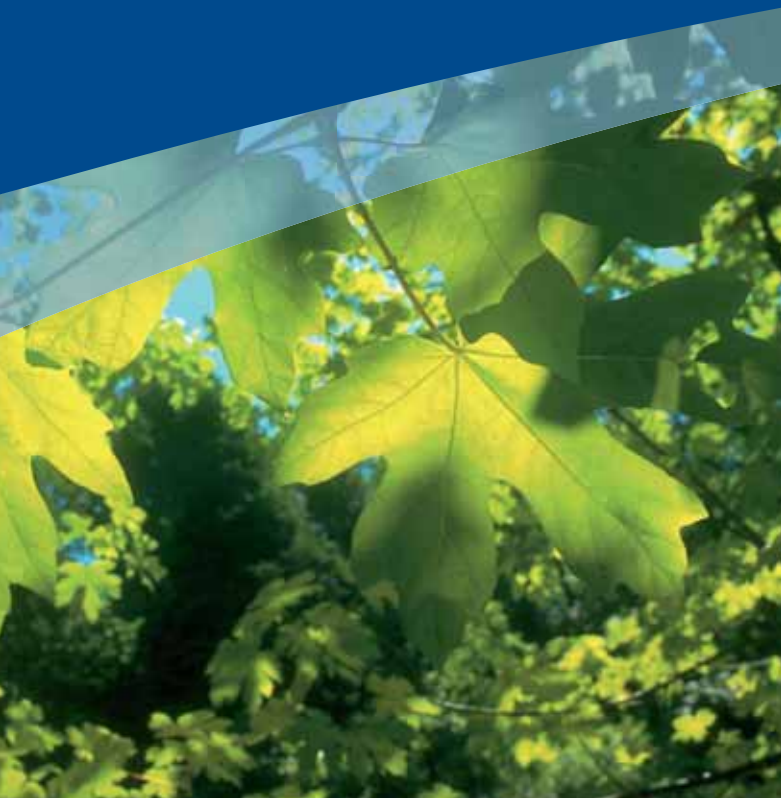


# Achieve

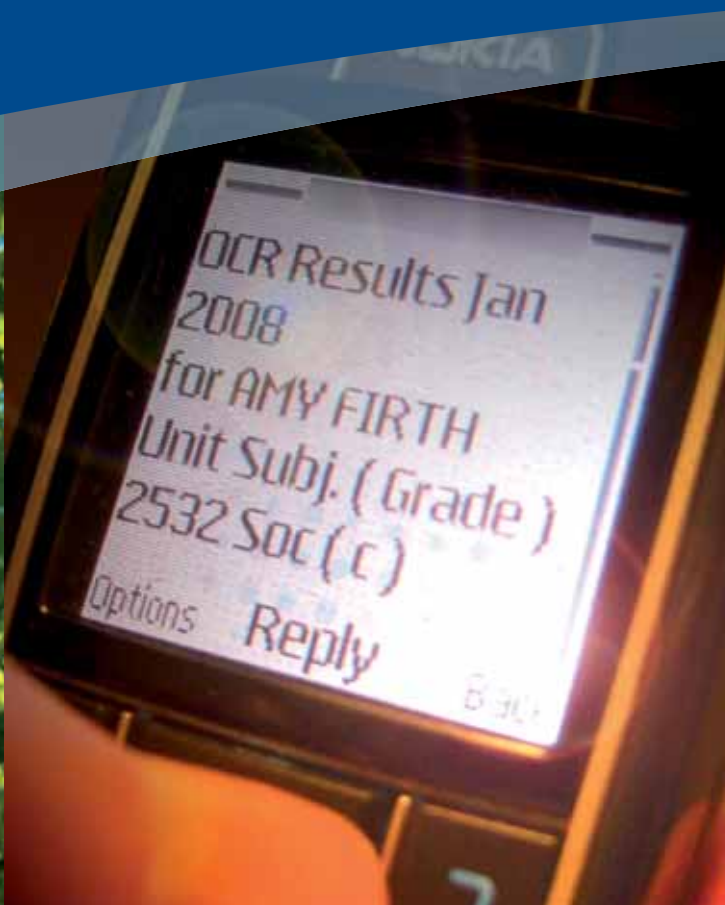
Summer 2008



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT



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



## Results by text message

Selected students receive A level module results by text message, see page 4 →



## New Ancient History GCSE

Hollywood blockbusters create demand for new exam, see page 7 →

## Time capsule offers insight into exams

A time capsule that will offer an insight into exams past and present was inaugurated by Cambridge University's Vice-Chancellor Professor Alison Richard in April. The event was part of Cambridge Assessment's 150th anniversary celebrations.

The time capsule, which will contain details of technology used in assessment, exam specifications and certificates, will be placed in the Cambridge Assessment archives in December, 150 years to the day after the first Cambridge school exam was sat. It will also record the organisation's anniversary celebrations, including photographs, press coverage and film footage of key events. It was inspired by exhibits preserved by the Syndicate from the 1900 Paris Exhibition, now held in the Cambridge Assessment archive.

During a visit to Cambridge Assessment's offices, Professor Richard untied a ribbon around the capsule and placed in it a copy of a commemorative book, "Examining the World". She gave a short speech, highlighting Cambridge Assessment's important role within the University and the special relationship between them.

Group Chief Executive, Simon Lebus, said: "We have survived and flourished because the heart of our mission has been to bring educational excellence to the greatest possible number of people. The commitment was a central element in the vision of our founders and it is an ideal which I know is shared by the University."



Above: Cambridge University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alison Richard, being served a taster of a 1957 style tea, in front of the *Practical Cookery in exams – research through the years* exhibition.



Left: Cambridge University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alison Richard with Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment, Simon Lebus and the 150th anniversary time capsule.



UK's Minister of State for Innovation,  
Ian Pearson MP.

## A global perspective

Franklin Roosevelt said in his inaugural address: 'A nation, like a person, has a mind – a mind that must be kept informed and alert, that must know itself, that understands the hopes and needs of its neighbours – all the other nations that live within the narrowing circle of the world.'

That was sixty odd years ago, but Presidents and Prime Ministers the world over now feel that sentiment more keenly than ever.

With global markets as competitive as they are, we all recognise the value of high skills levels. But globalisation isn't just the catalyst for our efforts to raise skills. This country as a whole is becoming progressively more influenced by transnational factors.

One of those factors is a global market in education.

The UK has become part of the international flow of students and academics. A large proportion of the UK's research base is populated by international students.

The numbers tell their own story. The UK is a global leader, second only to the USA, in the provision of education to citizens of other countries. We have over 460,000 overseas students studying here in the UK. And if you add in the estimated 600,000 international students studying English here, that makes around one million students who are gaining experience of the UK.

But the Government feels strongly that for the UK, international education is not merely an export industry.

International education enriches our society in many ways. It deepens our awareness and understanding of other cultures, and likewise deepens others' awareness and understanding of our own. The relationships that we develop can last for a lifetime and often provide the potential for greater educational, cultural and scientific exchange, as well as greater trade, investment, and political cooperation.

The speakers that I was able to hear at the Cambridge Assessment seminar in May talked about experiences in their own countries which, like the UK, face many challenges. It was good to hear what they had to say because we are always ready to learn from good examples and ideas. Events like that seminar are a very useful way to bring together thinking about common issues and it was a successful and stimulating discussion.

See p7 to learn more about the seminar.

## News in brief

### More international offices open

University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) has opened new regional offices in Lahore and Islamabad. This is the first time that CIE representatives have been based in Pakistan.

A new regional office is also due to open in Johannesburg. This will enable the formation of a regional centre of activity that will greatly benefit CIE schools in Africa.

A new CIE representative has been appointed in Beijing following news that the Chinese government is to allow 2,000 schools to offer international examinations to Chinese students.

### OCR response to criticisms of Diplomas

OCR's Chief Executive, Greg Watson, commented recently on the progress of Diplomas:

"We have heard Edexcel's criticism of the Diploma programme. We disagree. We have said from the very start that Diplomas are complex and their implementation is fast, but at this stage, we believe it is down to us to work with teachers and Government to make them work for the first learners and to use what we learn from that first wave to refine the qualification and its delivery."

### Asset in demand

Asset Languages has awarded its 100,000th qualification. The award was gained by a pupil at King Edward VI School in Morpeth, Northumberland for their success in a German listening test.

Vivienne May, Asset Languages Senior Development Manager, said: "Passing the 100,000th mark is an important achievement for Asset. We've received nearly double the number of entries compared to last year. This proves that there is real demand for an alternative qualification like ours to support language teaching in this country."

The Asset Languages scheme from OCR is designed to reward language skills for learners of all ages and abilities from primary to adult.

### Macau wants its English Language to be Bet-ter!

Cambridge ESOL has undertaken a major benchmarking project in casinos across Macau. The project tested staff in the casinos and was implemented to assess the level of English of workers, in their role when communicating with tourists.

Twenty-nine major casinos around the country are taking part and more than 2,700 people will be involved in research, interviews and test-taking. Initial research undertaken by Cambridge ESOL revealed surprising results, indicating that a good level of English is not only needed to communicate with customers. Due to the various languages and dialects spoken by employees, it is also needed for them to communicate with each other.

### Does policy work?

The fourth Cambridge Assessment House of Commons Research Seminar was hosted and chaired by Barry Sheerman MP, Chair of the House of Commons' Children, Schools and Families Select Committee, on 1 July.

The seminar looked at so called 'education initiatives' and asked whether the research community can help policy makers understand why initiatives succeed or fail.

Speakers included Phil Davies, formerly of the Government Social Research Unit, who spoke on his experiences in dealing with evidence-based policy making, Dr Sue Burroughs-Lange who evaluated the Reading Recovery programme and Professor Kathy Silva – who researched SureStart.

The seminar can be watched on

[www.policyreview.tv](http://www.policyreview.tv)

Further information can be listened to at

[www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk](http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk)

## Humanism included in RS GCSE

### For the first time, pupils will have the opportunity to study Humanism as part of a Religious Studies GCSE, according to draft proposals for a new Philosophy and Ethics course from OCR.

OCR's Religious Studies suite offers two courses, including a traditional faith-based approach with its World Religions GCSE, where students can study Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. The Philosophy and Ethics GCSE takes a modern issues-based approach and encourages students to examine the perspectives which different belief systems take to real-life concerns such as euthanasia and abortion. Students are encouraged to engage with various religious beliefs, with the main focus for

teaching on the six main world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) and Humanism.

Humanism has been added to reflect the increasing number of people sharing humanist beliefs in the UK. As an alternative OCR's World Religions specification offers a comprehensive faith-based approach to religious studies.

Mara Bogdanovic, Stakeholder Relations Senior Manager at OCR, said: "Humanism is growing rapidly within the UK, and it is a belief system held by increasing numbers of citizens in today's society. As part of OCR's Philosophy and Ethics GCSE it provides an excellent contrasting opinion for students to debate alongside the religious views that have always been included."

## Rise in demand for Cambridge Pre-U

The new post 16 qualification from University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), Cambridge Pre-U, is celebrating a sharp rise in demand from schools in both the state and private sectors following the recent accreditation of the qualification by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Ann Puntis, CIE Chief Executive, said: "Cambridge Pre-U ticks all the boxes for students heading for university. It offers a clear progression route, flexibility for schools, and stretch and challenge for students. Cambridge Pre-U meets the needs of young people, schools and universities."

QCA accreditation, and the registration of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma on Section 96, have been

important in opening up state maintained schools' access to Cambridge Pre-U as a route for students heading to university. Thirty schools have already indicated that they will offer Cambridge Pre-U in 2008 with another 100 planning to offer Cambridge Pre-U within the next two to three years.

The Cambridge Pre-U Diploma meets both the Government's plans for 14–19 education and its long-term strategy for increasing the number of students who go to university.

Ann continued: "We welcome the current phase of the Government's strategy for 14–19 education and look forward to participating in its planned consultation. The first five years of adoption of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma fit well within the timeframe of the Government's promised 2013 review. As the level of



demand for the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma increases over the next five years, Cambridge Pre-U will take its place as a distinctive and valuable qualification in the UK educational landscape."

## Functional skills update

With the first year of the pilot scheme now well under way, OCR functional skills are already helping learners get the most out of work, education and everyday life.

West Kent College is one centre that is already seeing the benefits. The college has so far entered more than 50 candidates for English, Maths and ICT at Levels 1 and 2.

As Key Skills Joint Team Leader, Bev Keech explains, it was important for the college to have an input into functional skills from the beginning. "We want to ensure both learners and teachers get maximum benefit from the qualifications – so it's good to know OCR listens to our comments."

Open communication between the college and OCR is vital to shaping the qualifications, and this is based on a successful ongoing relationship. "We know OCR very well," continues Bev. "We carry out most of our key skills with them, and have always worked well together, so it made sense to stick with OCR for the functional skills pilot."

Building on the January and March assessment sessions, the college plans to enter at least 50 more candidates in June – from age 16 to mature adults. Again these will cover all three subjects at Levels 1 and 2.

Functional skills are practical skills in English, Maths and ICT. The qualification was introduced by Government to address employers' concerns that young people and adults are not achieving a firm grounding in English, Maths and ICT as outlined in the 14–19 Education and Skills White Paper by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

OCR is running a three year pilot for functional skills in all three subjects at all levels – Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2. Year two of the OCR functional skills pilot starts in September – with assessment opportunities in November 2008, and in January, March, May and June next year.

## All you ever wanted to know about assessment...

Senior education professionals from across the world attended a tailored study programme in May, to discuss the development and administration of public examinations and share experience.



International Study Programme delegates outside Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.

The two-week programme, hosted by the Cambridge Assessment Network gave international delegates the chance to debate the role and responsibilities of public examinations providers in today's society.

Andrew Watts, Cambridge Assessment Network Director, said: "We provide professional development for people working in assessment and offer seminars and courses that span curriculum and assessment development. To meet the needs of our delegates, we draw on the huge range and depth of knowledge amongst our staff here at Cambridge Assessment."

Key issues addressed on the course included: what do our stakeholders need and require from us? How do we fulfil our responsibilities regarding accountability and the impact of assessment in society? Where can we make radical change to improve quality and effectiveness? Should we compromise – and if so,

why and when? Where can the fast moving world of technology help us?

In response to feedback from previous participants, this year new topics included – sessions on Assessment for Learning (with Sue Swaffield of the Faculty of Education at Cambridge and an acknowledged expert in the field); Lorna Kempster (CIE) on making assessment accessible to all; and a dedicated slot on security and dealing with malpractice – sadly a 'hot topic' world-wide!

The participants had the chance to visit some local schools to see how they deal with assessment and also to see the work of the Cambridge University Press.

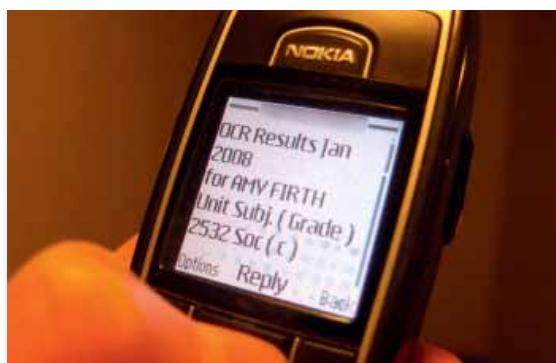
The Cambridge Assessment Network will offer the programme again next May, and since this course was over-subscribed, early enrolment is recommended. For more information, contact [thenetwork@cambridgeassessment.org.uk](mailto:thenetwork@cambridgeassessment.org.uk)

## Results by text message trial

Everyone knows how frustrating it can be if you're away on summer holiday when the exam results come out. It can be weeks before you get home to collect your grades. Well now OCR has a solution: delivering results to you, wherever you are, by text message.

During a recent trial, OCR successfully issued students with their results by text message from the 2008 January exam sessions. The trial included 100 candidates at seven schools who received the results of their A level modules.

OCR worked closely with the schools and colleges involved to identify students who would benefit the most, while ensuring that students who needed support could collect their grades in the traditional way, with teachers on hand.



The service can be of particular benefit to those students who may be on holiday when results are issued or who are no longer in the area.

Colin Banks, Operations Director for OCR, said: "Extremely positive feedback has been received from both candidates and centres, and an extended trial for this summer's A level exam results is planned.

"Schools still play a crucial role in the results process and this technology is being introduced in partnership with them to ensure its effectiveness and success."

## China joins in 150th anniversary celebrations

Simon Lebus, Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment, and Dr Michael Milanovic, Chief Executive of Cambridge ESOL, recently visited China as part of the 150th anniversary of Cambridge Assessment. A celebration was held in the Great Hall of People, Tiananmen Square on 22 April. The celebration also marked the 15th anniversary of Cambridge Assessment in China.



Dr Dai Jiagan, President of the National Education Examination Authority, with Simon Lebus, Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment.

Over 40 distinguished key partners and guests were invited to share the celebrations, including Dr Dai Jiagan from the National Education Examination Authority (NEEA), Ms Tian Yan from Beijing Foreign Affairs Office, Sir William Ehrman, British Ambassador to China and Mr Bhaskar Chakravarti, Director, British Council. There were also representatives from the Shanghai Municipal Education Examination Authority (SMEEA), Shanghai Personnel Testing Authority and Zhejiang Education Examination Authority (ZEEA) as well as experts in English Language Teaching, directors of international training institutes, publishing companies and the media.

As part of the celebrations a celebratory banquet was held at which Simon Lebus spoke about Cambridge

Assessment's developments and collaborations in China in the past 15 years.

China has seen a great deal of growth in English language exams recently and there are now more than 500,000 BEC takers in China alone.



## "Do candidates who have taken Critical Thinking AS level perform better in their A levels in other subjects"

...is the question answered in the latest research report from Cambridge Assessment, Europe's largest assessment agency.

Beth Black, Senior Research Officer at Cambridge Assessment, said: "We've got evidence that candidates who achieved high grades in AS level Critical Thinking performed better overall at A level than candidates who did not study Critical Thinking at all.

"It seems likely that students are managing to transfer the skills of Critical Thinking – analysis and evaluation of ideas and arguments, and how to construct clear, logical and coherent lines of reasoning – into their other subjects."

The report compared A level outcomes for two groups of more than 2,000 UK students. The groups were matched for previous GCSE attainment. One group had gained a grade A or a grade B in Critical

Thinking AS level, while the other group had not taken Critical Thinking. A comparison of the mean A level performance showed that the Critical Thinking group's performance was clearly higher than the non Critical Thinking counterparts.

Beth continued: "Although perceptions of Critical Thinking are highly varied and not always based on an informed understanding of the identity and nature of the subject, it remains incredibly popular and became OCR's [which is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group] biggest A level in 2005 – 6 and the fastest growing A level in the UK in 2007."

Cambridge Assessment, with all of its collective expertise – 20 years of experience in testing Critical

Thinking which is unrivalled by any other body within the UK – is in a unique position to respond to the question and contribute to the long-term integrity and success of the subject.

The report will be published on the Cambridge Assessment website. The report forms part of a bigger piece of ongoing research into the subject by Cambridge Assessment, which includes the definition and taxonomy of Critical Thinking. More information can be found at [www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk](http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk)

"Critical Thinking is the analytical thinking which underlies all rational discourse and enquiry. As an academic discipline, it is unique in that it explicitly focuses on the processes involved in being rational."

## Exam chief promises “fresh pair of legs for A level”

Education journalist Mike Baker talks to Greg Watson, Chief Executive of OCR, about the latest A level reforms.

Recent A level reforms, most notably Curriculum 2000, have often meant a bumpy ride for schools, colleges, exam agencies and even the Government. So what can we expect from the wide-ranging changes to A level which take effect for courses starting in autumn 2008? Should we be tightening our seat belts again?

Greg Watson, who vividly remembers the Curriculum 2000 crisis, is much more confident, indeed positively enthusiastic, about the latest changes which he believes will rectify some of the mistakes made back then.

He feels the Government and the exams regulator, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, exerted “a dead hand” over the Curriculum 2000 changes, which introduced the AS level and increased the number of assessment units. He says it brought “a reduction in choices and a heavy degree of rationalisation, which killed off some of the more innovative approaches to subjects”.

By contrast, he believes the current changes emerge from much closer cooperation between exam boards and schools and universities. These reforms, he says, are “refreshing the subjects, bringing them bang up to date, bringing in new thinking from academic circles, giving A levels a fresh pair of legs”.

So what is changing? First, in most subjects, there is a reduction in the number of units from 6 to 4. This, he says, greatly reduces the burden of assessment, with more time for learning rather than for preparing and sitting examinations.

The second big change is the introduction of an A\* grade, offering greater stretch for the most able. There will be optional questions, more open in style but still based on the same syllabus, giving candidates chance to shine. He says this is partly in response to demand from some universities, which have been finding it difficult to distinguish between the most able candidates.

The third change relates to subject content. Greg enthuses about this chance to escape the “very rigid criteria” set by the regulator for Curriculum 2000 and to return to the tradition of talking to teachers and academics, responding to innovation and new ideas.



Greg Watson, Chief Executive of OCR.

For example, he points out that OCR has deliberately produced specifications that are “modern and relevant with a dash of unexpected excitement”. He cites Psychology with sections on tyranny and gambling; Media Studies looking at blogs and podcasts; and History covering British India and Margaret Thatcher as points of change.

However, the most controversial of these changes is the new A\*. Some fear it will downgrade the current A-grade. Greg disagrees. He says “an A will still be an A but there will be an additional standard above that based on questions that will demand more independent thinking”.

He sees risks if universities rely too heavily on the A\* in the early years. “Universities would be very unwise to leap straight on the A\* as the definitive way of finding the right students”, he warns. It must be given time to “bed down” or there could be a “backwash effect on schools”.

So could we suffer the same implementation problems as hit Curriculum 2000? Greg thinks not: “There has been a much healthier dialogue this time and the Government and the QCA has been more willing to listen to the experts, there has been better communication with schools, and a clearer timeline.”

The first of the new-style A levels will be awarded in 2010, three years before the Government’s promised review of A levels. Greg believes the traditional A level will emerge from these changes with a new lease of life.

### Preparation for new style A levels:

- Brochures were sent to 50,000 heads of departments and exams officers to explain the changes and to provide a timeline of OCR key dates over the next few years.
- Specifications were posted on the exam board’s website along with assessment materials, coursework guidance, summary documents and comparisons which outlined the changes.
- Expo events were held across the country with subject specific presentations by experts, face to face seminars with senior examiners and interactive workshops on the new ‘stretch and challenge’ style questions.
- Detailed support material, schemes of work and training initiatives were developed and OCR worked closely with its publishers to ensure that the best quality resources were available for the new specifications.

## New points-based immigration system uses Cambridge

Cambridge ESOL certificates have now been granted approval for use in the UK’s new points-based immigration system.

From the end of February 2008, the UK Home Office (the ministry responsible for immigration and other internal affairs) is implementing a new points-based immigration system for all non-EU nationals. The new system groups potential immigrants into five “tiers”. The recent approval of Cambridge ESOL certificates is for tier 1 – highly skilled migrants such as doctors, scientists or entrepreneurs, which will replace the existing Highly Skilled Migrant Programme.

As part of the application process, applicants are required to provide evidence of their English language abilities. The Government has now approved a range of Cambridge ESOL certificates as suitable to verify that ability. At tier 1, applicants need to demonstrate English language skills equivalent to level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The following Cambridge ESOL examinations will now be accepted for applications at tier 1:

- Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)
- Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
- Business English Certificate (BEC) at Higher level
- International English Testing System (IELTS) at a band score of 6.5 and above
- International Certificate in Financial English (ICFE)
- International Legal English Certificate (ILEC)
- ESOL Skills for Life (Level 2).

For more information on the new points-based system, please see [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

## English Profile goes from strength to strength



Members of English Profile Network at the fifth seminar series.

**The fifth in a series of seminars which are shaping English Profile – the collaborative research programme building on the work of the Common European Framework of Reference – was hosted by Cambridge ESOL earlier this year.**

The seminar was a truly international event, with English Profile Network members representing countries as diverse as Montenegro, Taiwan and Japan.

Attendees were able to hear about the latest progress made with the research programme and define forthcoming priorities, including an international English Profile Conference for September 2009.

Project Co-ordinator Dr Svetlana Kurtes spoke about the need to make the English Profile network bigger and more global for a wider cross-fertilisation of ideas. She said this would be achieved through seminars and other promotional activities and would be a priority for the coming year. She called on interested people to volunteer to become regional co-ordinators in

order to contribute data, promote projects and disseminate results.

Dr Kurtes went on to state that two pilot projects were already taking place, the first to specify the methodology for collecting data for the corpora, and the second related to regional networks in Italy and Serbia.

One of the seminar's recurring themes was the focus on spoken language corpora and the need for quality data for analysis. Cambridge ESOL will be making its database of spoken language from learners available for the research project.

At the heart of the English Profile research programme is the use of learner corpora including the Cambridge Learner Corpus which is jointly owned by Cambridge ESOL and Cambridge University Press.

The latest information about English Profile can be found at: [www.englishprofile.org](http://www.englishprofile.org)

## New GCSEs give teachers more choices

**OCR is giving teachers greater choice in the GCSE assessment process with its new range of draft specifications.**

The revised subject specifications are designed to make the assessment process more manageable for teachers, and subjects more interesting and engaging for pupils, while offering flexible assessment methods. New subjects have also been launched in Law, Ancient History and a full course in GCSE Citizenship.

OCR estimates that more than 5,100 schools and education centres will start teaching the redeveloped GCSEs from September 2009, with approximately 625,000 pupils benefiting from a more bespoke approach to assessment. OCR has worked with teachers, students, subject associations, and employers to redevelop existing GCSEs and introduce a selection of new qualifications that meet the requirements outlined by both teachers and their students.

Clara Kenyon, Director of Qualifications at OCR, said: "Following on from the success of our new Gateway Science and Twenty First Century Science GCSE suites, we've continued to place innovation and motivation at the heart of our approach to developing specifications. We've involved teachers throughout the development process so the revised specifications can now give teachers exactly the tools and processes they need for their particular subject."

All 43 of the draft GCSE specifications announced by OCR offer flexible assessment options, allowing teachers to choose whichever assessment approach suits their pupils best, be that linear or modular. Controlled assessment replaces coursework for those GCSEs continuing with internal assessment.

The OCR specifications are available at [www.GCSEchanges.com](http://www.GCSEchanges.com)

## Forum looks to the future

**International delegates to a recent Gulf education forum in Dubai, hosted by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), heard that design and education technology are key to raising school performance in a competitive global environment.**

The forum, 'Building Capacity, Raising Performance: Trends in Secondary Education', was attended by more than 90 delegates, including ministry officials, representing 11 countries, who discussed key educational issues facing the Gulf region.

Cambridge Assessment Group Chief Executive, Simon Lebus, gave the keynote address. He said: "The challenge that faces us all is to educate today's learners for tomorrow's world. It is forecast that the top 10 jobs that will be most in demand in 2010 didn't exist in 2004.

"Societal change and globalisation are transforming education: technology is both a driver and a reflection of this. The forum is an opportunity to reflect on this change, and how it can be managed to build capacity and improve educational performance."

Other speakers included Tan Yap Kwan, Chief Executive of Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board; Fatma Al Marri, Chief Executive Officer of the Schools Agency at the UAE Knowledge and Human Development Authority; Ann Puntis, CIE Chief Executive and representatives from a leading UK provider of educational technology, RM Education plc.



(L – R) Tan Yap Kwang, Chief Executive, Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board; Fatma Al Marri, Chief Executive Officer of the Schools agency at the UAE Knowledge and Human Development Authority, and Simon Lebus, Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment.

## “Education policy around the world: Innovations in 14–19 Reform”

All around the world countries are reforming what they offer to their young people as they come into the last few years of their school education. In the UK this is often referred to as ‘14–19 Reform’ but the same processes are taking place under different names right across the globe.



Mr Carol Keller of the University of the West Indies addressing international delegates at the seminar.

Through its work in over 150 countries around the world, Cambridge Assessment has a unique vantage point on this global education revolution. So it was ideally placed to convene a conference at which leading international educationalists tackled the challenges of 14–19 reform on their own continents. They found many common issues and challenges.

The event at the historic Lancaster House, part of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, in London on 7 May attracted a large audience of researchers and members of the Diplomatic Corps. The opening address was given by the UK’s Minister of State for Innovation, Ian Pearson MP (see guest column, page two).

If there was one overarching theme it was that the challenges of globalisation must be faced by all education systems but that local cultures and identities must be recognised and preserved. Voices from both the podium and the floor were insistent that regional, national and local contexts had to be taken into account by policy makers.

The debate covered the economic effects of globalisation as well as fears that globalisation would inevitably lead to a westernisation of countries’ systems and societies.

More information about the seminar, Cambridge Assessment and its 150th anniversary celebrations can be found at [www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk](http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk). The individual presentations can be found on [www.policyreview.tv](http://www.policyreview.tv)



## Oxford looks for more thinkers

Oxford University has looked to Cambridge for help in identifying the best students applying to study economics and management.

This follows the successful introduction of the Cambridge Assessment Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) as an admissions test for those wishing to study Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) at Oxford last year. That test was taken by 1,200 candidates. Now, the university has decided to expand its use of the TSA to students applying to read Economics and Management as well.

Applicants will be required to take the pre-interview admissions test, administered by Cambridge Assessment, from this autumn.

Dr Margaret Stevens, Admissions Organiser for PPE, said: “Oxford University receives a large number of applications for PPE and Economics and Management, and they are growing annually. Admissions decisions are complex because candidates come from a wide variety of subject backgrounds, and the study of PPE or E&M requires a range of abilities.

“The Thinking Skills Assessment helps admissions tutors to assess whether candidates have the particular skills and aptitudes that are required for these courses.”

The need for additional methods to identify candidates’ suitability and potential for success in higher education is gaining increasing importance, particularly in response to the widening participation agenda.

Cambridge Assessment has been providing research-led and evidence-based solutions for major higher education institutions for over 20 years and is currently developing and delivering carefully-targeted admissions tests. One of these admissions tests is the TSA.

For further information visit, [www.tsa.cambridgeassessment.org.uk](http://www.tsa.cambridgeassessment.org.uk)

## Back in time with new Ancient History GCSE

Ancient Egypt and historical figures such as Alexander the Great and Cleopatra will be studied at GCSE for the first time with a new Ancient History qualification from OCR.



Students will have the opportunity to study the historical events behind the Hollywood blockbusters ‘300’, ‘Troy’ and ‘Alexander’, as well as investigating the history of Rameses II.

The draft specification, which will be taught from September 2009, has been developed by OCR in response to demand from schools teaching its Ancient History A level which are keen to offer the subject to a younger age group.

Professor Tom Harrison, Chair of the Joint Association of Classical Teachers, welcomed the new qualification: “This confirms the growth in the popularity of Ancient History as an academic subject. With the huge public interest in the ancient world, Classics nationally is buoyant and this new qualification will bring the subject to a younger, even broader, audience.”

Content will include the foundation of Rome, Greece and the Persian wars, Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Cleopatra and Agrippina the Younger.

### About TSA Oxford...

It consists of two components:

Section 1: Aptitude and Skills (90-minute multiple-choice component). This section includes 50 questions designed to measure a candidate’s problem solving and critical thinking skills.

Section 2: Writing Task (30-minute task – one from a choice of three essay questions, on general subjects that do not require any specialised knowledge). The writing task gives a candidate the opportunity to show that they can communicate effectively in writing, organising their ideas and presenting them clearly and concisely.

The results are used together with other information available about each candidate. A full list of the criteria used in the PPE and E&M admissions processes is available on the University of Oxford web site [www.ox.ac.uk](http://www.ox.ac.uk)

Watch this space...



## IAEA 2008

The 34th International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) Annual Conference will be held in Cambridge, from 7–12 September 2008. It will be hosted by Cambridge Assessment as part of the celebrations for its 150th anniversary.

140 presenters from more than 35 countries will share expertise in assessment and discuss current issues such as assessment for improving learning and evaluating the qualities of assessment.

For further information about the conference visit [www.iaea2008.cambridgeassessment.org.uk](http://www.iaea2008.cambridgeassessment.org.uk)

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## Immigration, language and citizenship

Over 500 delegates attended the 3rd Association of Language Testers in Europe International Conference which was hosted by Cambridge ESOL to mark the UN International Year of Languages, as well as the 150th anniversary of Cambridge Assessment – its parent organisation.



Delegates came from more than 30 countries and the conference featured over 150 presentations and workshops, as well as six plenary sessions. A major theme related to immigration, language and citizenship as all European countries grapple with the issues.

The conference attracted leading experts on assessment, applied linguistics and sociolinguistics from around the world, and was addressed by two Members of the European Parliament, Hannu Takkula, MEP for Finland and Vice-Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education and Richard Howitt, MEP for Eastern England.

There was also a keynote speech by Margaret Kuzma of the European Commission, on the European Indicator of Language Competences.

Speaking after the event, Dr Michael Milanovic, Manager of ALTE and Chief Executive of Cambridge ESOL said: "I am delighted by the success of this conference. ALTE holds international conferences every three years, and they are becoming an important part of the calendar for the language assessment and teaching communities."

Papers can be downloaded from [www.alte.org](http://www.alte.org)



Formal conference dinner at King's College.

## First principals' forum in Sarajevo

The first Cambridge forum for principals and teachers from across Bosnia and Herzegovina was held in Sarajevo recently.

Delegates discussed the options available for international assessment and benchmarking of students studying in integrated and bilingual contexts. The forum was also attended by representatives from the British Council and the Ministry of Education for the Sarajevo Canton.

Safija Okovic, Examinations Coordinator from The First Bosniak High School, presented a model of delivery developed by her school. The school's integrated approach allows students to take a range of CIE qualifications at IGCSE and A level, together with a reduced National Curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. There was a high level of interest in this approach among participants.

The school's Principal, Lejla Aksamija, explained that the integrated model was designed for students

who wanted international qualifications as well as a national diploma. She said: "Our aim is to keep young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina by offering them a top quality education and choice of international qualifications."

Ann Gibson, CIE Regional Manager, Europe, said: "CIE will be working with schools and Ministries of Education from all Cantons to discuss the potential for integration of CIE assessments and recognition by national authorities and universities."

Cambridge Principals' Forums provide principals with an opportunity to discuss key issues in assessment development which are facing schools, their students in the region, and students internationally. To find out more about the forums, visit [www.cie.org.uk](http://www.cie.org.uk)