

# Achieve

Autumn 2015



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT



## Welcome to *Achieve*

The latest news from Cambridge Assessment, the University's international exams group.



## Education that's fit for the future

Teachers from around the world debate 21st century learning. see page 8



## Special ingredient

Celebrity chef Heston goes back to the classroom. see page 8

## Cambridge first for godfather of knowledge

**A knowledge-based core curriculum increases equity and "dramatically and significantly" raises attainment in schools, a renowned thinker in education has told a conference.**

Academic E.D. Hirsch told a large audience in Cambridge that the importance of knowledge was already accepted in Asian countries but that it was a challenge to convince some people in the United Kingdom and the United States who "basically hate the idea of a lockstep education".

"How do we persuade people who are devoted to individuality to go where science and common sense take us?" he asked. "How do we avoid antagonising most of the population and offending our own preferences for heterogeneity?"

Professor Hirsch, who has been a leading figure in US education for more than 30 years, was credited with inspiring recent education reforms in the UK including an overhaul of the National Curriculum. Nick Gibb, the Schools Minister for England, has said about him: "No single writer has influenced my



Professor E.D. Hirsch spoke in Cambridge for the first time on the theme of 'Equity, attainment and core curriculum'.

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Geoff Barton

## From Suffolk to Shanghai

I don't watch a lot of television but when I do it's never – I mean never – programmes about education. An adolescence of the BBC school drama series *Grange Hill* taught me that lesson. So I haven't seen the BBC's recent documentary *Chinese School*, in which five teachers from China took over the education of 50 teenagers in a school in England.

But I have worked in education for 30 years and, in the past 10, been to several actual Chinese schools. Our comprehensive school in Suffolk, England, has a longstanding partnership with the Yangjing-Juyuan Experimental School, a highly successful junior high in Shanghai.

As everyone knows, Shanghai is one of the top-performing education principalities in the world – especially in mathematics. Suffolk, on the other hand, isn't top-performing. Yet teachers and officials from Shanghai join the annual visit of their students to our school and warmly welcome our 30 or so students and staff when they make the return visit.

Their interest is in something they believe they lack in their schools – creativity, a sense of independence in their students and a spirit of inquiry.

What we see during our return visits is that culture trumps teaching quality. The lessons we see are often textbook-led, focused heavily on closed teacher questions, short student answers, all conducted in an atmosphere of congenial, not oppressive, discipline.

But our strong view is that it's not what happens in the classroom that makes the real impact on Shanghai students' performance. It's what happens at home. Because we see students who go home and do at least three hours of work each evening, who often attend private lessons on other days, and who know that they should aim to achieve more highly than their parents.

Expectations, aspiration and culture play a very significant part in shaping the motivation of the students. They ensure that there is no poor behaviour. They help to create a work ethic which, whilst impressive, also has an underbelly. We see the stress levels of students, the anxiety of parents, the exhaustion of teachers.

None of this is to belittle or decry the schooling we see in Shanghai. We are learning much from their uncompromising ambition. But it is a reminder for us to beware of the lure of international envy and its associated assumptions; that if only we did over here what they do over there, then we'd be as successful.

Education is rarely that simple – except, perhaps, when depicted on television.

Geoff Barton is Headteacher at King Edward VI School, a 14–19 comprehensive upper school in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, England.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Pi in the sky

Schools around the world are taking part in a unique weather experiment.

Weather stations operated by credit card-sized Raspberry Pi computers have been installed at schools and other locations around the globe.

The Raspberry Pi Foundation teamed up with US software giant Oracle to give away 1,000 weather station kits free to schools. The kits are supported

by a range of teaching and learning resources provided by UK exam board OCR for its GCSE and A Level Geography and sister exam board Cambridge International Examinations for its Cambridge IGCSE® Geography.

Under the project, schools will be able to gather and access data from hundreds of weather stations around the world, enabling students to learn about computing, meteorology and geography.



Cambridge Assessment has joined schools around the world by installing a weather station at one of its UK offices.

#### More universities join the Cambridge club

More than 500 new organisations have this summer joined the list of institutions that accept an exam board's qualifications for admissions purposes.

In America, the University of Tulsa, the Manhattan Institute of Management and the University of Calgary have all started accepting Cambridge

English Language Assessment exams for admissions purposes, while in Japan the list includes Meijo University and Kanda University of International Studies. Cambridge English says that its exams can help institutions reach more international students and be confident in their applicants' levels of English.

## Results to remember

This year has seen another significant increase in schools using international exams.

Cambridge International Examinations held its largest ever exam series in June 2015, with global entries up by 15 per cent on last year, including eight per cent growth in entries for its International A Level and 23 per cent growth for its IGCSE.

More than 2,000 schools in the UK received results for Cambridge IGCSE First Language English qualifications. Across all subjects, Cambridge IGCSEs are increasingly widely used by schools in England. Entries in 2015 were up 56 per cent on 2014, and 2014 saw a growth of 55 per cent on the year before.

Almost a third of students in England taking an English Level 2 qualification this year took them.

Michael O'Sullivan, Chief Executive, Cambridge International Examinations, said: "It is not just about the examination. Schools tell us that they like our syllabus content and that students find it engaging. Teachers tell us the syllabus is not only enjoyable to teach, but has offered them stability during a time of change and uncertainty around the curriculum and exams. In Cambridge IGCSE, they see an internationally respected qualification with well-maintained standards."



## Cambridge first for godfather of knowledge

*continued from page 1*

thinking on education more.” Interestingly however, Professor Hirsch has never spoken in the UK before.

During his talk, organised and sponsored by the exam group Cambridge Assessment, a department of the University, he traced the history of progressive thinking in education and the idea that children’s development “naturally unfolds” rather than being taught. It was a “deeply wrong theory that has been the source of enormous inequity,” he said.

“To ask [disadvantaged] children to ‘unfold naturally’ is an unwitting educational crime,” he added.

“The ability to act and communicate effectively within the cultural commons is a requisite to the success of any citizen, with success defined minimally as the ability to earn a good living, participate in democratic self-government, and meet every citizen as an equal.”

He told the audience, which included Amanda Spielman, the chair of Ofqual, the exams regulator in

England, and Dame Rachel De Souza, Chief Executive of England’s Inspiration Trust academy school chain, that it was the duty of schools to impart knowledge and the best way of achieving that was with a grade-by-grade core curriculum. He called on universities such as Cambridge to help increase acceptance of a knowledge-based curriculum, particularly because unlike elected representatives they avoided accusations of political bias.

His talk was followed by a series of questions and comments from an interested audience. Before his

appearance in Cambridge, Professor Hirsch had spoken at a London event hosted by the think tank Policy Exchange, sponsored by Cambridge Assessment, and he went on to speak at an Inspiration Trust school in Norwich, England. All events proved popular on social media, with the London event one of the top conversation topics on Twitter.

You can watch a video of Professor Hirsch’s Cambridge talk here: [www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/news/cambridge-first-for-godfather-of-knowledge](http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/news/cambridge-first-for-godfather-of-knowledge).



## British Isle goes international

The autumn has seen the roll-out of the Cambridge IGCSE across all schools in a British Crown dependency.

Last year the Isle of Man Government decided to switch away from the English GCSE system following a public consultation.

“The decision to move almost wholesale to one exam board was the most radical change in the Island’s education policy since the Second World War,” said Professor Ronald Barr, Chief Executive of the Department of Education and Children, Isle of Man.

“At the end of this process, we had a very clear mandate – in some cases, as strong as an 80/20 split in Cambridge’s favour.

“We had parents, young people and employers telling us consistently that they liked the term ‘international’ because we’re an international jurisdiction as a Crown

Professor Ronald Barr,  
Chief Executive of the  
Department of Education  
and Children, Isle of Man.



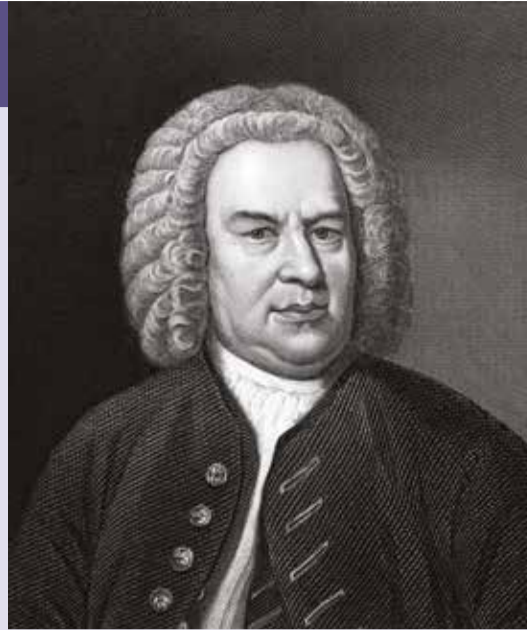
dependency, and that they liked the connection back to GCSE. There was a sense that Cambridge has international credibility and that it wouldn’t be subject to the same political pressures as the GCSE.”

By the end of this academic year, more than two-thirds of the GCSE provision will have moved across to Cambridge IGCSE.

## Cultural capital

A UK exam board is calling for a re-evaluation of the importance of creative subjects.

OCR says that figures show the creative industries are vitally important to economies the world over and in the UK alone they are worth £76.9bn. Despite this, over the last few years numbers taking creative GCSEs have plateaued, and gone down at A Level. Creative subjects are not included in the five core subject areas of the EBacc performance measure used in England's schools – although they will count towards the new, broader 'Progress 8' performance measure being introduced in 2016.



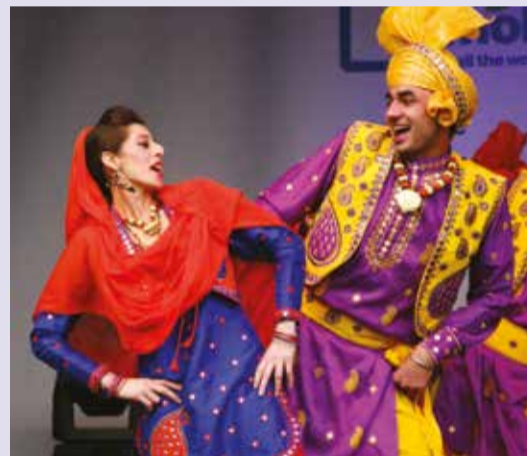
J.S. Bach

*"They take inspiration from the 'best of British' but also from the 'greatest of global' – from Bach to Bhangra, Purcell to Frank Lloyd Wright, Lady Gaga to The Beatles, and Jean Paul Gaultier to Willy Russell."*

Paul Steer, Head of Policy at OCR, said he was concerned that the arts are too often dismissed as easy options: "The arts are certainly not easy. They take really hard work and require students to dig deep," he said.



Lady Gaga



Bhangra performers

OCR says it has worked hard to make its new creative GCSEs and A Levels relevant and engaging.

*"They take inspiration from the 'best of British' but also from the 'greatest of global' – from Bach to Bhangra, Purcell to Frank Lloyd Wright, Lady Gaga to The Beatles, and Jean Paul Gaultier to Willy Russell," Paul added.*

### The arts help develop 'self-starters' and emotional intelligence

All require the student to set their own agenda from within themselves, rather than follow set topics as in other subjects. They have to make independent decisions all the way, and be self-critical. They also need to be brave in exposing their creations, and accept criticism. Working in teams makes students into good communicators.

### The arts are stretching

Music, art and drama require long hours of hard work and dedication. Students have to pay great attention to detail, to perfect and redo. Putting on a play, exhibition or concert takes strong organisational skills.

### Arts students are highly sought after by employers

Many employers now actively seek those who have studied the arts. Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, was fond of saying his success was due to his hiring artists and musicians fascinated by technology rather than 'computer geeks'.

### Arts 'reach the parts other subjects can't reach'

The arts develop the broader dimensions of the human being – mind, body and soul. The arts can express the inexpressible and make sense of things that otherwise do not seem to. This can be very fulfilling and helps us function as human beings – which can only be good for society as a whole.

### Arts 'reach the students other subjects can't reach'

Teachers find arts subjects particularly beneficial for two groups: those who struggle with traditional subjects and those who are high achieving. Less academic students can become defeatist if they feel they can't achieve: drama, music or art can be the place they blossom. With studious students, the arts can bring them out of themselves and be a release.

*Compiled by OCR Subject Specialists Marie Jones (Music); Karen Latto (Drama); Jane Beagrie (Art and Design).*

## The English ambassador

A teacher from Colombia has been praised for a project that got the whole community involved in learning English.

Diana Yama from Instituto Champagnat in Colombia has been named as Cambridge English Schools Ambassador 2015 after impressing judges with a case study about her work since joining the Cambridge English School network, a programme jointly run by exam board Cambridge English Language Assessment and publisher Cambridge University Press.

"The level of entries was really high but Diana's case study stood out from the crowd," Mariana Calderon from Cambridge English said.

"She got the whole community involved in her project, which was to improve the level of English.

"This included parents taking exams to improve their own English, the support of the school's parents' association and teachers taking exams and teaching qualifications to improve their own language and teaching abilities. It was a really impressive project."

Diana said the programme has had a huge impact on the school and all the students have been really enthusiastic in extracurricular activities.

The other finalists – Graham Ward from Frederic Mistral – Fundació Collserola, Spain, and Priscila Jaramillo from UEPRIM, Ecuador – also



demonstrated their commitment to the programme and to improving the level of English in their school through their presentation. A video of the event is available on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JB4vyJVAOLE>.

## Prediction is a difficult art

A study has shown how hard it is to predict how students will do in exams, with teachers in the UK getting more than one in two forecast grades wrong.

Figures show that in 2014 43 per cent of A Level forecast grades were correct, compared to 48 per cent in 2012. Researchers Tim Gill and Dr Tom Benton, from Cambridge Assessment, say that one explanation for the fall in accuracy might be reforms which have led to the removal of most January exams in England, as teachers often used these to help their predictions.

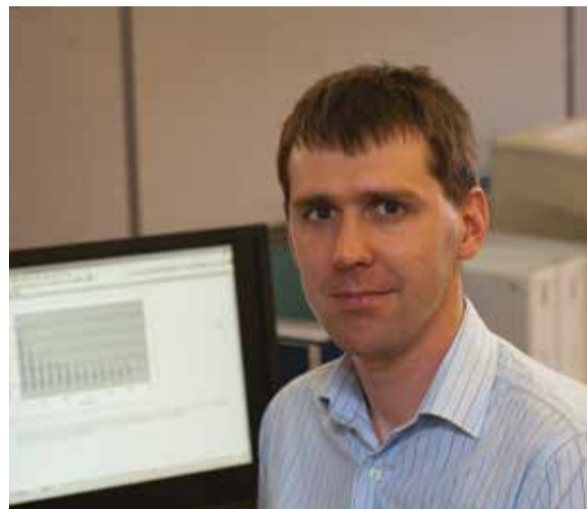
The researchers point out that in the vast majority of cases, the forecast grade was either correct or within one grade. In 2014, around 88 per cent were correct or within one grade, while nearly 12 per cent were more than one grade out. In 2012, nearly 92 per cent were correct or within one grade, while around eight per cent were more than one grade out.

Teachers in the UK were more likely to be over-optimistic in their forecasts (43 per cent) than pessimistic (nearly 14 per cent).

The data is broken down by school type and shows that independent and grammar schools were the most accurate at forecasting A Level grades. The researchers say this might be because students at these schools generally achieve higher grades, and higher grades are easier to predict.

The figures are not the predicted grades sent to UK university admissions service UCAS in January each year, but are instead forecast grades sent to UK exam board OCR in May. They are part of a series of statistics that the board traditionally used to help set grade boundaries.

Sylke Scheiner, OCR's Director of Assessment Standards, said the figures showed how important it is for teachers to be involved in examining and develop their assessment skills.



Researchers Dr Tom Benton and Tim Gill.

"This underlines the need for more teachers to become examiners so they can really understand the nuts and bolts of how their students can perform," she said.

The research was published alongside reports on forecast grades for OCR GCSEs in 2013 and 2014, which show a fall in accuracy from nearly 47 per cent to nearly 44 per cent. They are all available to view at [www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/statistical-reports](http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/statistical-reports).



## An assessment first

The first ever course for leaders in educational assessment has been declared a success.

Exam board executives, academics with an advisory role, policymakers and ministry officials from countries including The Bahamas, Indonesia, Lesotho and Portugal, came to Cambridge in September for a week-long course held by a respected training and professional development organisation.

The wide-ranging programme from the Cambridge Assessment Network embraced trends in examining and assessment worldwide, including international surveys; the role and impact of assessment in society; and the day-to-day job of managing an assessment agency.

Each delegate was matched with a Cambridge Assessment staff member for one-to-one in-depth discussions on issues pertinent to delegates' contexts. And despite the intense programme, there was time for networking and informal discussions including a candle-lit college dinner, a visit to a local school and a tour of the landmark Ely Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, England.

Next year's Leadership in National Assessment programme will be held from 19–23 September 2016 and you can register online at [www.canetwork.org.uk/leadership](http://www.canetwork.org.uk/leadership).



Delegates and staff on the 2015 Leadership in National Assessment course.

## Moldova students can bypass the Bacc

**Moldova has introduced new rules which mean that students who pass one of a range of English language tests will be exempt from having to take a school exam in that subject.**

The Ministry of Education in Moldova has recognised a range of Cambridge English exams as proof of ability in the language. The recognition was officially approved by the Comisiei Naționale de Examene (National Exams Committee).

Under the new rules, students who have passed *Cambridge English: First, Advanced, Proficiency* or an *IELTS* test will gain an exemption from the high school Baccalaureate. Students will be given a grade 10 in the Baccalaureate exam if they have passed a recognised English language proficiency exam at Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Level B2 or above.

The Ministry of Education in Moldova joins other ministries of education who already offer exemptions to Cambridge English certificate holders, including the ministries of education in Romania, Lithuania and Slovakia.

## Bilingual pioneers

**A school located in one of the world's southernmost locations has been praised for its pioneering approach to bilingual education.**

Michael O'Sullivan, Chief Executive of Cambridge International Examinations, toured Colegio Integral de Educación Río Grande (CIERG) on Tierra del Fuego at the beginning of September as part of a visit to Argentina.

Michael said: "CIERG is pioneering bilingual education in Tierra del Fuego. English-speaking Argentinian teachers work closely with their Spanish-curriculum

colleagues – and the children are already exemplars of the 'Cambridge learner' attributes! Even the primary children are keen to speak English and unafraid of doing so in front of their classmates."

As part of his visit, Michael addressed the ESSARP (English Speaking Scholastic Association of the River Plate) Conference in Buenos Aires on the theme of how to foster creativity and innovation.



Teachers and students at CIERG with Michael O'Sullivan, CEO of Cambridge International Examinations (centre).

## Ocean explorers

**A new Geography A Level will for the first time cover migrant trafficking and piracy, rising sea levels and sustainable fishing.**

UK exam board OCR has introduced a new 'Exploring Oceans' option as part of a new 'Geographical Debates' section of the A Level. As well as exploring the secrets of the seas – from ownership of polar ice caps to subterranean fossil fuels – students will also be able to study other major global geographical debates including climate change, the future of food, disease and hazards. Through case studies on these debates, A Level students will have the opportunity to make sense of topical events happening in the world around them.

Mark Smith, Subject Specialist for Geography at OCR, said: "With the chance to explore areas like 21st century piracy, pandemics and plastic pollution, there has never been a more exciting time to study geography at school. Our new specification aims to bring to life the intrinsic links between physical and human geography, giving students a greater understanding of the challenging events they hear about on the news every day."

Geography is one of the 10 most popular subjects taken at A Level in the UK, and the skills learned are valuable to employers.

Mark added: "The need to combine numeracy, literacy, teamwork and analytical skills, plus cultural agility, spatial and environmental awareness, make geographers sought after for almost any profession."

Subject to Ofqual accreditation, the new A Level will be introduced into classrooms in England from September 2016.

## Proof of English popular in Pakistan

Key figures in Pakistani education have met to discuss how to increase access to English language assessment.

Universities, schools, language centres and training centres across Pakistan are offering their students the chance to earn Cambridge English certificates, which cover every level from the *Cambridge English: Young Learners* tests for children, through to advanced professional development courses for language teachers. The importance of these certificates has even been recognised by the office of Pakistan's Prime Minister, which said in a letter to the Institute of Career Development that increased access to the

certificates will "benefit the Pakistani education community as a whole, especially young students".

During the event in Lahore, which was hosted by Andrea McKay from Cambridge English, plans to engage with the exam board for both teacher training and English assessment exams in higher education (HE) institutions of Punjab were announced. Izhar Hussain, Director of the Center for Executive Education at the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi and

Dr Osamah Qureshi, Director of the Institute of Career Development, highlighted the areas in which Pakistani institutions can take advantage of Cambridge English programmes and what their experience has been so far.

Senior members of the Punjab Higher Education Commission attended the event. The Commission is interested in endorsing *Cambridge English: Business Certificates* and will be recommending that HE institutions set up preparation centres.

## Making languages work

There are four key ways to boost the language skills needed for employability, the European Parliament has heard.

Nick Saville, Director of Research at exam board Cambridge English Language Assessment, said that it was vital to promote a multilingual agenda, be realistic about what is necessary and achievable in language learning, make more use of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and ensure that communicative language skills are developed.

Dr Saville was speaking at an event held with the Association of Language Testers in Europe to mark European Day of Languages 2015. The event was hosted by a long-standing supporter of multilingualism, Finnish Member of the European Parliament Hannu Takkula.



Dr Nick Saville from Cambridge English, MEP Hannu Takkula and a sign language interpreter during the seminar on language skills and employability.



MEP Hannu Takkula taking part in a survey which asked what languages people can speak.

"As a realistic, if challenging objective, I think that we should be aiming to ensure that our school leavers and graduates are achieving a CEFR level B1 in at least one foreign language, preferably in two, with more emphasis on spoken language ability," Dr Saville said.

During the week more than 600 people took part in a survey which showed that dozens of languages are spoken in the European Parliament, from Hindi, Mandarin and Arabic through to Maori and Welsh.

## The bilingual challenge

A new book reveals some of the many ways schools worldwide are practising bilingual education.

*Language Rich: Insights from Multilingual Schools* by Stuart Shaw, Helen Imam and Sarah Hughes was published in September by Cambridge University Press and shares findings from an ongoing programme of research into bilingual education at Cambridge International Examinations.

The exam board says that many schools worldwide offer its international qualifications in bilingual settings, but opting for an English-medium education presents anxieties about achievement – not only achievement in the second language, but how to maintain the first language as well. Its research has led to many practical

initiatives, including a bilingual survey tool – shared in the book – to help schools evaluate their own context.

Fred Genesee, Professor of Psychology, McGill University, said: "While we all appreciate the need for bilingualism as a result of globalisation, few of us fully understand the complexities that schools that provide bilingual programs of instruction face when trying to meet these demands. Findings from research projects sponsored by Cambridge International Examinations provide unique and important insights into bilingual education, practices and assessment in multilingual schools around the world."



## University challenge

Over the last three decades exams in the UK have changed significantly, and are now changing again. In the same period the proportion of the UK population going into higher education has increased dramatically: from around 10 per cent to around 40 per cent of 17–19 year-olds. But throughout this, one thing has stayed constant – the UK admissions system.

How can this be? Has the UK's Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) remained so effective in a shifting world that no change has been needed? These are just some of the questions being asked by Richard Partington, Senior Admissions Tutor at Churchill College, Cambridge, at a free seminar in the city on 18 November. For more details and to reserve a place at *Is the HE Admissions system in the UK fit for purpose?* go to [www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/events/is-the-he-admissions-system-in-the-uk-fit-for-purpose-2015](http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/events/is-the-he-admissions-system-in-the-uk-fit-for-purpose-2015).



Richard Partington will be exploring UK university admissions at an event later this month.

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*Design: H2 Associates, Cambridge*



## Special ingredient

**A Michelin-starred chef is supporting a draft new cookery GCSE in the UK.**

Heston Blumenthal demonstrated some of the cooking methods that students will learn as part of UK exam board OCR's new GCSE in Food Preparation and Nutrition in a report on the BBC's *Breakfast* news programme. Heston, along with a team of chefs from his Fat Duck restaurant in Bray, Berkshire, met a group of enthusiastic students at St Michael's Catholic College in London to demonstrate some of the cooking methods that students will learn as part of OCR's new GCSE.

His workshop at the school included using eggs to make a stable emulsified sauce (mayonnaise) and as a raising agent (meringue), as well as an eye-catching liquid nitrogen demonstration.

"Heston's natural curiosity and scientific approach to cooking complement the new GCSE perfectly and will enthuse students as they discover the essentials of food science, build strong practical cookery skills and a good understanding of nutrition," OCR Subject Specialist, Sandra Marsh said. "His enthusiasm and his input in developing new resources is fantastic."



Heston said: "My own passion for food began with questioning everything about the science behind cooking – which is what we need to encourage kids to do in schools. Helping them to understand why eggs make a soufflé rise or liquid nitrogen produces smoother ice cream makes a massive difference. It's how they get engaged, learn and develop the confidence to experiment and get creative in the kitchen."

He will be working with OCR on a series of explanatory videos to bring the syllabus to life in the classroom, and 'Heston's hints' will be folded into a new Hodder Education text book that will accompany the GCSE.

OCR Subject Specialists Sandra Marsh (left) and Gill Taylor, with Heston Blumenthal and food teacher Scott Bradley (right).



## Education that's fit for the future

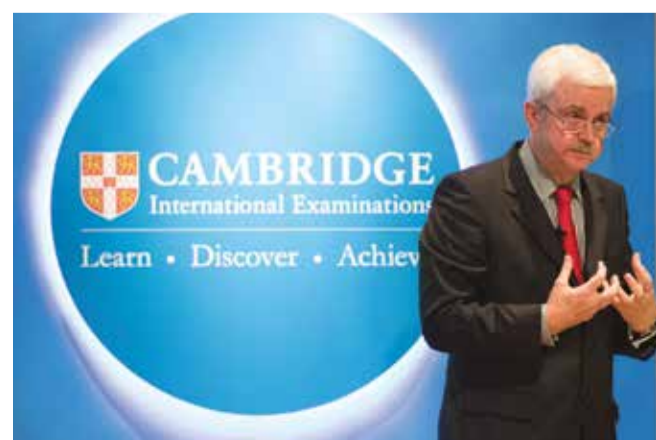
**Education systems worldwide need to be adaptable, skills focused and learner centric to be fit for the future, a conference has heard.**

More than 200 teachers from 50 countries discussed how to help prepare young people for the challenges of the 21st century at the Cambridge Schools Conference in September.

During the conference, world-renowned international education experts took to the stage to outline their ideas and drive debate on the education we need to help develop lifelong learners who are confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged.

Speakers included Tony Little, fresh from his 13-year tenure as the Headmaster of Eton College, who noted the importance of adopting a holistic approach to education, developing visionary teachers and nurturing the relationship between teacher and student. Professor Stephen Heppell discussed how to make better physical and virtual spaces for teaching and learning, while Professor Gordon Stobart outlined the challenge of balancing 21st century skills with setting 'standards' for accountability and selection. Another speaker, Veronica Boix Mansilla, the Chair of Harvard Graduate School's Future of Learning Institute, stressed the need to prepare young people for participation in an interconnected world.

Michael O'Sullivan, Chief Executive, Cambridge International Examinations, said: "As educators, it is crucial that we understand the particular changes which are prominent in our times that impact teaching and learning. That is why this year's conference theme is so important. Whilst the challenges that arise from the falling away of jobs for life, 21st century globalisation and the rise of digital technology defy simplistic solutions, we have a responsibility to prepare ourselves and our learners as best we can with an education that is fit for the future."



Speaker Tony Little, former Headmaster of Eton College.