email: **cieeventsteam@cie.org.uk**

Tel: **01223 553554**

Fax: **01223 553558**

Worldwide demand for Cambridge Pre-U

Many Cambridge schools from around the world have taken a keen interest in the development of Cambridge Pre-U in the UK. They have found the structure and values of Cambridge Pre-U very appealing and are particularly interested in Cambridge Pre-U GPR – because it is designed to be fully compatible with UK and International A Levels.

At the beginning of May, delegates from 15 schools attended a seminar in Cambridge to discuss an international pilot of the GPR component of Cambridge Pre-U. During the pilot, schools will work with Cambridge to explore the accessibility of Cambridge Pre-U GPR for teachers and students worldwide.

Michael Shelton, English Teacher at Eau Gallie High School, US, was enthusiastic about the aims of Cambridge Pre-U GPR. He said: 'It allows for the creation of an independent learner rather than a dependent learner.'

After the seminar, Philip Hornblow, Specialist Classroom Teacher at MacLeans College, New Zealand, said: 'Cambridge Pre-U GPR is rigorous, it's academic, it's challenging and stimulating.'

New developments in Cambridge Pre-U mathematics

Mathematics and Further Mathematics are popular Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects and we continue to develop our mathematics provision.

Cambridge Pre-U Mathematics students develop a deep knowledge of their subject by the end of the two-year course, but, as one teacher put it: 'Mathematics at this level gets very hard, very quickly – some students progress happily to a stage where they seem to hit a wall – and struggle to go any further.'

Teachers have told us of their concerns that this may be putting students off post-16 Mathematics completely, so we are developing a Short Course in Mathematics, that will take one year to complete. Consultation with schools on this project is ongoing – we welcome your views. Please contact CIE at international@cie.org.uk if you would like to take part in the consultation process.

Ultimately we hope that an appealing Cambridge Pre-U Mathematics Short Course will make mathematics accessible to greater numbers of students.