

Achieve

Spring 2009



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT



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

Online sensation

An online game promoting OCR Nationals has become an internet smash hit. See page 6 →

UCAS tariff confirmed

Cambridge Pre-U, an alternative to A level being offered by both the maintained and independent sectors gets UCAS points. See page 7 →

Empowering young women in Zambia

More than 150 young Zambian women have embarked on new business ventures including a pre-school for street children, a goat-rearing and meat trading company, and a sunflower oil pressing company, as part of the tailor-made leadership programme designed to give young women living in rural Zambia greater independence.

The Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women Certificate Programme in Young Women's Leadership and Enterprise is a five year programme developed by Cambridge University and Camfed International, a leading charity dedicated to the education of women in Africa. The programme has huge benefits for the local community and will enable up to 500 young women in rural Zambia to acquire business skills.

The Judge Business School and University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) represented Cambridge University in the project, developing the course materials and ensuring that the qualification is robust.

CIE's expertise in delivering and assessing international qualifications made them a key partner in the project. Ursula Underhill, a Qualification Manager at CIE, who helped design the syllabus and is closely following the progress of the students, said: "CIE is committed to extending access to the benefits of education and we are



Students in lessons for the young women's Leadership and Enterprise course.

proud to witness the growing empowerment of these young Zambian women."

The first phase of the programme has now been completed. Upon completion of all three phases of the programme, the young women receive the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women

Certificate in Young Women's Leadership and Enterprise – a recognised qualification that will open doors in their search for meaningful employment, and give them confidence to succeed.

Learn more about Camfed at www.camfed.org



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

www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk



Kathleen Tattersall OBE
Chair of Ofqual

One step closer...

Since Ofqual was created in April 2007, we have certainly achieved some key successes in our work and have grown as an organisation in our own right. Although at the moment we remain part of QCA, as we reach our first anniversary, I'm pleased to say we are one step closer to achieving full independence as the second reading of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill has now been introduced by Parliament. The legislation will provide the framework within which we will operate as an independent regulator with the powers to fulfil our responsibilities to maintain standards and promote public confidence in the quality of qualifications, examinations and tests.

Legislation aside, Ofqual has had an eventful first year which took many unexpected twists and turns. We did not seek these challenges but they provided unexpected chances to make our voice heard. By commissioning Lord Sutherland to carry out an independent review of the 2008 National Curriculum Tests, we sent out a clear message that we will take strong action whenever problems occur.

In addition to the Sutherland inquiry, we have launched important initiatives and consultations relating to topics such as reliability, awarding body efficiency and performance as well as monitoring the introduction of the new Diploma.

In relation to regulated qualifications I am pleased that Ofqual will have the power to monitor and review the activities of awarding organisations to ensure compliance with Ofqual's regulatory requirements. We have, however, made clear that we wish to work with awarding organisations to jointly strengthen the system and build on the achievements of the past.

To regulate effectively Ofqual must be clearly independent and transparent. We must also be able to act in ways that give learners, parents, teachers and employers confident that qualifications, tests and examinations are of a high quality, and that the qualifications and assessment system has integrity. I am confident that the new legislation will enable Ofqual to achieve these outcomes.

News in brief

IELTS celebrates 20th anniversary

2009 marks the 20th anniversary of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as the leading benchmark of English language proficiency for higher education and migration. Since it was introduced in 1989, the test has evolved into a truly global product with candidate numbers growing from a few thousand each year to over one million in 2008. As part of the anniversary celebrations, joint owners, British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations will be involved in a series of projects covering achievements to date and developments for the future.

Cambridge Assessment Conference

The fourth Cambridge Assessment Conference, *Issues of control and innovation: the role of the state in assessment systems*, will feature keynotes from Professor Robin Alexander (University of Cambridge) and Professor Alison Wood (King's College London). Bringing together leading analysts and commentators to scrutinise current developments, it will harness the insights of public policy experts, educationalists and assessment specialists to make a radical contribution to discussion of issues of control of assessment. Further details and a booking form for the October conference are available at www.assessnet.org.uk.

International delegates visit Cambridge to learn about assessment

In May the Cambridge Assessment Network will be welcoming international participants on its two-week residential course *Public Examinations: Development and Administration*. The course attracts delegates from around the world, and looks at the design and delivery of public assessment. Details about the course are on www.assessnet.org.uk.

It's all about 'e'

E-learning, e-assessment and e-administration were top of the agenda at the fourth Cambridge International Advisory Seminar in February.

School representatives from Cambridge International Centres in more than 15 countries attended the event. Delegates also visited a local school, Coleridge Community College, to gain insight into how UK schools are implementing new technologies.

The annual Cambridge International Advisory Seminar – hosted by Cambridge International Examinations – provides a forum for CIE to work in partnership with schools worldwide on educational issues.

Cambridge IGCSE gets UK accreditation

Fifteen Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses have received Ofqual accreditation and are now listed on the UK's National Database of Accredited Qualifications.

For accreditation purposes, the syllabuses will be titled 'Cambridge International Level 1 and Level 2 Certificates' in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. They will continue to be known across the world as Cambridge IGCSE.

University of Cambridge International Examinations – who developed the IGCSE more than 20 years ago – is now discussing with the Department for Children, Schools and Families whether the qualification can be funded for teaching in maintained schools and included in league tables.

Choice and flexibility for teachers

Cambridge ESOL's flagship teaching qualification, the Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Delta), now has a modular framework. This provides an accessible professional development programme with flexible entry points, making it easier for candidates to balance work commitments with further study. The first candidates sat the new modular version of the exams in December 2008.

Delta is an internationally recognised qualification that aims to deepen candidates' understanding of the principles and practice of teaching the English language to adults. It can be used to help existing teachers progress their career in teaching English to speakers of other languages.

The modular aspect is designed to suit the needs of today's teachers by offering more choice and flexibility. The modules, which can now be taken independently cover:

- Module One: Understanding Language, Methodology and Resources for Teaching

- Module Two: Developing Professional Practice
- Module Three: Extending practice and English language teaching specialism

Nick Charge, Examinations Manager at Cambridge ESOL, said: "So far the take up and feedback has been extremely positive and we are confident candidates will benefit from this version of Delta. In the past, it was often a challenge to juggle work commitments and further study – since December this convenient format encourages learning in progressive stages."

OCR Nationals help students to capture the moment

Students from one of Britain's leading sixth form colleges were given the opportunity to showcase their photographic work at a public exhibition in Aldershot, as part of their OCR Media National Certificate course.

The work of the 16 and 17 year olds from Farnborough Sixth Form College was inspired by the theme of 'identity', drawing on the importance of family and friendship.

Rachel Jarvis, the College Subject Leader for Media, said: "The students have put so much hard work into this exhibition. The photographs look fantastic – they could easily be the work of professionals.

"The whole project has embraced our key aims of motivating students in a meaningful way in order to raise their achievement."

OCR Nationals are an alternative to GCSEs, taking a more engaging, practical approach to learning and assessment. Industry-relevant qualifications geared to key sector requirements, these vocationally related qualifications are increasingly popular with schools and colleges, and suit a range of learning styles.



Clockwise from top-left: Alex Turner, *Don't stand still*; Lee Munshi, *Goal!*; Alex Turner with course tutor Collette Brennan and *Wisdom*; Jade Armstrong, *Progress*.

Asset Languages earn UCAS points

Asset Languages qualifications at Advanced Stage have been awarded UCAS tariff points.

The points for Asset Languages – the assessment scheme designed to reward the progress of language learners – come into effect for entry into higher education from 2010 onwards.

Vivienne May, Asset Languages Senior Manager, commented, "We are very pleased that our qualifications have been allocated tariff scores. Many schools and colleges are entering language learners for our Advanced Stage qualifications. They are being used alongside AS/A level courses, as part of short immersion style language courses, for subsidiary language learning, or with Year 11 pupils who have been fast-tracked through a language GCSE. All these learners can now benefit from earning UCAS points for their success with our qualifications."

Asset qualifications at Advanced Stage were used by more than 50 schools and colleges who made over 1,500 entries in 2007/8. As well as French, German and Spanish, candidates can now be entered for Advanced Stage qualifications in Arabic, Chinese – Cantonese and Mandarin, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Turkish.

Asset Languages is a flexible assessment scheme designed to reward the progress of language learners. It assesses pupils for their skills in the separate skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and there are multiple opportunities for tests throughout the year.

Developed by awarding body OCR and Cambridge ESOL, Asset provides accreditation by mapping learners' skills against the Languages Ladder. The Languages Ladder is a national recognition scheme launched as part of the Government's National Languages Strategy.

The newly allocated points for Advanced Stage Asset Languages qualifications, at Grades 10, 11 and 12 of the DCSF Languages Ladder, are shown in the table below.

UCAS tariff scores for Advanced Stage Asset Languages qualifications

Advanced Stage	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Speaking	12	20	28
Listening	11	18	25
Reading	11	18	25
Writing	11	18	25

UCAS points for Advanced Asset Languages (four skills)

45	74	103
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At Seaton Burn Community College in North Tyneside, a group of eight Year 11 pupils learning French were entered for Advanced Stage tests of their speaking skills last summer.

Katherine Storey, Head of Modern Languages, said "The students passed their GCSE exam in French at the end of Year 10. In Year 11, they followed a course which laid the foundations for A level French. We decided to enter them for the Asset qualification because it gave us the flexibility to prepare the students for a level 3 examination in just one skill. This was quite a challenge given that it led to an A level equivalent rather than an AS which is what we had prepared them for in the past.

The students were really motivated by their experience and six out of eight of them chose to continue with their French studies in the sixth form. Whilst the remaining two students decided to follow a different pathway in the sixth form, they have an additional qualification which complements the subject which they chose to study and they are delighted that it has now been recognised by the universities and will provide them with UCAS points."

Can emotional intelligence predict success?

Some aspects of emotional intelligence – in particular self-motivation and low impulsivity – significantly predict attainment in GCSE Sciences over and above the contribution made by academic ability (as measured by KS3 attainment) according to research carried out by Cambridge Assessment.

To open a wider debate on the issue, Cambridge Assessment will host an event in conjunction with the RSA on Thursday 7 May to discuss the effect of emotional intelligence upon learning.

Dr Joanne Emery, Research Officer at Cambridge Assessment, said: "There are lots of definitions of emotional intelligence but, very basically, it's a range of emotional and social skills and behavioural dispositions – people's ability to recognise and manage their own emotions and also those of other people.

"As educational researchers, we were interested in why some children make more progress at school than others and we felt that emotional intelligence, as well as conventional academic ability, might affect achievement at school. It seemed very plausible that factors like motivation and emotion management would affect learning outcomes and psychologists working in this area have claimed that these skills predict achievement in school and beyond.

"There has also been a government initiative to teach emotional and social skills to school children, with the intention of improving their achievement as well as their behaviour, so we wanted to see if emotional intelligence really is related to greater success at school."

The event will enable teachers and policy-makers to make their views heard. Do they think emotional intelligence has an effect on learning and is it possible to improve it with training programmes? Is funding appropriately allocated, are the right aspects of emotional intelligence being taught, and are the desired effects being achieved?

The next stage of the research by Cambridge Assessment will match the emotional intelligence scores of the participants in the sample to all their GCSE results in order to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and performance in a wider range of GCSE subjects. In particular it will address subjects such as English, Art and Drama, where understanding people's feelings are more obviously related to the subject matter. We believe that emotional intelligence may prove to be an even more important predictor of performance in such subjects.

If you're interested in attending the event, bookings can be made (subject to availability) via the RSA website at

<http://www.thersa.org/events>

Successful thinking for all

More than 100 teachers explored the cross-curricular benefits of thinking skills, at an OCR-hosted conference held at Rugby School, one of Warwickshire's own hotbeds of reasoning and thought.



The *Successful Thinking for All* conference at Rugby School.

Thinking skills encompasses the well established critical thinking skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis but also a far wider and more extensive range of thinking skills including problem solving, information processing and creative thinking.

The event-packed day included contributions from distinguished speakers. Professor Stephen Higgins of Durham University looked at thinking skills at all Key Stages of Education. Head of the Sixth Form at Bishop Challoner School discussed teaching practice in relation to the A level in Critical Thinking, while the Director of Studies at Rugby School considered how thinking skills could be used in projects at foundation, higher and extended levels. This was followed by an introduction

to OCR's new level 2 qualification in thinking skills (GCSE equivalent) by a teacher from Stoke Sixth Form College.

Feedback from the day has been extremely positive with Jane Simister, Director of thinking skills Programme at Northwood College in London, saying: "The conference was really excellent. I am very much interested in future conferences such as those being held in May and June which will introduce practical materials that can be used to teach Thinking Skills courses."

Details of further OCR conferences/events can be found on the OCR website at www.ocr.org.uk

Ofqual – More independence needed

Cambridge Assessment will be carefully following the passage of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, through Parliament during the course of 2009.

The Bill aims to deliver a new regulator, Ofqual, to act as the guardian of education standards. It is vital that Ofqual is a transparent and accountable regulator, but the Bill does not go far enough to ensure that it will. Vital issues about reporting to Parliament, the role of the Select Committee and duties to report particular actions, need to be addressed.

The Secretary of State, Ed Balls MP, announced that he intended to introduce an independent regulator to build up trust in educational assessment – something that has been eroded over the last decade or more. We fully support this objective and we believe that, in order to secure public trust, it is essential that Ofqual is not merely a Government agency, or is even perceived as such.

The best regulators look to create long-term trust and credibility by acting transparently, authoritatively and

with integrity. Ofqual needs to have the capacity to do that. The Bill as it has been introduced to the House of Commons threatens to create an organisation that falls short of those goals. Cambridge Assessment will be working with others in the sector to strengthen Ofqual's hand for the sake of giving us all standards that we can have confidence in.

The Bill has been published and was first debated in the House of Commons on 23 February 2009.

Cambridge Assessment will be following the Bill's progress throughout the year as it completes its Parliamentary stages.

You can keep up to date with what we're thinking on

www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/spotlight

Better Training: Better teachers?

Leading education experts from Oxford and Cambridge universities raised their concerns over the effectiveness of current teacher training programmes provoking a lively discussion around some fundamental questions about teacher education at Cambridge Assessment's fifth Parliamentary seminar.

The seminar, *Better Training: Better teachers?*, was hosted at the House of Commons by Barry Sheerman MP, Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee – which is undertaking an inquiry into Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers.

Guest speakers were Professor John Furlong, Director of the Oxford University Department of Education and Dr David Pedder, Lecturer in Educational Leadership and School Improvement at the University of Cambridge. They presented some of their thoughts and findings before participants staged a fascinating discussion on the national state of initial teacher training and continuing professional development in the UK.

Professor Furlong talked about the role of initial teacher education and raised a series of interesting points about the steps that could be taken in order to drive quality in the current provision of teacher training. He proposed the weakness of ITT is the weakness of the knowledge base of the teaching profession itself. He highlighted the need for a suite of 'signature pedagogies' that teach people to think like, act like and be like an educator.

Dr Pedder called for a more strategic approach to CPD planning to provide for the wide range of needs that exist in schools today. Findings from his research suggest that a great deal needs to be done to target CPD and to enable teachers to make the most of the opportunities on offer.



Tim Oates, Cambridge Assessment's Group Director of Assessment Research and Development, said: "For me, the seminar confirmed that, admittedly important, debates about the form of teacher education have effectively suppressed recognition of the importance of definitive subject-specific pedagogy. Cambridge Assessment plans to research this area, and will link this to qualifications development, accompanying INSET, and learning materials designed for qualifications."

Over 140 teaching professionals, including researchers and practitioners attended the event. Discussions from the seminar will undoubtedly lead to further debate during the planned inquiry into this educational area.

Visit www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk to watch the seminar and to download Professor Furlong's and Dr Pedder's presentations.

Cambridge takes 800th celebrations to Greece

The positive impact that Cambridge's English examinations have had in Greece was recognised at a special celebratory conference in Athens at the beginning of this year, as part of Cambridge University's 800th anniversary.



Cambridge ESOL's Chief Executive, Dr Mike Milanovic speaking at the British Ambassador's residence in Athens.

Speeches from Cambridge ESOL's CEO Dr Michael Milanovic and British Ambassador Dr David Landsman OBE focused on how close collaboration between Greece and Cambridge University – of which Cambridge ESOL is a department – has allowed greater educational opportunities in Greece. The audience of 200 guests included a number of Greek nationals who have studied in Cambridge.

Cambridge ESOL has provided English language opportunities for well over a million students since the exams first became available in Greece in 1938. It also has a commitment to continuing widening opportunities through close collaboration with authorities and business partners in the region.

Andy Chamberlain, Cambridge ESOL's Regional Manager in the area explained some of the benefits this long standing relationship has encouraged: "We have been offering language opportunities in Greece for over seventy years and have issued well over a million Cambridge ESOL certificates to Greek candidates to date. Our language qualifications have opened doors to thousands wishing to engage in further study and improve their career prospects. This is part of our ongoing commitment to offer our world renowned expertise in language assessment to learners of English in Greece."

Last year, Cambridge ESOL was heavily involved in a number of projects and events in Greece in the run up to the University's 800th anniversary. Highlights included events and seminars for over 5,000 Greek teachers and the recognition of the Business Language Testing Service by the Supreme Council for Personnel Selection in Greece as proof of English language ability. To ensure they are fully resourced for the challenges ahead in Greece, Cambridge ESOL also reported a significant boost in resources. Their office in Athens is now the centre of operations across Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. This helps to continually improve the service to teachers and candidates in the region.

Cambridge leads thinking on student-centred education in India

The benefits of the student-centred approach were discussed by educators across the sub-continent at a major conference initiated by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) in India.

Over 300 educators from schools across India participated in the *Towards a student-centred classroom* conference in Mumbai on Friday 21 November. In total, 120 schools were represented at the event – more than at any other previous CIE conference in India.

The keynote address was given by Sue Swaffield, Senior Lecturer at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education (pictured) who spoke about her research into student-centred learning. Interactive workshops enabled teachers to discuss how to apply the theory to the classroom.

Sarojini Rao, Principal, Indus International School, said: "This conference reinforces our belief in personalised learning, which is about creating deep experiences and deep learning for our students. This type of learning would not be possible without collaborative networking in forums like this."



Sue Swaffield from the Faculty of Education giving the Keynote address.

In his closing remarks, Kevin Stannard, CIE Director, said: "CIE aims to support schools by providing a flexible curriculum framework, and to promote active and autonomous learning by putting the student at the heart of syllabus design. Conferences like this one allow us to share ideas and learn from each other. We share with schools a common purpose – transformative education – and a common focus the student."

In March, experts from the University's Faculty of Education ran workshops for CIE in Bangladesh and India to show Cambridge teachers how to implement student-centred techniques into maths lessons. CIE plans to hold more student-centred education events during 2009.

Celebrating the Cambridge India connection

Education journalist Mike Baker talks to Ann Puntis, Chief Executive of University of Cambridge International Examinations, about education reform in India.

A new qualification that is about to be launched in secondary schools in India is a symbol of the fast developing collaboration between Cambridge University and the Indian education authorities.

The Cambridge IGCSE in Contemporary Indian Studies will be piloted in 30 schools in India from September 2009. The aim is eventually to roll it out to many more schools, not only in India but globally.

The syllabus was designed by experts at University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) working closely with teachers in India. According to Ann Puntis, it was interesting to see how the involvement of Indian teachers led to a slightly different emphasis in the new qualification.

Instead of a traditional focus on history and geography, the Cambridge IGCSE has emerged with a strong emphasis on studying "what it means to be a young person in India today" and trying to answer the question "where is modern India heading?". So students will cover subjects like economics, environmental management, politics and social studies well as their own research topics. "It is taking the teaching of citizenship to a new level," says Ann.

The new qualification is merely the tip of the iceberg within CIE's broader involvement with India's

Council of Boards of Secondary Education, which represents the states that administer schooling across this vast country.

CIE is closely involved with the Council's work to extend secondary education to all children to the age of at least 14. There is much to do; according to the World Bank only 40% of Indian adolescents attend secondary school. In December, Ann attended a major conference held by the Council of Boards of School Education in India to discuss universalising secondary education. It set out the challenge: to provide for an additional 750,000 students, with 300,000 extra teachers and 44,000 new schools by 2011.

According to Ann Puntis it is a "great privilege" for CIE to be so closely consulted on Indian education. The scale of the challenge is highlighted by one staggering statistic: India has 19% of the world's young people. Moreover, Ann says that India is not content just to expand its secondary schooling, but is also determined to raise its quality.

She advised the conference against the common error of trying to promote secondary education by emphasising practical skills. She told delegates it was essential to focus on the fundamental, and flexible, skills of numeracy and literacy, which would be more useful to young people seeking employment in a fast-changing economy.



Ann Puntis, Chief Executive of University of Cambridge International Examinations.

As the Indian economy powers ahead, CIE is experiencing rapidly growing demand for its qualifications. 225 schools are already registered to offer the Cambridge IGCSE, International AS and A level and numbers are growing fast. The close ties between Cambridge and India were underlined by the visit of the vice-chancellor, Professor Alison Richard, whose January tour of India was her first overseas trip in Cambridge University's 800th anniversary year.

As a sign of the two-way process, Cambridge University has announced up to 10 fully funded scholarships for undergraduates from India. Summing up the mutually beneficial ties, Ann says "it's great that Cambridge is involved in India's thinking about education, its development, and in discourse with its experts, whilst also doing pro-bono work in the form of scholarships".

OCR is online sensation thanks to gaming success

An online game – *Reach for the Sky* – promoting OCR Nationals, has become an internet smash hit attracting over four million players.

Reach for the Sky is part of an OCR campaign promoting its OCR Nationals qualifications – an exam-free alternative to GCSEs that encourages engagement through a practical approach to learning and assessment.

The game features three gaming levels representing the three levels of OCR Nationals. The player has to jump on OCR books to escape the exam hall – reinforcing the message that OCR Nationals, although innovative and rigorously assessed, do not feature formal examinations.



Since its launch earlier this year, *Reach for the Sky* has become one of the most successful viral ad campaigns in the world according to viralchart.com.

Michelle Hughes, OCR eMarketing Manager, said: "The objective of the game was to raise awareness of OCR Nationals across a wide range of audiences including, teachers, students, parents and employers. Viral marketing is a good mechanism for doing this as it allows OCR to spread the message that there are no exams with OCR Nationals to a large audience very quickly. With four million game plays so far I think it has more than exceeded expectation."

To play *Reach for the Sky* go to www.ocrnationals.com/game

Assessment issues in the classroom

The sixth Cambridge Assessment Network's conference for teachers, looking at assessment issues in the classroom, took place in February. The keynote speaker, Professor John Gardner from Queen's University Belfast, delivered a presentation on "*Matching Assessment to a 21st Century Curriculum*".

Professor Gardner looked at the tensions between the curriculum emphasis on learning for the 21st century and aspects of existing and potential future assessment systems. He commented on how some of the directions in which curriculum design is heading are very loosely defined and will inevitably create problems for their assessment, if assessment is deemed necessary.

The sessions looked at how assessment may respond in the short and long term to the changes, examining the implications for schools and awarding bodies, and of course students themselves.

Follow up activity gave delegates an opportunity to share and discuss experience with other teachers, and included a session led by Adrian Gould of Lea Manor High School, Luton, on their Opening Minds Curriculum and the impact this has had on the rest of the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

Further details are available at www.assessnet.org.uk/conferences

UCAS tariff confirmed for Cambridge Pre-U

Cambridge Pre-U, an alternative to A level being offered by schools in both the maintained and independent sectors, has now been awarded UCAS points.



The announcement of the tariff – used by universities in making offers to applicants – at the end of 2008 was another important milestone for the qualification developed by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE).

Using UCAS tariff scores as a benchmark, universities will be able to translate Cambridge Pre-U grades easily. As the table shows, offers requiring B grades at A level (100 tariff points) translate as Merit 2 (101 tariff points). At the top end, it is clear that the equivalent grade to A* will be Distinction 2.

The top grade at Cambridge Pre-U, Distinction 1, reports achievement above the new A level A* grade

and its tariff points will be announced after the first Cambridge Pre-U examination entries have been assessed in 2010.

Dr Kevin Stannard, CIE Director, International Curriculum Development, said: "The tariff is a very pleasing reflection of the university sector view that Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects – in terms of their content and structure – represent an excellent preparation for undergraduate study."

Cambridge Pre-U is already being taught in nearly 50 independent and state-maintained schools. Feedback has been very positive, with schools liking the flexibility of the Cambridge Pre-U approach.

Band	Cambridge Pre-U Grade	UCAS Tariff Points	A Level Grade & Tariff Points
Distinction	D1	tbc	
	D2	145	A* 140
	D3	130	A 120
Merit	M1	115	
	M2	101	B 100
	M3	87	C 80
Pass	P1	73	
	P2	59	D 60
	P3	46	E 40

QCA gives OCR's functional skills adult pilot the green light

OCR is undertaking additional pilot activity to help the QCA comprehensively evaluate the suitability of functional skills qualifications for adults.

This follows the need identified by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills for further research before a final decision is reached in respect of replacing the current Skills for Life qualifications.

Functional skills are practical skills in English, Information and Communication Technology and Mathematics. OCR recruited schools following the successful introductory briefing event earlier this year.

The outcome of the pilot will inform policy decisions about future provision for adults – underlining that this is a critical distinction to activity in the existing pilot where the 'policy decision to implement functional skills has already been taken.

OCR Product Manager, Lauren Frere, said: "We're involved in this pilot because we want to know schools' views on how functional skills assessments would best meet the needs of their learners. We also want to explore how a move from Skills for Life qualifications to functional skills would impact upon schools' administrative, resource and cost requirements.

"But most crucially, we wish to explore how assessing the full range of functional skills may bring benefits and challenges to the delivery of these applied functional skills."

Poverty is the main barrier to A level achievement

Media reports continue to claim that state school students are undermining their chances of gaining places at the most competitive institutions by choosing 'non-traditional' A levels. The University of Cambridge famously published a list 20 subjects that, taken together, are considered to be 'less effective preparation' for their courses – applicants are expected to offer at least two subjects not on this list.

Research by Cambridge Assessment, on behalf of the University's Outreach Steering Group, investigated the numbers of candidates in England achieving three or more A grades at A level, by school type and local education authority. Our research shows that, of the 24580 candidates achieving three or more A grades in 2006 (excluding General Studies and Critical Thinking), only 1011 had taken subject combinations that would have been considered unacceptable by the University. Furthermore, 224 of these candidates were from independent schools.

Cambridge Assessment's research shows that it is attainment rather than non-traditional subject choices that prevents state school students from accounting for a greater proportion of places at Cambridge. State school students accounted for only 64% of the 24580 candidates achieving three or more A grades, despite constituting 86% of the A level cohort.

The proportions of state school students achieving grades that made them viable Cambridge applicants varied widely between the 149 LEAs. This appears to be closely related to their socio-economic status.

Watch this space...

Cambridge ESOL to report on language assessment in Denver

Nick Saville, Director of Research and Validation at Cambridge ESOL, will be speaking at two conferences in Denver, Colorado in March 2009:

- The Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC) 2009
- The annual conference of the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL)

At the LTRC he is coordinating a symposium which will cover the impact of language assessment for migration purposes. This will provide an opportunity to report back on the work of Cambridge ESOL's Research and Validation team who are working closely with advisory bodies, government departments and other key stakeholders towards clarifying the complex issues in this area of language assessment. At AAAL he is jointly presenting with Professor Mike McCarthy on the latest outcomes of the English Profile Programme – a long term, collaborative project designed to enhance the learning, teaching and assessment of English worldwide.

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Ringling in the year of the Ox



L–R: Anjali Radcliffe from GSK, Mickey Bonin, ESOL Development Manager – East Asia, Rt. Hon. Bill Rammell MP, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Chinese Ambassador, Madame Fu Ying, Paul Cahill from Anglo American and Ben Chapman MP, Chairman All Party Parliamentary China Group.

Cambridge Assessment supporting the All Party Parliamentary China Group's (APPCG) annual Chinese New Year reception on the Terrace of the House of Commons. The APPCG provides an opportunity for discussion on China related issues among parliamentarians and promotes a cross parliamentary dialogue with the National People's Congress and the APPCG's counterpart organisation in China, the China-UK Friendship Group.

Assessing language online

Businesses are now able to assess prospective and existing employees' language ability with the launch of Cambridge ESOL's online version of its successful Business Language Testing Service (BULATS).

The new online version of the test has been developed in response to significant customer demand. It gives businesses a reliable language solution with greater flexibility.

The test, which is available in English, French, German and Spanish, is a fast and accurate method of assessing language ability making it an ideal tool for businesses to use when making recruitment and promotion decisions. Other uses include helping Human Resource Managers to evaluate progress made from language training which has been delivered by an external agency.

Dr Michael Milanovic, CEO for Cambridge ESOL, explains: "We are committed to ensuring that our exams continue to be fit-for-purpose for our commercial customers. More and more businesses are looking to recruit people with second language capabilities and therefore it is important for us to ensure we can provide the necessary tools for such decisions to be made quickly and efficiently."

Fully aligned with the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for languages) and accredited by Ofqual, BULATS Online is now available in Western Europe and is currently being rolled out across other regions.

Money management know-how

Having the knowledge to manage your money effectively has never been more important, especially in today's economic climate. Accordingly, OCR has included a unit – *Learning to manage your personal finances* – as part of its new Business, Administration and Finance Diploma.

Learners are encouraged to consider various personal financial scenarios and ask themselves: What will happen if I get into debt? How can I avoid this happening? How do I budget effectively so that my expenditure is not higher than my income? This will enable learners to budget effectively, plan their future spending, and have the opportunity to choose appropriate bank accounts based on their knowledge of savings and borrowings and interest calculations.

Nicola Bowman, involved in the development of the unit, said: "The personal finance element promotes good spending habits, in addition to how to seek financial advice to become a savvy saver. Young people are encouraged to look at their own and their family's attitudes and influences to managing money. Additionally, the Diploma develops learners' understanding of personal finance and how to make the

most appropriate and sound decisions, using the variety of different financial products and services around – whether they are saving, borrowing or trying to source suitable financial products."

The Diploma combines theoretical and practical learning and consists of units designed to teach transferable personal, learning and thinking skills and how to apply them to the world of business and finance.

As well as developing learners' competence in matters of finance, the *Learning to manage your personal finances* unit (and the Diploma as a whole) also highlights the range of career opportunities available within the UK financial sector. The OCR Diploma in Business, Administration and Finance will be available for first teaching from September 2009.