

Achieve

Summer 2009



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT



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

Mind the research skills gap

Find out what skill almost three-quarters of sixth formers want to prepare them for university study. see page 8 →

Wanted: an independent regulator

Find out our views on the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill. see page 4 →

Kids do better in exams if in touch with some emotions



Top academic convinced by Cambridge Assessment's research that Emotional Intelligence does affect educational attainment.

Dr K V Petrides, Reader in Psychology and Assistant Director, University College London, was speaking at a recent seminar to debate whether the right aspects of Emotional Intelligence (EI) are being taught in schools.



He said: "This is the largest study that has been conducted in the area, ever. No other study comes close to what Cambridge Assessment has pulled off. I am absolutely convinced now that trait EI is related to performance at school. Now is the time to take research evidence and apply it to the intervention programmes that are being rolled out in schools."

The event, co-hosted by the RSA and Cambridge Assessment, on 7 May follows a recent study by Cambridge Assessment's Research Division which found a link between aspects of Emotional Intelligence – in particular self-motivation and low impulsivity (self-control) – and attainment at GCSE.

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Far left: Dr K V Petrides, Reader in Psychology and Assistant Director, University College London.

On the panel (L:R): Professor John Bynner, Emeritus Professor of Social Sciences in Education at the London Institute of Education, Matthew Taylor, RSA Chief Executive and Chair, and David Chaytor MP. Also on the panel (but not pictured) were Dr Joanne Emery, Research Officer at Cambridge Assessment and Jackie Beere OBE, author, former headteacher and educational consultant.



**David Laws MP, Liberal Democrat
Shadow Secretary of State for
Children, Schools and Families.**

A Bill without a unifying purpose...

"The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill has left the House of Commons for the Lords heavily amended, but still deeply flawed. The Government introduced an almost unprecedented number of amendments to their own bill while we were scrutinising it – though they did lose four votes on these at a committee hearing when too few of their own MPs arrived in time!

The Bill includes a ragbag of measures, which suggests a lack of direction. We are genuinely disappointed that the Government has not gone much further on Ofqual and set up what would be an objective standards regulator, rather than a body that will simply seek to regulate existing qualifications.

If the intention behind the establishment of the body is to end the annual debate where the Schools Minister and others have to pop up on TV in the middle of August to comment on standards of GCSEs and A levels, it will not work. Ofqual has been set up in a very limited form and not given the ability to comment on educational standards in a way that could allow all those interested in the education debate in this country to understand what has happened to standards over time. Without that basic understanding, we have little chance of having policy that is informed by fact, rather than dogma.

There is an awful lot in the Bill which adds to the bureaucracy of schools. The new complaints procedures, the regulations surrounding the use of force, and the search powers all bring in extraordinary burdens which head teachers object to and which will make their job in schools much more difficult.

Finally, an aspect of the Bill that showed up the incoherence of Government thinking in terms of accountability is that of school oversight. The Young People's Learning Agency is being established to cover the academies programme because, in a nutshell, the Government do not have confidence in the ability of local authorities as commissioners and standard setters at a high level.

If we cannot trust local authorities to do their job of overseeing schools and as the first tier to hold those schools to account for the standards that they deliver, we have a real problem, not only with the average schools and the better than average schools but with the many schools in this country which are in challenging circumstances and which are performing badly, but which are not academies at present. The Government must resolve this contradiction.

This is a Bill without a unifying purpose, which could do real damage if it is passed into law as it stands. The House of Lords, where the Government does not have a majority, now have the opportunity to make amendments on all of these issues."

Kids do better in exams... continued from page 1



Chaired by Matthew Taylor, RSA Chief Executive, the event brought together a panel of educational experts – including: David Chaytor MP; Professor John Bynner, Emeritus Professor of Social Sciences in Education at the London Institute of Education; and Jackie Beere OBE, author, former headteacher and educational consultant.

Tim Oates, Group Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment, said: "We see that social background makes a major impact in terms of attainment – and this research, in terms of scrutiny of data, suggests very strongly that Emotional Intelligence in the way in which we've measured it, also makes a difference in terms of attainment."

Many UK schools, both at primary and secondary level, are involved in Government-backed initiatives such as the DCSF's Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme.

Meanwhile, Dr Kathryn Ecclestone, Professor of Education at Oxford Brookes University, challenged: "I'm really pleased that this debate is happening. However, it's also an abdication for me of the idea that we can inspire people through subject knowledge – learning something really meaningful and deep, not learning about myself and my capabilities."

Other respondents included: Felicity Martin, Headteacher, Eggars School, Alton; James Park, Director, Antidote; and Sonia Sodha, Senior Researcher, Demos.

To download the research or video and podcast of the event, visit the EI viewpoint on:

www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk



Felicity Martin, Headteacher at Eggars School being interviewed after the EI seminar.

A century of change

300 teachers of English as a foreign language were set a special task, at a celebratory evening in April, to mark the 800th anniversary of Cambridge University.

They were invited to answer a question from the original 1913 paper in the Certificate of Proficiency in English examination. The question was set by Dr Nick Saville, from Cambridge ESOL, as a way of illustrating how much exams have changed over the past century.

The celebration – jointly hosted by Cambridge ESOL and Cambridge University Press at Cardiff's National Museum – coincided with the annual conference of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language.

Dr Saville's presentation covered the past, present and future of language assessment. He used the opportunity to launch a new 2009 research volume on how key Cambridge ESOL exams have developed over the last few decades. The audience was offered

an insight into: *Examining FCE and CAE: Key issues and recurring themes in developing the First Certificate in English and Certificate in Advanced English exams* by Dr Roger Hawkey – the latest from the popular Studies in Language Testing (SiLT) series. Now in its 28th volume, SiLT covers a wide range of important issues in language testing and assessment.



Dr Nick Saville,
Director of Research
and Validation at
Cambridge ESOL.

(For all candidates.)

1. Give the past tense and past participle of each of the following verbs, dividing them into strong and weak; add explanations: *tell, wake, buy, eat, lay, lie.*

Whodunit?

Students can now sample what it takes to become a forensic scientist – without experiencing the gory bits – by playing a new online game.

The cartoon-styled game, *Apartment 13*, illustrates the skills required to be a forensic scientist, what a day's work may involve, and the career opportunities available. It has three distinct parts – Crime Scene, Autopsy and Courtroom – providing a murder mystery scenario in which the player assumes the role of a forensic scientist to analyse evidence, perform an autopsy, and ultimately identify the guilty party from among three key suspects.



Apartment 13 was produced by OCR, in association with viral and digital marketing agency TAMBA, to showcase its range of OCR Nationals in Science qualifications – in particular its Forensic Science unit.

Michelle Hughes, OCR eMarketing Manager, said: "We were looking for an innovative way of showing teachers and learners just how exciting our OCR Nationals in Science qualifications are. One of the units is Forensic Science so the use of an online 'CSI-style' viral game, where you actually take on the role of a forensic scientist, seemed like the ideal route. We have found viral marketing to be one of the best ways of promoting the benefits of our qualifications to a vast audience in a very short space of time."

In addition to Forensic Science, OCR Nationals in Science offer many other exciting units including Science in Sport, Food Science and Science of Health and Body Care.

OCR Nationals are exam-free alternatives to GCSEs and A levels that offer an engaging and practical approach to learning and assessment. Students are motivated through the use of a 'real work' style in addition to having optional units available to study, which in turn will help them to develop skills that can be used in the workplace. Offered at Levels 1 to 3, they cover a wide range of industries and sectors: Business, Travel and Tourism, Information Technology, Health and Social Care, Sport, Public Services, Design, Science and Media.

To play *Apartment 13* visit: www.ocrnationals.com/sciencegame

What role should the state have in assessment?

As major changes to the UK education system – regulation, setting up of new agencies, and the allocation of responsibilities – are underway, mapping the consequences and implications of these changes is a vital process.

Cambridge Assessment's 4th annual conference will debate what role the state should have in defining the framework for assessment systems.

The conference, *Issues of control and innovation: the role of the state in assessment systems* will include keynote sessions by renowned speakers Professor Alison Wolf, the Sir Roy Griffiths Professor of Public Sector Management at King's College London and Professor Robin Alexander, Fellow of Wolfson College at the University of Cambridge.

Experts including Professor Mary James of the Institute of Education, University of London; Isabel Nesbit of Ofqual; and Dr John Allan from the SQA; will lead a series of seminars on the day.

Public policy experts, educationalists and assessment specialists are expected to attend, as well as those working for national and local education bodies, political parties, awarding bodies and employers' organisations.

For further information about the conference on 19 October 2009 at Robinson College, Cambridge, and to book a place, email thenetwork@cambridgeassessment.org.uk or telephone +44 (0)1223 553846.

Read more about the conference in the interview with Tim Oates, Group Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment, on page 4.

How to think and reason

A new qualification in 'Thinking and Reasoning Skills' is about to be launched in response to a demand from schools.

The qualification features a blend of reasoning and broader thinking skills, giving students the opportunity to develop in a number of areas such as:

- Conceptual thinking in order to explore ideas and their connections.
- Enquiry skills enabling them to generate their own questions in relation to evidence and information.
- Problem solving so that they can organise and analyse data and draw conclusions from it.
- The ability to question evidence for relevance, significance and credibility.
- Reasoning so that they can analyse arguments, evaluate reasoning and develop logical arguments of their own.

A range of centres are currently being recruited for the two year pilot of the new Level 2 OCR qualification, which begins from September 2009.

Pilot centres taking up the new qualification will be supported by a kick-off meeting in the summer term 2009 ready for first teaching in September 2009. OCR plans to provide resources such as lesson plans, assessment materials, and schemes of work to support teachers in preparing and delivering lessons.

Higher Education and business leaders have been calling for young people to have greater thinking and reasoning skills for some time.

Visit www.ocr.org.uk to find out more.



Tim Oates, Group Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment.

How far should the state control assessment?

Education journalist Mike Baker talks to Tim Oates, Group Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment, about a forthcoming conference on the role of Government in school assessment.



The involvement of the state in assessment matters is always potentially controversial. Moreover, it is currently in flux around the world with several national governments turning to independent agencies to run national assessment systems.

But getting the right balance between Government accountability and professional independence, without damaging public trust, is critical.

This, according to Tim Oates, is the rationale behind an autumn conference in Cambridge entitled: *Issues of control and innovation: the role of the state in assessment systems* (see page 3 for conference details). The conference will look at the ways different countries approach the difficult issue of where the balance of authority should lie in assessment systems.

Recent events in England have made this issue urgent. There was huge political embarrassment over the marking problems with the 2008 national tests for 11 year olds. The resulting political outcry led to allegations of heavy-handed Government involvement in assessment arrangements from the former head of the national assessment agency.

At the same time, England is creating a new regulatory body, called Ofqual, to oversee examinations and assessment. According to Tim, this is "a crucial stage" and "if we make mistakes now, we will have to deal with unintended consequences for a very long time".

He believes there are serious dangers if regulatory bodies like Ofqual attempt to directly run qualifications, rather than regulate them. If regulation operates through specifications for qualifications that are too narrow or too detailed, the responsiveness of the examination system may be seriously curtailed. "If Ofqual becomes, in effect, an awarding body it will threaten the ability of exam boards to be flexible and to adapt to the changing needs of learners, society and the economy".

Professor Robin Alexander, from the University of Cambridge, who has been conducting a major inquiry into the curriculum and assessment in England's primary schools, is one of the keynote speakers. Professor Alison Wolf, from King's College London – a powerful critic of excessive Government interference in educational reform – is the other main speaker.

Tim acknowledges that governments have a proper role in setting the framework for school assessment systems. In each country context, the balance which needs to be struck is likely to be different. For England he argues that "light touch, strategic regulation is right and helpful". But he says the price of excessive detail and unworkable arrangements would be a system unable to respond to the needs of schools, universities, students and parents.

For more information about the conference visit: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/annual-conference

Wanted: an effective, accountable and independent regulator

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill – which aims to deliver Ofqual, a new regulator of qualifications that will act as a guardian of examination standards – has now passed through the House of Commons and is currently doing the rounds in the House of Lords.

During the House of Commons Stages extensive sector representation and media coverage indicated that there is a strong public desire to ensure the regulator has greater autonomy from Government and more accountability to Parliament.

There is also overwhelming cross-party political support for unequivocal Ofqual autonomy and accountability; a Cambridge Assessment survey of 150 MPs found over 90 per cent of MPs agreeing that a regulator should have a duty to report its key regulatory decisions to Parliament, that Parliament should play a key role in ensuring regulators operate independently from Government and that Parliamentary scrutiny is critical to making sure regulators are accountable and transparent.

Cambridge Assessment has been actively involved in offering suggestions on areas of the Bill which, in its view, require attention and/or change. It has also circulated a briefing paper to highlight matters of concern to a range of MPs, Peers, Officials and Stakeholders.

A number of amendments aligned with Cambridge Assessment's arguments were debated in the Second Reading and through the Committee Stage of the lower House of Parliament – although the Government remained committed to its own version.

At the time of writing, the first major debate on the Bill has just taken place in the UK's upper chamber – the House of Lords. Again, many drew attention to Cambridge Assessment and its concerns. It now goes into Committee for detailed discussion on individual clauses from 16 June. A briefing meeting of Peers held by the Group recently showed a wide degree of concern on its issues, particularly amongst independents.

A more detailed report of Cambridge Assessment's work in Committee and its suggested amendments to the Bill can be found in the *confidence in standards – Ofqual independence* Viewpoint on: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk



Cambridge Assessment is focussing on a number of key themes:

- Confidence in Standards – Clause 138; Power of Secretary of State to determine Minimum Requirements**
This clause reinforces public perceptions of ministerial interference and undermines the shared aim of providing 'Confidence in Standards'. To ensure public confidence Ofqual must not be viewed as a Government agency.

In addition, it believes this clause to be inimical to good education, particularly as the UK department has control over funding as well as what is taught through the National Curriculum. It is calling for this clause to be deleted from the Bill.
- Proportionality – Clause 143; Review of Activities of Recognised Bodies**
This clause gives Ofqual wide powers to investigate any matter – such as contact with Parliamentarians. This will lead to Ofqual being taken away from its core duty of maintaining standards.

Clarity is needed to define "connected activities" and it is suggesting that the clause be amended by adding in the words "directly or materially affecting the public examination system".
- Transparency & Accountability – Clause 164; Annual and other reports**
This clause requires Ofqual to lay Annual Reports before Parliament. No detail exists and the Government retains huge reserve powers.

The Lords Second Reading provides an opportunity to look at best practice with regard to securing maximum transparency.

Enabling access to a Cambridge education

A new scholarship scheme will enable students from Pakistan to study in Cambridge without the worry of creating financial burden for their families.

The University of Cambridge 800th Anniversary Scholarship Programme – funded by Cambridge Assessment – was announced in Pakistan in May by Simon Lebus, Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment and Ann Puntis, Chief Executive of University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). William Bickerdike, CIE's Regional Manager for the Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan organised the event.

School-leavers from Pakistan who meet the usual admission criteria for the University of Cambridge will be invited to apply for the scholarships. They are competitive and conditional on the offer of a college

place at Cambridge for October 2010. Simon Lebus said: "We play an important role in supporting the University's outreach mission and, in doing so, provide opportunities for more and more young people to access the benefits of education."

As the programme develops there are expected to be up to 15 undergraduate scholars from Pakistan studying at the University of Cambridge at any one time.

CIE qualifications have been available in Pakistan since 1915, and CIE works closely with schools there. Currently, more than 450 schools throughout Pakistan offer Cambridge O levels and International A levels.



Press conference in Lahore (L:R): Ann Puntis Chief Executive of CIE, Simon Lebus, Group Chief Executive at Cambridge Assessment and William Bickerdike, CIE's Regional Manager for the Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan.

Managing the difference of devolution

Wales now has its own forum where providers of vocational qualifications can consider ways of meeting the distinctive needs of Welsh learners.

The Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) Advisory Group for Wales met for the first time in May and appointed OCR's National Manager for Wales, Robin Hughes, as Chair. FAB is a membership body representing organisations that award vocational qualifications in the UK.

Robin Hughes said: "This is a very positive development. It will help awarding bodies who are providing vocational qualifications to learners in Wales to engage with the policies that are shaping the Welsh education system. And when we do that, we can provide a service that meets the needs of learning providers and their learners here in Wales."

Education and training policy has become increasingly distinctive in Wales since its devolution a decade ago. The most significant is the expansion of vocational

learning for 14–19 year olds and the launch of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

OCR has had an office in Wales since 1994 and is working with providers and stakeholders to increase the range of assessment that is available for learners in Wales, including assessment in the medium of Welsh. OCR supports over 400 learning organisations throughout Wales and delivers over 100,000 OCR qualifications every year to learners of all ages.

For more information about OCR's work in Wales, visit: www.ocr.org.uk/cymru



Global popularity

Worldwide entries for the Cambridge IGCSE June 2009 session have increased by almost 20 per cent on last year.

Cambridge IGCSE – developed by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) over 20 years ago – is taught in more than 125 countries.

In the UK, schools are increasingly interested in Cambridge IGCSE as a means of extending choice in the curriculum. It is currently offered in more than 300 independent schools. Ofqual has accredited 16 of the most popular Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses, including Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics. CIE is in discussion with the DCSF regarding funding for Cambridge IGCSEs and their inclusion in school league tables.

Dr Kevin Stannard, CIE Director, International Curriculum Development, said: "We hope that state-maintained schools will one day have access to the qualification, but not at the risk of losing the features that schools around the world value, and which make it unique."

Do you speak financial English?

Employers can now help to improve their workforce's ability to conduct business globally or to communicate with international clients and colleagues in English with the launch of a new course.

Cambridge Financial English is a 'blended learning' course designed to help individuals improve their financial English skills. It has been developed by the University of Cambridge ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), Cambridge University Press and ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants).

The course can also be used by tuition providers delivering to potential or existing business students.

Mike Milanovic, Chief Executive, Cambridge ESOL, said: "English is the language of the financial sector, and it's really important for employers to be confident that their workforce have the language skills they need. We've worked with experts in financial English to develop a flexible course that combines online study with face-to-face training. It covers real-life topics that accounting and financial professionals will face and gives them the confidence they need to effectively communicate in the workplace."

The course helps to develop the four language skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Cambridge Financial English may also count towards the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements of members of accountancy and finance professional bodies.

For more information visit: www.financialenglish.org



Cinderella helps Argentinian children

An adaptation of the fairytale *Cinderella* was recently announced as the winning entry in a competition to find the most innovative approach to English language teaching in Argentina.



Silvana Piergiovanni presenting her winning project to Cambridge ESOL.

The project: *Discrimination: a change is possible*, enabled students, through the use of art and culture, to translate a story into English to which they could relate to. It was a cross-curricula initiative, incorporating script writing, stage design, choreography and the production of invitations.

The teacher behind the winning project is Silvana Piergiovanni, who teaches at a public primary school attended by a number of pupils from the disadvantaged area of 'Fuerte Apache' near Buenos Aires.

The competition, 'Innovation in ELT', was organised by the British Council, and supported by British Airways, Cambridge ESOL and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL).

Cambridge ESOL's Chief Executive Dr Mike Milanovic praised her approach to teaching English. He said: "It is really inspiring to see such creative approaches to teaching. This level of commitment has encouraged the children to develop skills that will be of use to them throughout their entire lives. When you consider the limited resources which were available, the extent of Silvana's achievement is incredible and I am pleased she has been acknowledged for her commitment, innovation and creativity in the classroom."

As part of the prize, Silvana recently visited the UK and attended the IATEFL conference in Cardiff.

Inspired and informed

Former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion discussed the challenging aspects of making English accessible and the art of teaching poetry as part of a new initiative to engage with teachers about the changes to GCSEs in 2010.

Writing about the events in his diary for the *New Statesman*, Andrew Motion said: "It's hard for anyone to measure their effect on an audience, but the effect of the audience on me is palpable: it feels like a call to arms. This is one of the battles I've been trying to fight for ten years now – to make poetry more accessible to children as an expression of the fundamental human relish for words, their play, and their connection with strong feeling – and there's a lot more to do before anything like a victory can be declared."

His talks were part of a series of free regional events called *Talk English*. The events (in association with The Poetry Society) were run by OCR and aimed at teachers and local authority advisors – regardless of which exam board they work with.

The events provided teachers with tips, techniques and practical content that could be taken away and used in the classroom. It also offered them the chance to ask questions and to network with others in their field.

Talk Maths – in association with Millennium Mathematics Project – is another series of regional events that OCR has been running. Highly-respected mathematicians Rob Eastaway, Dr Jennifer Piggott, Simon Singh and Andrew Jeffrey, provided entertaining and informative talks on how to engage students in Maths.

Further GCSE 2010 events on English, Maths and ICT are being planned for this summer, to provide teachers with the opportunity to learn and discuss the new specifications and how OCR can help them through the process of delivery. For further information please visit www.ocr.org.uk/events for details.



Clockwise from top left: Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate 1999 to 2009; Adisa from the Poetry Society at the London event; and Maths expert Andrew Jeffrey at the event in Manchester.

2010 GCSE developments – English, Maths, and ICT

Over the next 18 months a number of key developments will take place in the new English, Maths and ICT GCSE specifications. These developments – initiated in response to the QCA revision of subject criteria – include a series of consultations, events and research programmes, designed to ensure the specifications are ready for use in September 2010.

English

The introduction of the GCSE English Language specification will mean that there will be three GCSEs in total – the others being GCSE English and GCSE English Literature. Importantly, due to amendments to the rules governing what kind of information is recorded by school and college achievement and attainment tables, schools will have to consider whether they offer learners English or English Language/English Literature. Schools may wish to offer all three depending on the ability of their learners.

Assessment changes mean that coursework will be replaced by a system of Controlled Assessment. This change has been introduced by the regulator to address persistent problems such as plagiarism. GCSE English and GCSE English Language will include 60 per cent

Controlled Assessment and GCSE English Literature, 25 per cent.

These qualifications can either be sat in a linear or modular way and are available at both foundation and higher tier. Students can be entered across two or more examination series and units can be retaken only once, subject to entry requirement rules.

Maths

Changes include the introduction of new subject criteria with new Assessment Objectives: recall and use knowledge of the prescribed content (45–55 per cent weighting); select and apply mathematical methods in a range of contexts (25–35 per cent); and interpret and analyse problems and generate strategies to solve them (15–25 per cent). Also, September 2010 will see the introduction of a 'twin' GCSE Maths pilot that is part of the new Key Stage 4 programme of study and will require candidates to sit qualifications in both Applications of Mathematics and Methods in Mathematics. It is intended that the twin pilot will incorporate additional content over and above that of the single GCSE.

ICT

Changes include a shift in focus, with the introduction of a more practical and hands-on approach from

the outset. OCR considers the new GCSE ICT to be an ideal opportunity to revitalise perceptions, and manage expectations, to create a wholly up-to-date specification. Further changes to the specification include the replacement of ICT coursework with Controlled Assessment, with the final grade comprised of 60 per cent Controlled Assessment and 40 per cent external assessment. Controlled Assessment units are likely to have broad set tasks which can be contextualised to suit centre requirements.

OCR is assisting the development of its new specifications with a comprehensive support package for teachers and learners including: INSET, specimen assessment materials, a controlled assessment guide, guidance on the changes and delivery, and materials from publishing partners Oxford University Press and Hodder Education.



Passionate about English

English teachers were treated to a live and interactive display showcasing an extensive range of English qualifications at one of the most important events in the English teaching calendar.

The National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) 2009 conference and exhibition – of which OCR is a major sponsor – is an annual event for teachers, lecturers, consultants and researchers on the teaching of English from primary to post-16.

Visitors to OCR's stand were greeted by actors dressed in Shakespearean costume who provided performances of entertaining theatre, whilst a caricaturist immortalised the visitors in a similar Shakespearean style. Qualification specialists were on hand to provide advice and guidance on specific qualification content and to tell teachers about the latest developments to its 2010 English GCSE specifications.

Emily Almeida-King, OCR Product Manager, said: "Our research shows that English teachers are extremely passionate about literature and NATE allowed us to highlight this – demonstrating in particular the development of our 2010 English GCSE specifications. Our events team worked really hard to bring this passion to life, using the teaching of Shakespeare as a fundamental element."

Guest speakers at this year's event included: Anthony Horowitz, TV and children's writer; Jean Binta Breeze, Jamaican poet; and Luke Abbott, National Manager, Mantle of the Expert. The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and the Globe Theatre were also in attendance.



Assessment for a creative world

Cambridge Assessment's involvement in one of the most important events on the assessment calendar goes from strength to strength. As the host of last year's International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) Annual Conference, this year Cambridge Assessment will present four research papers and deliver a seminar at the 35th IAEA Conference in Brisbane, Australia, 13–18 September.

The year's theme is 'Assessment for a Creative World'. Keynote speakers include Professor Patricia Broadfoot CBE, Vice Chancellor of the University of Gloucestershire, and Professor Barry McGaw AO, Director of the University of Melbourne Educational Research Institute (MERI).



Keynote presentation by Professor Robert J Mislevy from IAEA 2008.

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Photography: cover: flowers, Big Ben; page 3: girl in classroom; page 5: flag. Design: H2 Associates, Cambridge

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Mind the research skills gap

Almost three-quarters of sixth formers feel they would be better prepared for university if they were taught research skills at school.



Cambridge Pre-U GPR students from Central Sussex College.

The findings come in a survey of 2,000 16–19 year-olds commissioned from OnePoll by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE).

The survey asked sixth formers how ready they are for university study and what they expect when they get there. Regarding specific skills – being able to carry

out independent research and write a dissertation – 74 per cent thought that learning how to do independent research at school would be a big help at university.

To bridge the gap between school and university, CIE developed the Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives and Independent Research (GPR) course, helping students learn how to follow and deconstruct arguments, separate fact from fiction, and assess and evaluate the truth of claims. Cambridge Pre-U GPR can be taken with other Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects and with A levels.

The survey found that the longest piece of written work most 16–19 year olds have completed is either 1,000 or 2,000 words. Cambridge Pre-U GPR gives students a chance to dig deeper into a particular subject and to develop research proposals, one of which forms the basis of the 4,500–5,000 word Independent Research Project.

Vietnam strengthens links with Cambridge

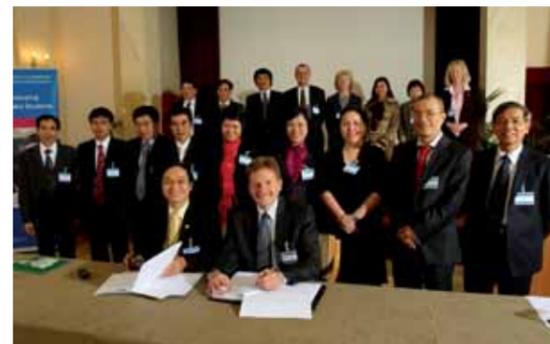
Education officials from Vietnam visited CIE recently to find out how its Cambridge International Curriculum can be adapted to different regional contexts.

The talks gave the delegation from the Department of Education and Training (DOET) in Vietnam an opportunity to hear about University of Cambridge International Examinations' (CIE) approach to education: from qualifications and assessment services to professional development for teachers. In turn, CIE learnt more about current education provision in Vietnam.

The visit ended with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding which will open up greater communication between the two bodies.

Stefanie Leong, CIE's Regional Representative for Vietnam, said: "The Memorandum of Understanding is a sign of the respect that governments and schools

have for CIE. It is certainly a positive move, especially for students in Vietnam. I am now looking forward to working more closely with DOET and schools in the region." CIE works in partnership with more than 30 Ministries of Education worldwide.



Talking my language

A project to help British children who do not have English as their first language is raising the profile of so-called 'community languages'.

'Community language' refers to languages with which learners have an affinity through their ethnic background. In England nearly 15 per cent of children in primary schools, and 10 per cent in secondary schools, do not speak English as their first language.

Over the last 18 months, Asset Languages – owned by OCR – has been closely involved in a project funded by DCSF to raise the status of community languages. Nearly 100 schools are now participating in the 'Our Languages' project which supports the teaching and learning of community languages through building bridges between mainstream and supplementary (also known as complementary) schools.

The expertise of Asset Languages has been sought by the DCSF because of the experience it has in the

assessment and accreditation in 25 different languages. In 2007/8, for example, Asset was used to assess the learning of 16 different languages in primary schools alone.

Asset Languages is relevant to community language learning as it can provide assessment for learners at virtually any age and the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing can be assessed separately and at different levels. Asset's flexibility suits the uneven skills profile of someone with a community language: a Gujarati-speaking fourteen year old, for example, who may have the speaking skills of someone at a high GCSE level but whose reading and writing skills may be weaker.

Visit www.ourlanguages.org.uk to find out more.