

Update
November 2008

First term report

Kevin Stannard, CIE Director, International Curriculum Development

It is a pleasure to update you on the first term of teaching Cambridge Pre-U.

Around fifty schools began teaching Cambridge Pre-U at the start of the academic year, with another 100 or so indicating their intention to begin in 2009 or 2010. The timing of accreditation and details of LSC funding did not make it easy for maintained schools, but they are well represented in the 2008 group.

Supporting schools, supporting students

We are working closely with schools to ensure that students embarking on Cambridge Pre-U are fully supported. A comprehensive INSET programme has been developed, with Learn More and Getting Started seminars held in October and November, and more scheduled for March and June 2009. We continue to publish support material via the online subject communities, and recently held an online 'Ask Cambridge' session, focusing on Cambridge Pre-U. Materials for interim assessment are also available – contact international@cie.org.uk

for more details, or register online by clicking on the 'register' tab on the Cambridge Pre-U page at

www.cie.org.uk/qualifications.

Support from adopting schools has been very evident. Writing in *Attain* magazine, Ralph Townsend, the Headmaster of Winchester College, explained that part of the reason for adopting Cambridge Pre-U was to give, 'encouragement to those who continue to believe that a spacious formation of young minds and hearts, and an examination structure which supports it, offers the best future for them and for the society in which they will take their place.'

Excellent preparation for university

We continue to work with universities to ensure an understanding of the distinctive characteristics of Cambridge Pre-U. The University of Durham, among many others, supports the aims of Cambridge Pre-U. In its formal recognition

statement, Durham draws attention to 'the academic rigour of the linear approach, the retention of subject

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specialism and the expanded reporting scale at the top end of achievement.'

In a recent letter to the *Telegraph*, John Witheridge, Headmaster of Charterhouse, discussed preparation for university as the key benefit of two alternatives to A Levels.

He said: 'For some schools, and some pupils, the International Baccalaureate will be an attractive alternative to A level. Another alternative, which is already being taught at Charterhouse and other schools (maintained and independent) is the new Cambridge Pre-U. There are significant differences but what both these international qualifications have in common is the determination to challenge and stimulate pupils, and to prepare them thoroughly for further academic studies at good universities.'

We are in advanced discussions with UCAS to establish a tariff value

for Cambridge Pre-U. We understand that the Expert Groups convened as part of the UCAS tariff review, made recommendations that took into account the distinctive size and structure of Cambridge Pre-U, and noted the fact that the qualification has been accredited by QCA, is funded for teaching in state schools, will figure in school league tables, and meets entry requirements for Higher Education, subject to the regulations of individual institutions for specific courses.

We understand further that the UCAS Board received recommendations for tariff scores for a wide range of qualifications at its September meeting, and that UCAS has established a sub group to consider these recommendations in more detail. We understand that the group will make a further report to the UCAS Board at its December meeting.

Framework for success

The aim of Cambridge Pre-U remains that of providing schools, teachers and through them, students, with a framework that helps them to become truly engaged and interested, stretched and challenged; to equip and inspire them to go on to succeed at university.



Creating independent learners



Global Perspectives and Independent Research (GPR) is a core component of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma. Universities tell us that it is an excellent preparation for undergraduate study, as it gives real evidence of independent, critical thinking.

Schools feel that GPR provides a framework to help teachers to develop their students' independent thinking and study skills, in a structured way.

Angela Drew, Deputy Head (Academic) at Epsom College, has introduced Cambridge Pre-U GPR. She said: 'At Epsom, we have for some years now offered our Sixth Form students the opportunity to write a dissertation researching an area of particular personal intellectual interest. We see Global Perspectives and the Independent Research Report as a means of providing additional

academic challenge for our students.

'We have had great success teaching AS Critical Thinking to our Year 11 pupils and intend to introduce AS Critical Thinking for our most able pupils in Year 10 from September 2009. We feel that GPR would provide a topical, stimulating and engaging course for these students in their Lower Sixth year and that the IRR would allow them to develop these skills further through a personal exploration of a question that genuinely fires their enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity.'

Schools welcomed the accreditation of GPR as a separate qualification by QCA in May, making it available to students who wish to take GPR in combination with A Levels. GPR is equivalent in value to a full A Level, and is funded on a par with A Levels.

GPR Examiners appointed

Chief and Principal Examiners have been appointed for Global Perspectives and the Independent Research Report. The Principals each have between 5 and 20 years' experience in senior examining roles and come from a variety of disciplines, including History, English, Politics, Critical Thinking and General Studies.

GPR Chief Examiner, Mike Wells, has been examining since 1977. He has been a principal examiner for History and has written History textbooks and guides for teachers on AS and A2.

As a Deputy Head and Head of Sixth Form, Mike grappled with the problem of finding a good general course that would hold students' interest, challenge them, extend their awareness of the wider world and develop their critical skills to prepare them for an information-rich but sometimes judgement-poor world.

Mike said: 'If Cambridge Pre-U GPR had been available I would have jumped at it. It is easily the best course of its type that I have seen, with scope for both teachers and pupils to use it to best advantage and as an encouragement to follow intellectual interests but in an informed way.

'I am excited about the course. I enjoyed working on its development and piloting and I look forward to seeing it become an important part of sixth form life.'

Learn more!

University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) offers a comprehensive programme of professional development and support for schools offering or planning to offer Cambridge Pre-U. Sessions are tailored for different subjects and for schools that are at different stages of adoption.

The *Learn more!* events are introductory seminars for principals and directors of study, who want to know more about Cambridge Pre-U. The next series of *Learn more!* events will be held in Sheffield and London in February 2009, and Manchester and London in June 2009.

Teaching and Assessment of Principal Subjects

CIE offers subject-specific half-day courses giving an introduction to the teaching and assessment of the Cambridge Pre-U syllabus. They include:

- an introduction to curriculum and teaching resources
- guidance on how the programme can be structured within the curriculum
- an explanation of marking and assessment of procedures
- guidance on how to deliver content in the classroom

Subject-specific INSET is available for those who are already teaching

the Cambridge Pre-U syllabus, and who wish to improve the delivery and assessment of the syllabus. Practitioners are invited to share best practice with their colleagues.

The next subject-specific courses will be held in March 2009.

Setting and Marking Interim Assessments

CIE is planning a training session on 'Setting and marking interim assessments' during May 2009. This will help teachers develop and mark interim assessments for Cambridge Pre-U at appropriate standards to monitor students' progress.

Teachers of Modern Languages will have the opportunity to set the live summer 2009 short course assessments for the purpose of interim assessment in May 2009. INSET to support marking these assessments will take place in mid-June 2009.

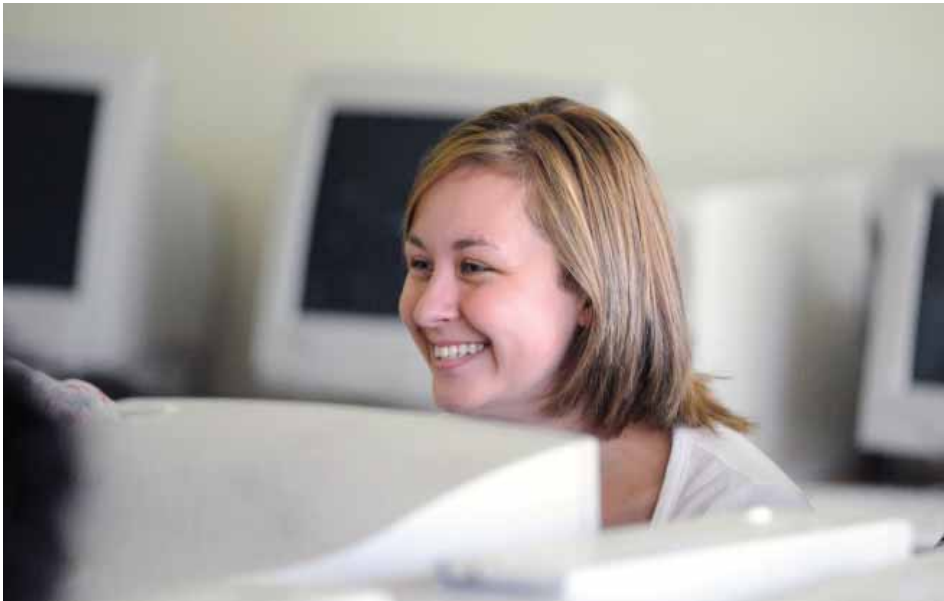
Learning more about GPR

'Teaching and assessment of GPR' events are being booked to help schools that are offering or planning to deliver GPR. Further INSET will be provided in March 2009 on marking the Independent Research Report.

Email international@cie.org.uk for INSET details. We are also happy to arrange tailored INSET for individual schools or groups of schools.

Cambridge Pre-U and maintained schools

Peter Monteath, UK Schools Manager



The Learning and Skills Council's decision to fund Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects and GPR at the same rate as A Level has paved the way for maintained sector schools and colleges to offer Cambridge Pre-U. Despite details on funding being confirmed just weeks before the start of the new academic year, several maintained schools made the commitment to offer Cambridge Pre-U from September 2008.

Cambridge Pre-U offers maintained sector schools a unique opportunity to offer an exciting alternative to their existing curriculum. This flexibility in models of adoption is valued by maintained sector schools, some of whom have rejected IB because of its perceived rigidity. The most common model of adoption for maintained sector schools is to offer a single Principal Subject in 2008, with a view to moving to more subjects

from 2009 when they have had more time to prepare the transition from A Level. Another adoption model seen in maintained schools is to offer GPR alongside A Levels, or to offer A Levels and Cambridge Pre-U in similar subjects, side by side.

Coloma Convent Girls' School, a comprehensive school in Croydon, is offering Cambridge Pre-U Business and Management alongside A Level Business Studies. Andrew Corish, Assistant Head, said: 'The girls have enjoyed the challenge of the new course. They like the high profile nature of the qualification and have enjoyed the discussions and arguments that the course provides. It has been more work for them and the teaching staff, but their commitment and enthusiasm is making it worth the effort. We are now planning to introduce further Cambridge Pre-U subjects next September.'

Linear course brings new freedom for teachers

Schools are enthusiastic about the flexibility that linearity offers them – Cambridge Pre-U allows teachers to develop their own teaching programmes that are suited to their students' capabilities and interests.

Oundle School is offering Cambridge Pre-U Economics, German and Physics. Examinations Officer, Andrew Ireson, reports that there is a real 'buzz' about Cambridge Pre-U around the school and that the teachers involved in Cambridge Pre-U are enjoying the extra 'freedom' that a linear course brings them.

Andrew says: '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.'

Teachers are also pleased that Cambridge Pre-U gives their students time to assimilate knowledge and to develop their skills, particularly in courses like Cambridge Pre-U Art and Design, rather than focus on assessment too early in Year 12.

In maintained sector schools, summer term ends some four weeks later than many independent schools; it is often described as 'dead time' between the end of AS Levels and term end. A linear course with assessment at the end allows schools to use this time more effectively.