

Achieve

Spring 2007



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT



Welcome to *Achieve*, which brings you the latest news from Europe's largest assessment agency, Cambridge Assessment.

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

Cambridge Pre-U attracts interest nationwide

Headteachers from across Northern England attended an event on 9 February at Cheadle Hulme School in Cheshire, to find out more about Cambridge Pre-U – the new alternative to A Levels and the IB (International Baccalaureate).



Paul Dixon, Headmaster of Cheadle Hulme School.

Teachers working with CIE on the development of the new Cambridge Pre-U qualification gave an insight into some of the syllabuses they have developed. The event included presentations on Cambridge Pre-U subjects including: chemistry, modern foreign languages, economics, comparative government & politics, philosophy & theology and psychology.

Paul Dixon, Headmaster of Cheadle Hulme School, which hosted the event, said: "We are very interested in courses which may remove regular modular examination pressure, to give us back more teaching time with all the cultural benefits this will bring. We would also welcome a certificate which will enable more differentiation between candidates in the top grades – making it fit for the purpose of selecting the highest achieving candidates for the most popular courses at the best Universities."

Cambridge Pre-U aims to give people the skills and knowledge they need to make a success of their university studies. It will enable students to hit the ground running during their first year at university.

Draft syllabuses of the first 14 subjects went out to schools in the UK and abroad for consultation in October. A further 12 will go out for consultation in the spring.



James R. Flynn is Professor Emeritus at the University of Otago (New Zealand) and recipient of its Gold Medal for Distinguished Career Research and now a Distinguished Associate of The Psychometrics Centre.

Intelligent thinking

Before Christmas, Professor James Flynn – best known for the ‘Flynn effect’, the discovery of massive IQ gains from one generation to another – gave the first Cambridge Assessment’s Psychometrics Centre lecture “Has intelligence been rising?”

“If you examine historic trends in IQ scores you find that massive gains have been taking place. In my work since 1981, I found this phenomenon in many different countries. On this basis, it seemed either our forebears were intellectually slow or perhaps even mentally retarded; but neither option made sense.

Analysis of IQ subtest scores suggests an explanation. We’re not smarter than our forebears but are better at solving problems on the spot without a previously learnt method. During the 20th century we have put on scientific spectacles and the rise in IQ subtest scores reflects our increased tendency to think scientifically. We’ve freed problem-solving from the concrete.

This enables us to deal with the hypothetical and hold discussions that otherwise would be impossible. There must be some saturation point in our acquisition of scientific thinking and the rise has stopped in Scandinavia.

But my wider point is that rising IQ is, at most, half the story. Other intellectual qualities – critical acumen and wisdom for instance – aren’t measured by IQ tests. The most important form of cognitive progress is enhanced wisdom. If the 20th century was the century of rising IQ, the 21st century may well be the century of critical thinking and enhanced wisdom. And in these areas, overall IQ increases have little to say.”

For a full text of Professor Flynn’s lecture, please see www.thepsychometricscentre.co.uk/publications/BeyondTheFlynnEffect.asp

Professor Flynn’s sixth book, *What is Intelligence*, will be published in August 2007 by Cambridge University Press.

ESOL funding in the UK

In the wake of confusion around the future of ESOL qualifications and their funding, Cambridge ESOL is lobbying for clarification from the UK Qualifications & Curriculum Authority and the Department for Education and Skills.

A sudden switch in policy in late 2006 led to an announcement that there will be no government funding for ESOL international provision. This would mean that established and internationally recognised qualifications, such as Cambridge ESOL’s general and business English exams will not be funded. The only possible exception to this will be IELTS.

Lee Knapp, UK Development Manager for Cambridge ESOL, said: “We are making our position clear that the UK is already well served by the range of ESOL assessments available, both to meet Skills for Life and other requirements, and that the long-term interests of

learners, employers and ESOL providers won’t be well served by a hasty and unjustified introduction of new provision. Effectively, the new policy direction means a downgrading of qualifications which are sought after by thousands of learners in the UK each year, and are already well understood and widely used by employers in this country and around the world.”

The UK Government plans to introduce a new suite of ‘ESOL for Work’/Job-focused ESOL qualifications from September 2007. As it stands, it will not attract automatic funding or be guaranteed funding for more than one year.

Evidence-based policy?

The first in a series of education research seminars takes place in the UK House of Commons on 25 April.

The Chairman of the Education and Skills Select Committee, Barry Sheerman MP, and Cambridge Assessment are working together to deliver hard evidence to politicians on a range of issues. The first seminar will deal with the controversial subject of national assessment. The UK is thinking of changing its current system of Key Stage 2 and 3 tests. A number of alternative approaches, backed by research evidence, will be put forward. A vigorous debate is expected to follow.

The discussions will cover how to enhance teaching and learning; information for school accountability; and information on national standards to inform policy. The Cambridge Assessment Group’s Director of Research, Sylvia Green, said: “Unless a new national assessment system delivers all three objectives, it will never be adopted by Government. We hope the seminar brings politicians and researchers together to solve the problems in a realistic way.”



It is planned that there will be three seminars a year featuring the best researchers from the field being covered. Current titles under discussion include: making teaching and learning more effective; what’s really happening to boys; and technology in the classroom – help or hindrance.

Dearing welcomed

UK exam board OCR welcomed Lord Dearing’s Languages Review. OCR produces Asset Languages, the assessment scheme for the UK Government’s Languages Ladder.

Barrie Hunt, Director of Asset Languages at OCR, said: “We welcome the report’s approach to assessment through the Languages Ladder at Key Stages 2 and 3 when children are developing a passion for languages. At primary the formative approach of Asset Languages is working well and at secondary many pupils are already being motivated by the scheme’s approach.”

He added: “Globalisation demands that as many of our young people as possible have access to language learning. Encouraging schools to keep their students involved to the end of their compulsory education is necessary too.”

The Asset Languages scheme is designed to reward language skills for learners of all ages and abilities from primary to adult. The qualifications are offered at six stages, in over 20 languages, in all four skill areas; listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Since September 2005, in excess of 15,000 candidates have made entries across the range of languages offered and a further 50,000 are expected to make entries for summer 2007. Over 1,400 schools have already registered an interest in making entries in the future.

Screening out cheating

Privacy filters, normally used to prevent industrial espionage, were used by 80 students in their OCR IT Key Skills Level 2 exams to help combat cheating.



80 Farnborough Sixth Form College students sitting OCR IT Key Skills Level 2 exams using privacy filters.

In a pioneering scheme, Farnborough Sixth Form College introduced the filters as part of an innovative online assessment trial.

Privacy filters are optical louvers that are placed over a computer screen which restrict the angle of view of the screen to those directly in front of it and prevent viewing from the side. In this instance, the screens were donated and produced by technology company 3M.

Dr John Guy, Principal at Farnborough Sixth Form College, said: "Our new e-assessment centre was built with the future of assessment in mind. We worked closely with OCR to make sure its software was supported by our college network and we've succeeded in demonstrating that large scale online testing – with the use of privacy filters – is a realistic possibility in the school environment."

Greg Watson, Chief Executive of OCR, said: "Cheating is a rare occurrence but it is taken extremely seriously. The punishments for anyone caught cheating range from marks being discounted in one examination, through disqualification from all examinations forever, to criminal charges. OCR examiners are trained to spot cheats, using a number of statistical techniques to ensure fairness to all candidates."

OCR's e-assessment solutions offer increased efficiency, flexibility and choice. They can be installed onto standalone PCs and laptops or they can utilise existing network infrastructures. No dedicated server or specialised hardware is required and the software is provided completely free of charge.

Setting the standard

Cambridge ESOL is working with the Colombian government to ensure every pupil leaves state education with a good level of English language proficiency.



Left to right: **Juana Ines Diaz Tafur**, Deputy Minister of Education, Colombian government, **Kate Pretty**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge, **Sharon Harvey**, Regional Manager (Latin America), Cambridge ESOL, **Simon Lebus**, Group Chief Executive, Cambridge Assessment, **Mike Milanovic**, Chief Executive, Cambridge ESOL.

From October 2007 all school pupils in Colombia will need to demonstrate their English language skills by passing a Cambridge ESOL exam as part of their *Prueba de Estado* school-leaving certificate.

The new international standard of testing comes as part of the bid by Colombia's Ministerio de Educación Nacional to equip the population with English skills for work and higher study, and the development of the *Prueba de Estado* is just one element of the collaboration. The

ECAES, a test for final year university students, also includes an English language component from Cambridge ESOL and Colombian trainee teachers are being entered for the FCE (First Certificate in English) – including, most recently, a group of 400 in December 2006.

Cambridge ESOL will work with the ministry to provide training and support so that in future, Colombia will be able to produce its own tests linked to the international standard (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

The value of internationally recognised qualifications and expertise in English language is also at the heart of a unique, government-led scheme in the Dominican Republic. The country is preparing its university students for careers in international business through the 'English Immersion Program to Meet the Competition'. Around 4,200 students are expected to take Cambridge ESOL's BULATS (Business Language Testing System) to assess their ability to deal with the demands of a global business environment. The collaboration follows a meeting between the President of the Dominican Republic, Dr Leonel Fernández, and Cambridge ESOL on a visit to the UK in 2006.

Assessment for Learning

The Cambridge Assessment Network – which provides professional development activities for all individuals involved in assessment – organised its second Excellence in Assessment seminar on 23 March 2007, on the subject of Assessment for Learning.

More than 90 delegates enjoyed a keynote paper by Professor John MacBeath, Chair of Educational Leadership at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. He set out how Assessment for Learning is designed to raise student achievement and improve their learning.

Andrew Watts, Director of Cambridge Assessment Network, said: "Delegates' reactions to the day were very positive. Many said they left feeling inspired to try new strategies in the classroom and were looking forward to the benefits they felt this style of assessment could bring to their students."

After the seminar, delegates split into their subject groups to review assessment principles, reflect on their current assessment practice and work on practical ways of implementing Assessment for Learning in their subject. They then ended the day with a plenary session where they were able to share their ideas across the groups.

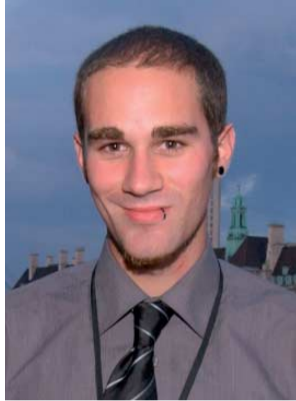
The seminar was run in conjunction with the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge and was aimed at secondary school teachers of music, art, design & technology and religious studies, as well as school managers.

The Cambridge Assessment Network will run a similar seminar for secondary school teachers of history, geography, modern foreign languages and drama on 16 November 2007. To book a place, or for further information, please email thenetwork@cambridgeassessment.org.uk



Innovation rewarded

Cambridge Assessment has awarded a six-month secondment to a student from the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff (UWIC), as a result of the Innovate to Educate Awards.



James Cook, recipient of the award from Futurelab – an education technology think tank – won the placement for his project *schools:united*.

It focused on an online social networking platform for education professionals combining networking capabilities and online collaborative tools, enabling users to submit content and knowledge as well as to collaborate and communicate with each other.

Phil Parker, Chief Architect, Application Development Group for Cambridge Assessment, said: "I'm looking forward to James joining our team in June 2007. Fresh thinking, originality and new ideas have always been part of our mission to provide excellence in assessment and James should fit right in."

The award, which is designed to encourage students in Higher Education to work with a teacher to focus their final year project on a novel digital resource to assist learning, in or out of school, was supported by Cambridge Assessment and the BBC.

16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers



Talia Sanhewe (Top Billing TV) interviews Ann Puntis and CIE's Head of International Education Dr Newman Burdett on their visit to South Africa.

University of Cambridge International Examination's (CIE) Chief Executive Ann Puntis addressed educationalists from around the world at the 16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, in Cape Town in December 2006.

The Education Ministerial Conference addresses the challenge of providing all children and young people in the Commonwealth with access to quality education. Ann joined Professor Duma Malaza, Chief Executive of Higher Education South Africa, and Professor Colin Bundy, from Oxford University, in speaking at The Right to Secondary and Higher Education forum.

CIE works in partnership with Ministries of Education, qualifications authorities and with examination and assessment boards around the world. In some countries, such as Singapore, Cambridge examinations are the state qualification for students in secondary school. There, tens of thousands of students take qualifications through CIE which are developed in partnership with the Singapore government.

In Southern Africa, CIE has worked with governments to develop national education systems, including Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, and helped to localise by training officials, teachers, markers, and examiners in curriculum development and assessment.

CIE also launched its free textbook to promote science practical teaching in the developing world at the conference's Teachers' Forum and the Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators Conference. The text book has been developed in collaboration with the International Association for Science Education using a team of writers from around the globe.

Minister of Education discusses future projects



Left to right: First Undersecretary for General Education, MoE Egypt, **Dr Reda Abou Serie**; His Excellency the Minister of Education Egypt, **Dr Yousry Saber El Gamal**; **Dr Newman Burdett**, CIE's Head of International Education; and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, **Dr Kate Pretty**.

Egypt's Minister of Education visited Cambridge in January to discuss a number of projects being developed by the Egyptian government and University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE).

His Excellency Dr Yousry Saber El Gamal met with Simon Lebus, Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment, and CIE's Chief Executive, Ann Puntis.

Egypt will be piloting the Cambridge International Diploma for Teachers and Trainers later this year with a view to rolling out the Diploma across the country in 2007.

CIE is also applying to the ministry for accreditation of its Cambridge Checkpoint programme. Cambridge Checkpoint tests are available in English, mathematics and science and are to be offered three times during the year. The service is aimed at students of approximately 14 years of age studying mid-secondary curriculums. The tests cover all major areas of learning required in the first years of an international secondary education.

Teachers kept in the picture on A Level reforms

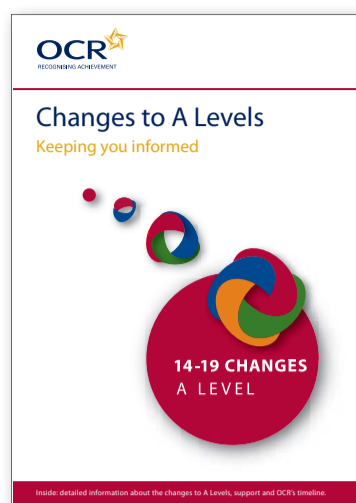
As one of the UK's leading providers of qualifications, OCR made an early start on helping teachers at schools and colleges around the UK prepare for new style A Levels which will be taught from September 2008.

OCR sent out a brochure to 50,000 heads of department and exams officers explaining the changes and provided a timeline of key dates. The brochure was issued in February, one month before OCR submitted its draft specifications for the new A Levels to English regulator, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

Clara Kenyon, Director of Qualifications for OCR, said: "Our mission is to work closely with heads of department and exams officers to prepare them for the changes ahead and offer continued support throughout the transition. The new A Level specifications are designed to benefit teachers and pupils. Our comprehensive research in liaison with schools and colleges throughout this process means that we are able to revise less popular parts of courses and develop more successful elements."

Detailed support materials such as schemes of work are being developed, and training is being planned to enable teachers to deliver the new A Levels effectively.

OCR's draft specifications were developed in line with revised QCA criteria, designed to reduce the volume of



assessment for students and marking for teachers. The revisions are also intended to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

The four main changes to A Levels include reducing the number of units, reviewing the inclusion of coursework, introducing 'stretch and challenge' and reviewing 'synoptic assessment'.

All awarding bodies are expected to offer A Levels in accordance with the revised criteria from September 2008. This applies to all subjects except Mathematics which will be revised for first teaching from September 2011.

The brochure explaining the changes to A Levels is available to download from www.ocr.org.uk/14-19changes

UK's Select Committee Inquiry into 14–19 Specialised Diplomas

OCR submitted evidence to the UK House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee Inquiry into 14–19 Diplomas.

Taking a tough line, OCR acknowledged that Diplomas represent an important opportunity. Revolutionising the 14–19 curriculum, it should help create new and engaging programmes of learning for young people. But OCR raised concerns about how the Diplomas have so far been developed and pointed out that opportunities to re-use the best of existing qualifications and systems had been missed.

Following the first Select Committee hearing on 14–19 Diplomas on 17 January, OCR submitted a follow-up letter to the committee, challenging some of the verbal evidence the Committee heard on that day. In particular, it highlighted a potential misunderstanding that the first five Diplomas were largely complete and that all the technical issues (grading in particular) had been resolved.

Both the evidence and follow-up letter can be viewed at www.ocr.org.uk/14-19/articles/alevel004.html Alongside qualifications such as OCR Nationals, Diplomas contribute to a vision of a broader, deeper curriculum for young people, incorporating an ethos of applied learning and personal skills.

Are we getting smarter?



Almost 150 people from across the globe gathered to hear Professor James Flynn's theories of intelligence and how massive IQ gains from one generation to another – otherwise known as "the Flynn effect" – at a seminar hosted by The Psychometrics Centre in Cambridge on 15 December.

Titled "Has intelligence been rising?", the seminar examined the implications of whether people today truly are substantially more intelligent than their parents and grandparents, or whether IQ tests should respond to the changing nature of human cognitive development in response to the technological revolution.

The UK's only Professor of Psychometrics John Rust, Director of The Psychometrics Centre, said: "Recent

debates on standards in education and about skills shortages in industry have highlighted the issue of 'intelligence': what it means and what role it plays in individual and national development. By hosting an event such as this we are able to perhaps acknowledge some of those questions.

The implications of his findings have been widespread; one consequence being that talk about individual



differences in ability is again respectable and no longer marginalises people on the basis of their race. Given that the assessment of ability forms such an important part of psychometrics, not only in education but also in recruitment, it enables psychometricians to focus on what they do well – the creation of reliability and valid instruments of assessment."

James R. Flynn is Professor Emeritus at the University of Otago. He is a New Zealander with an international reputation as a researcher, philosopher and author. As a psychologist, he is best known for the year-on-year rise in IQ test scores he first commented upon in 1981. www.thepsychometricscentre.co.uk (See Professor Flynn's column on page two)

e-testing on the up

More computer-based versions of Cambridge ESOL exams will be available for English learners around the world during 2007.



The new computer-based versions mean more exam dates can be offered each year, and the opportunity to make later entries will give teachers more flexibility in making sure learners are entered for exams at the best time. There will also be faster access to results, with scores made available online just three weeks after the exam.

Computer-based versions of the BEC (Business English Certificate) at Preliminary and Vantage levels will be offered from May 2007. Computer-based KET (Key English Test) will initially be available on five dates during the year, also starting from May 2007. The badge of professional knowledge for teachers of English to speakers of other languages, TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test), is to be offered from September 2007. Computer-based PET has been available since 2006, and eight dates are due to be offered this year.

Top psychometricians join Cambridge



The Psychometrics Centre – the UK's leading organisation for the study and application of psychometrics and part of the Cambridge Assessment Group – has more than doubled in size, following the launch of The Psychometrics Centre Scholarship in 2006 and with the appointment of three new psychology experts.

Emily Savage-McGlynn is the first person to receive the new Psychometrics Centre Scholarship awarded by Cambridge Assessment, which provides financial support for university fees, college fees and a generous stipend. She is a PhD candidate, studying within the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Cambridge University.

The other additions to the Centre's team are PhD candidate Paula Cruise, Occupational Psychologist Sophia Papachronopoulou-Botassi, and Psychometrician Li Xiao.

The UK's only Professor of psychometrics John Rust, Director of The Psychometrics Centre, said: "The Centre draws its staff, students and associates from many different academic and national backgrounds. This diversity has huge benefits for individual students as they are able to swap experiences and insights, enriching all their learning experiences. We are dedicated to linking the best of academic work in the area, to real solutions within fields such as education, social policy, health care and business." www.thepsychometricscentre.co.uk

Minister of Education discusses educational reforms

The Minister of Education Brunei Darussalam, His Excellency Pehin Abdul Rahman, led a delegation which visited Cambridge in January 2007.

The visit was held to give the minister the opportunity to discuss proposed educational reforms in Brunei with senior staff from University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE).

The delegation met with Simon Lebus, Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment, and Ann Puntis, Chief Executive of CIE, during the visit. They discussed the Cambridge International Curriculum and links with educational reforms in Brunei.

The Ministry of Education in Brunei is keen to continue its work with CIE on the development of the country's Lower and Upper Secondary education systems.

Left to right: **Ann Puntis**, Chief Executive of CIE; **Pehin Abdul Rahman**, His Excellency, the Minister of Education Brunei Darussalam; and **Simon Lebus**, Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment.



Czech it out!

Cambridge Assessment's Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) – a non subject-specific aptitude test, normally associated with Cambridge University admissions – will be taken by Czech students, in Czech, this summer.

The Faculty of Biological Sciences at the University of South Bohemia in the Czech Republic, will use a Czech language version of TSA on its 500 expected applicants in June 2007.

Mark Shannon, Admissions Test Team Assessment Manager, New Developments Division, said: "The TSA is a means of differentiating between candidates with equally high predicted grades. The test is an assessment of two kinds of thinking, problem solving and critical thinking. Problem solving is reasoning using numerical and spatial skills whereas critical thinking is reasoning using everyday written language. Both are considered to be important in Higher Education not only in the UK but worldwide.

"Working closely with the admissions team at the University of South Bohemia, the test will be translated into Czech. We've also identified cultural references, such as currency and geographical landmarks that the University will have to alter to contextualise the test for Czech students."

The TSA Project was established in 2001 at the University of Cambridge and use of the test has grown each year as confidence in its usefulness increases. Its results are used carefully and conditionally by colleges as additional information and never replace any traditional criteria on which admission decisions are based.

www.tsa.uct.ac.uk



Left to right: **Petr Smilauer**, Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of South Bohemia, and **Mark Shannon**, Admissions Test Team Assessment Manager, New Developments Division.

Assets rewarded



Schools Minister, Lord Adonis, hailed the success of thousands of language learners at an awards ceremony in London in December 2006. Lord Adonis presented awards to the most successful Asset Languages candidates since the programme was launched in September 2005 by OCR, as the national assessment scheme for the DfES' Languages Ladder.

The winners included eight-year-old Haris Rashid and 88-year-old Gerald Abraham – the youngest and oldest winners respectively.

Asset Languages offers an alternative route for learners of all ages to study a language at their own level of competence and at their own pace. They are assessed in one or more of the four skills – listening, reading, speaking and writing – in their chosen language. Lord Adonis said: "This is an exciting and innovative way to recognise people's ability to learn a language and to encourage them by showing real progress as they develop."

Barrie Hunt, Programme Director for OCR's Asset Languages, explained the Asset Languages assessment scheme: "It offers bite-size qualifications in popular languages such as French, German, Italian and Spanish, which people may have studied at school or speak on holiday.

"It also provides assessment for community languages (learned or spoken at home) such as Mandarin, Panjabi and Urdu, which helps recognise the diversity of languages spoken in the UK."

More information about Asset Languages can be found online at www.assetlanguages.org.uk

Setting the assessment agenda

A group of 50 headteachers from across the UK gathered in Cambridge to tackle some of the key issues concerning the future of assessment. They sought, and found, common ground between the teaching profession and exam boards.

The colloquium was facilitated by the Cambridge Assessment Network for the Specialist Schools and Academics Trust (SSAT). Despite work carried out by groups such as the General Teaching Council, the Assessment Reform Group and the DfES, some in the teaching profession still have misgivings about the future direction of assessment. The event aimed to provide an opportunity for headteachers to express their views.

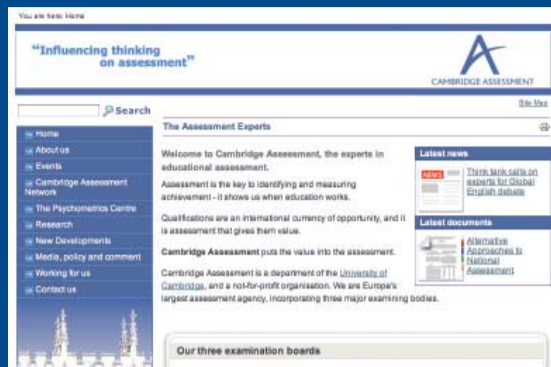
Andrew Watts, Director of the Cambridge Assessment Network, said: "The event was an opportunity to hear school leaders' views on their vision for assessment over the next decade. The areas of discussion included why we assess pupils' learning and performance; the purpose of national tests and assessments; demands currently placed on assessment systems; whether we are assessing the right things; and what are the options for assessment systems in the future."

The colloquium was chaired by leading educationalist, Professor David Hargreaves, Chair of Becta, an Associate Director of the SSAT, a senior Demos Associate and a Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge. He gave the keynote talk at the start and led the ensuing discussions. A presentation was also made by Tim Oates, Group Director, Assessment Research and Development, from Cambridge Assessment.

Findings from the colloquium will be published by Cambridge Assessment at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk

Watch this space...

Cambridge Assessment is developing a new, more useful and user-friendly website for launch this summer.



Gill Luff, Cambridge Assessment Group Brand Manager, said: "Our aim is to provide a useful resource to anyone who has an interest in educational assessment.

"The new site will make it easier for people to see what events and opportunities for professional development are available, as well as being able to access research findings and topical commentary on key assessment issues."

www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk

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IGCSE could help UK Government achieve its aims, says CIE



University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) has made its formal response to the UK Government's consultation on the use of IGCSE in maintained schools.

In the response to the consultation which ended on 22 February, CIE noted that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State had both made strong statements in support of enabling students to study for a range of qualifications. CIE believes that, in line with that policy, IGCSE should be available for teaching in state schools.

Basing its response on the desirability of extending choice and flexibility for teachers and students, CIE drew on its experience worldwide: "This use of Cambridge IGCSE – as a complement to National Curriculum assessment – is well established in many countries around the world. Its similar adoption in the UK would make a positive and significant contribution to the achievement of national assessment objectives while remaining within established international norms."

CIE points out that 'Distinctiveness within a Common Framework' explains the differences between IGCSE and GCSE. Since their near simultaneous development in 1988, the UK and the international sectors have made different, some subtle, choices in each syllabus. For example, IGCSE has split Language and Literature while the UK takes both in one qualification.

CIE states that these differences should be used to stimulate students – through allowing IGCSE to be taken in state schools. The alternative is a 'one size fits all' exam regime – the exact opposite of much of the Government's rhetoric.

The full response can be found at:
www.cie.org.uk/docs/countries/uk/CIE_response_DfES_consultation_IGCSE

Italians adopt UK style

In a move which could become a model for raising language standards in the rest of the world, Italian universities are signing up to a tailored blended learning programme created by Cambridge ESOL in conjunction with Cambridge University Press.

The B1 Cambridge English Online programme is the result of collaboration with Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI), the major body representing Italian universities. It is intended to ensure more graduates leave with the intermediate B1 level English on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The course is based on 75 hours of online self study and 25 hours of face-to-face tuition and covers all four skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking.

