

Achieve

Spring 2013



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT



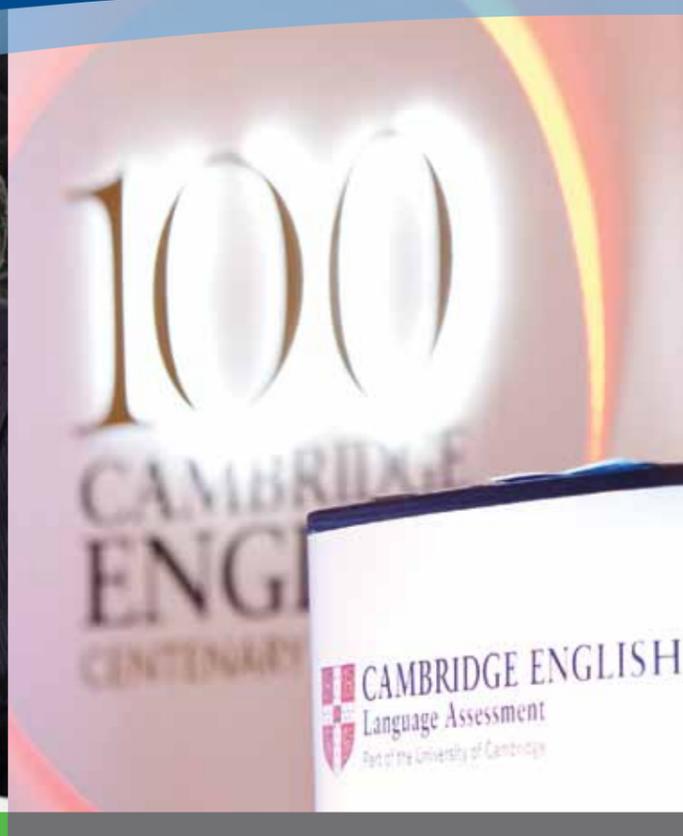
Welcome to *Achieve*

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



Blazing a trail in computer science

OCR's GCSE in Computing will now count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) performance tables in England. see page 6



100 years of Cambridge English exams

2013 is the 100 year anniversary of Cambridge English exams. Read about the celebrations planned. see page 2

21st century skills – a 21st century problem?

21st century skills are not unique to this century, top education experts agree.

Speaking at a recent Cambridge Assessment debate to evaluate what '21st century skills' today's students are being taught and whether they're being properly assessed and recognised, Daisy Christodoulou of the Curriculum Centre stated that "21st century skills were not invented in the 21st century" and that skills such as "communication" and "collaboration" have been characteristic of humans throughout recorded history. Indeed, Oxford University's Mike Nicholson said that his institution had been delivering "21st century skills" – with the exception of ICT – for 850 years.

However, both Christodoulou and the National Foundation for Education Research's Niel McLean agreed that an important difference of the 21st century was that it was ever more important that all people possessed these skills rather than the elite as in previous times.

Cambridge Assessment's Dr Irenka Suto's presentation highlighted the many different definitions of 21st century skills, concluding that there was no single widely accepted definition of what they constituted.

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Niel McLean, Head of Centre, Futurelab Research at National Foundation for Educational Research, addressing the issue of the value of international comparisons in assessing 21st century skills.



Professor Amy B M Tsui, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong.

New Chief Executive for Cambridge International Examinations

Michael O'Sullivan has been appointed as Chief Executive of Cambridge International Examinations. He took over the role on 2 April 2013 from Ann Puntis who stepped down after eight years in post.

Michael was previously Director of the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust and Cambridge Overseas Trust. Prior to that role, he was Secretary General of the EU Chamber of Commerce in China. Most of his earlier career was spent with the British Council; most recently as Director, British Council, China. Other roles with the British Council have included Head of Corporate Planning, and East Asia and Pacific Policy Director.



100 years of Cambridge English exams

2013 is the 100 year anniversary of Cambridge English exams. To coincide with this important milestone, the exam board has also changed its name to Cambridge English Language Assessment.

To mark the occasion, the Mayor of Cambridge and local Member of Parliament Julian Huppert were among 350 guests at an event showcasing how the exams have grown from small beginnings to being taken by millions of people around the globe every year.

Delegates saw the unveiling of a specially commissioned slate plaque carrying the inscription 'Knowledge, Innovation and Excellence' – designed by the Cambridge-based Cardozo Kindersley workshop.

The exhibition showed how the Cambridge English story began in 1913 when three candidates in the UK took the first Cambridge English exam. Dr Mike Milanovic, Chief Executive of Cambridge English Language Assessment, explained how the first Cambridge English exam lasted over 12 hours and included translation, dictation and phonetic transcription.



Pictured left to right: Dr Mike Milanovic, Chief Executive of Cambridge English Language Assessment, Simon Lebus, Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment, Professor John Rallison, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, and Professor of Fluid Dynamics in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, The Mayor of Cambridge Cllr Sheila Stuart and Julian Huppert MP.



Professor John Rallison, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, and Professor of Fluid Dynamics in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, unveiling the commemorative plaque.

Commenting on how exams have changed, Dr Milanovic said: "Each year Cambridge English exams are taken by over 4 million candidates around the world and focus on the real-life communications skills candidates need for success at university, in the workplace and for immigration. This enormous growth reflects how English has evolved into a key skill needed to achieve competitive advantage."

The Cambridge event was the latest in a series of events to mark 100 years of Cambridge English. The first event took place in Brazil which was followed by conferences in Alcalá de Henares near Madrid, Mexico City and other locations around the world.



Ann Puntis, former Chief Executive, Cambridge International Examinations, met with H.E Luvsannyam Gantumur, Minister of Education and Science, Mongolia, at the Education World Forum in London in January 2013 to agree the next phase of the Mongolia – Cambridge International Examinations Initiative in 2013.

Cambridge is working with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to support education reform in Mongolia.

Bilingualism should underpin education policy

Last November, I had the privilege of sharing my thoughts about bilingual education with participants at one of the Cambridge Horizons Seminar series organised by Cambridge Assessment Singapore. The seminar brought together school teachers, principals, curriculum development officers in Ministries of Education and university teachers from Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, India and Mongolia.

I was struck by the deep commitment of the participants to bilingual education and their efforts to equip students with the global literacy skill, English, so that they can be mobile across the globe. In Mongolia, for example, a few schools have begun to experiment with English-medium teaching and learning, and the results have been positive. Despite the limited human resources with proficient bilingual skills, i.e. English and Mongolian, the principals of these schools were optimistic about further expansion of English-medium schools in Mongolia. In Indonesia, English-medium schools were also beginning to mushroom, and how to ensure that teachers are proficient enough in the language to use it as a medium of teaching also came up in the discussions.

An area of concern for participants responsible for the promotion of indigenous languages, which were not used in schools, was how to ensure that English would not be learnt at the expense of the students' mother tongue, and that the emphasis on English language acquisition would not lead to the demise of other languages. Given the rapid spread of English and the strong demand for English in schools from parents as well as the business community, it is important that English is not learnt, or not perceived as learnt, at the expense of other languages, particularly the students' mother tongue. In other words, additive, and not subtractive, bilingualism or plurilingualism should underpin any language in education policy.

I would like to congratulate Cambridge Assessment Singapore on bringing together practitioners, policy makers and researchers in Asian countries with common concerns to exchange ideas and to learn from each other's good practices. May it long continue.

For more information about the Cambridge Horizons series see page 7.

21st century skills – a 21st century problem?

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However, there was consensus among both speakers and delegates that metacognition, communication and collaboration were the most important.

Guest speaker Andreas Schleicher, Special Advisor on Education Policy at the OECD, joined the debate live via a videolink from Paris, explaining the benefits and binds of international assessments. He also explained how the tests can reveal how 21st century skills have been embedded into different kinds of instructional systems and to what success.

Other speakers included Paul Andrews, University of Cambridge; Professor Richard Kimbell, Goldsmiths University of London; Darren Northcott, NASUWT; Simon Lebus, Cambridge Assessment; Ian Mason, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Tom Sidaway, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

The event, attended by over 120 delegates with hundreds more watching online, took place at the British Academy in London and can be watched online at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk



Darren Northcott, National Official, Education, NASUWT.



Pictured left to right: Bene't Steinberg, Group Director of Public Affairs, Cambridge Assessment; Mike Nicholson, Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach, University of Oxford; Ian Mason, Head of Policy, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Tom Sidaway, Director, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP; and Simon Lebus, Group Chief Executive, Cambridge Assessment.



The panel addressing the issue of the value of international comparisons in assessing 21st century skills.



Daisy Christodoulou, Chief Executive Officer, The Curriculum Centre.



Audience members including Mark Dawe, Chief Executive, OCR.

Cambridge connects Spanish and Vietnamese educators

Educators and policy-makers from Vietnam visited Spain recently to find out how the Cambridge curriculum is being adopted in state schools.

Spain is one of many countries that has introduced Cambridge programmes, such as Cambridge IGCSE, alongside its national curriculum – giving learners the benefit of international education while maintaining national values. The Vietnamese government is interested in taking a similar approach in its state schools, with the aim of developing bilingualism and preparing learners for success in the global economy. Some Vietnamese state schools have already begun teaching Cambridge programmes.

Cambridge International Examinations worked with EMG Education, a Cambridge Associate in Vietnam, to arrange for a delegation from Vietnam to meet Spanish Ministry of Education officials and Cambridge schools in Madrid in January 2013. Nearly 30 representatives from Vietnam made the trip, including senior executives from the Department of Education and Training of Ho Chi Minh City, education managers from various districts and school principals.



The Vietnamese delegation visited Montessori School Los Fresnos in Spain to find out how they use Cambridge programmes.

Seeing first-hand how Cambridge primary and secondary programmes can be integrated into national curricula was a key aspect of the trip.

Mr. Nguyen Hoai Chuong, Deputy Director, Department of Education and Training of Ho Chi Minh City, said: "We are very impressed with the way bilingual education has been offered in state schools across Spain. The Department of Education and Training of Ho Chi Minh City has been working with EMG Education to introduce Cambridge programmes in selected state schools, and exchanges from this trip will prove very valuable."

OCR opens up alternative pathways post 19

In recognition of the evolution of post 19 career pathways, UK exam board OCR is exploring new options for people who want to combine work and study after leaving school. Due to challenging economic conditions and the rising cost of higher education, credible vocational alternatives to standard university courses are becoming increasingly attractive to students and their families.

At the end of last year, OCR launched the first Higher Professional Services Apprenticeships which offer a chance to specialise in audit, tax or management consulting. This gives learners the opportunity to combine earning a living with securing relevant professional qualifications on their Apprenticeship journey. Similarly, the exam board is extending the ladder of its Cambridge Technicals vocational range to meet the needs of post 19 year olds. The Technicals range was launched a year ago, originally for 16 to 19 year olds, in the core areas of IT, Business, and Health and Social Care. The range has since expanded but from September 2013, OCR will roll out Level 4 Cambridge Technicals for post 19 learners which could be studied either full time or part time alongside work. These higher level qualifications in strong vocational areas could act as a bridge onto a university degree course or into employment. OCR is currently working in partnership with The Open University on routes into OU degree courses based on higher Cambridge Technicals.



Demand for linear learning drives record take-up of Cambridge IGCSE

The number of UK pupils taking Cambridge IGCSE in English, humanities and foreign language subjects has increased by over 130 per cent in just one year. This increase in popularity, which coincides with the 25th anniversary of Cambridge IGCSE, has been driven by a growing appetite among teachers and school leaders for a linear approach that prioritises learning time over assessment.

It also follows the recent expansion in the number of UK state schools offering the linear IGCSE qualification, from 97 in 2010 to 600 this year. Adding independent schools to that number, Cambridge IGCSE is now taken in over 1,000 schools in the UK.

David Hempstead, Head of French at St Paul's School, London said: "Cambridge IGCSE's emphasis on conceptual knowledge and accuracy, as well as more rigorous testing, has proved to be a far better basis for the next stage of students' education. Without controlled assessment, Cambridge IGCSE gives us much more time to teach. Linear qualifications such as the IGCSE in languages reflect the cumulative nature of language-learning, so assessment at the end of the course is entirely logical."

GCSE reform

As reported in the autumn issue of *Achieve*, Cambridge Assessment held a series of roundtables on GCSE reform to provide an opportunity for teachers, businesses, students and parents to discuss and put forward their views on the future of the GCSE.

Although the broad themes of each discussion group reflected the particular interests, prejudices, backgrounds or agendas of the contributors, certain key issues came up time and again across all the groups, with broad areas of agreement on solutions. These included:

The curriculum

- The requirement for broader learning that encompassed key skills and transferable learning, project work, critical thinking and extended learning.
- The feeling that there was too much top down direction and that teachers and schools with more freedom could develop more motivating packages of study which could, for example, have a local focus or allow for broader experiences.

High stakes testing

- There were too many high stakes tests.
- High stakes testing skewed learning outcomes and teaching practices, e.g. teaching to the test.
- High stakes testing narrowed the curriculum and prevented broader study.
- Teachers, parents and pupils were equally guilty of ramping up the pressures on and expectations of assessment.

Accountability measures and grading

- Current accountability measures distort learning outcomes by reinforcing teaching to the test and a concentration on C/D grade boundaries.
- They restrict the freedom of institutions to innovate and also reinforce 'age not stage', hindering genuine skills and knowledge-based learning particularly amongst lower ability pupils.

- They can change the nature of learning in a negative way, for example, helping create the environment for 'gaming'.
- Current grading arrangements reinforce teaching to the test and the negative features of current accountability measures.

In conclusion, if education reform is to deliver a sustainable, long-term framework that will stand the test of time, enable us to create exams that prioritise and promote learning, there is a fundamental need to achieve a national consensus on:

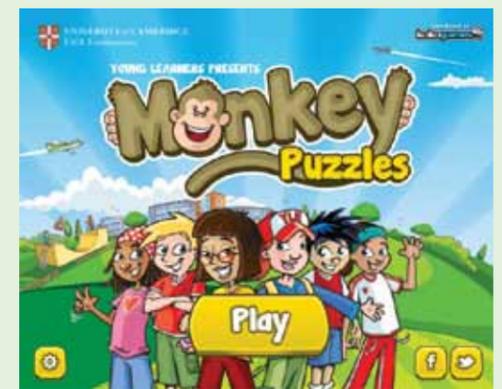
- What skills, knowledge and understanding do our children need in order to prosper in the 21st century?
- Should any 16-plus examination be a touch-point to monitor their progress and assist with students' decisions on routes? Or should it be a certificate that demonstrates the student's subject competence to employers or for onward education? Or should it provide employers, and FE with a tool that helps them differentiate between students?
- Are exam results a suitable form of accountability measure for schools?

Group Chief Executive, Simon Lebus, said: "Addressing these questions is difficult and controversial, but by getting the fundamentals right in terms of the curriculum and putting learning at the heart of assessment, we will forego the need for constant change, will restore trust to the examinations system and reach a hitherto unachieved level of common cause and agreement."

The full report can be found on www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk

New online game to help children learn English

A new online educational game has been developed by experts at Cambridge to help children around the world practise their reading skills when learning English.



Monkey Puzzles from Cambridge English Language Assessment introduces a fun learning environment that is packed with animations and sounds from a host of animal characters including lions, giraffes and elephants.

Players visit the Monkey's favourite places where they are faced with eight mini games to test their reading skills in English. Monkey Puzzles is ideal for children preparing for the Cambridge English Young Learners exams and is targeted at levels A1–A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Cambridge English Language Assessment's Digital Marketing Manager Lorna Pedersen explains: "Learning English should be an enjoyable experience for children and this is what we've aimed for with Monkey Puzzles. We've packed in lots of mini games to ensure children have a fun and educational gaming experience that motivates them to want to learn more."

Monkey Puzzles is the latest in a series of online learning initiatives from Cambridge English Language Assessment. Earlier in the year they launched Academy Island – the exam board's first online game which has been played by over 300,000 people to date.

Cambridge English Language Assessment worked with award-winning social media gaming specialist Koko Games to design and develop Monkey Puzzles which is freely available for schools, teachers, exam centres and even bloggers to copy and embed within their own sites to encourage children to practise their English.

To play the game visit www.cambridgeenglish.org/games

Global expansion of teacher training

Over 13,000 teachers from Cambridge schools worldwide took part in more than 530 face-to-face events and 200 online training events in 2011/2012 – the biggest turnout yet.

Investment in webinar technology has increased Cambridge International Examinations' reach, enabling teacher training to take place without the need to travel. A recent webinar for Cambridge IGCSE Enterprise connected teachers from Portugal, Bangladesh, India, Spain, Netherlands, Thailand, Ghana and the UK. Country-specific webinars are also working well, connecting schools within the same country so that training can be tailored to the local context and made accessible to a higher number of teachers. Such events help build partnerships between schools and raise standards collectively.

The exam board is also working with the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education to deliver teacher training. Tutors from the Faculty lead Cambridge Learner Seminars for maths and science teachers around the world. These seminars emphasise activity-based learning, giving teachers techniques for engaging learners in lessons. Over 125 teachers attended the seminars in Saudi Arabia in December 2012.



Mark Winterbottom, a lecturer in science education at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, leading Cambridge Learner Seminars for teachers in Saudi Arabia, December 2012.

Carolyn Tiller, Training Services Manager, Cambridge International Examinations said "It's great to give teachers these professional development opportunities because it helps them to keep engaged with their professional learning community of teachers and be innovative about their own teaching practice."

Inspiring historians

A Level History teachers recently debated the question 'Is History Kind to Churchill?' at the Churchill War Rooms in London.



Inspiring locations.



History teachers go back to class.

The event is part of OCR's programme of Continued Professional Development (CPD) series which gives teachers a chance to enhance knowledge and debate topical issues in their subject areas.

The varied programme included a lecture by Professor Richard Toye of Exeter University, author of *The Roar of the Lion: The Making of Churchill's World War II Speeches*, as well as an activity in the Churchill War Rooms and Museum, demonstrating how the museum can be used as an active resource for learners.

Other sessions included a discussion of source materials and a group exercise using archive material of a critical War Cabinet discussion of 28 May 1940 – should Britain fight on or attempt to negotiate a peace?

The focus of OCR's CPD events is popular with teachers. One teacher commented: "Great to attend a course that is subject focused and not just about mark schemes". Another highlighted "academic discussion – time to reflect" as a key attraction.

Dutch educators link up with Cambridge

A bespoke blended learning course in assessment and education was specially designed by the Cambridge Assessment Network team for the Netherlands' national curriculum body.

The course, attended by 30 delegates from the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO), focused on the principles of assessment and how it can be applied to the context of schools and the curriculum.

As part of the course, two workshops were held at SLO's headquarters in the Netherlands, each followed by a five-week period of online collaborative work. The workshops covered the purposes of assessment; learning and assessment; validity and reliability; processes of test and task development; assessing 'life skills'; and formative assessment.

The course culminated in a visit to Cambridge where delegates met with their subject counterparts from Cambridge Assessment to learn about each other's approaches to assessment. The visit also provided delegates with a comprehensive overview of current issues and practice relating to the English school curriculum and assessment.

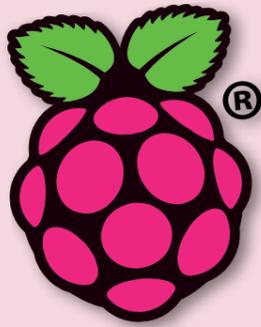
Theun Meestringa, responsible for Curriculum development for Dutch in upper secondary education, said: "It was definitely worth refreshing and fine tuning our knowledge on the validity and reliability of assessment. We got some new examples of ways of assessing language which we may use in further developmental work – more examples are always welcome! And we learned a new distinction between standardisation and moderation. For us, this last aspect may be of the greatest influence on our future work."

The Cambridge Assessment Network provides a forum for professionals involved in assessment to develop and share their knowledge and expertise. In addition to its wide ranging programme of seminars and training events, it also offers bespoke solutions – courses, events, resources and consultancy – to cater for specific educational and assessment training requirements.

Last year the Network also ran a four-week bespoke course on the teaching and assessment of English in primary and secondary schools for the Singapore Ministry of Education; and a one-day course on writing summative assessment within the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework model designed for the Chartered Institute of Housing.

To learn more about the Network and download the 2013 programme visit www.canetwork.org.uk

OCR will be illuminating aspects of Norman History at a forthcoming CPD event in May 2013 at another atmospheric and resource-rich location, the Tower of London. Historian and TV presenter, Marc Morris and Oxford University's Dr George Garnett, both authors on the Norman Conquest, will help get history teachers' ideas flowing.



Supporting schools with Google's free Raspberry Pi computers

2013 is shaping up to be an exciting year for computing. On the eve of BETT in January, the world's largest educational IT event, Google joined forces with OCR and five other partners to announce an initiative to hand out thousands of free Raspberry Pi computers to schools across the country.

Raspberry Pi is a cheap, credit card-sized, programmable computer which plugs into a monitor and a keyboard. It was developed to inspire a generation of learners to discover how computers are programmed and how they function.

OCR has used its expertise to develop a range of resources to help teachers and students get started with the Pi and explore its potential. Each free Raspberry Pi that Google give away will come with a learning support pack from OCR. It includes a 'Getting Started' tutorial booklet with an introduction to

using the computer, plus links to a variety of OCR resources which map directly to the curriculum – such as classroom challenges and advanced tutorials – as well as links to useful resources on the internet, all on a pre-loaded SD card.

Liz Upton from Raspberry Pi said: "This is a brilliant way to find kids all over the country whose aptitude for computing can now be explored properly. We believe that access to tools is a fundamental necessity in finding out who you are and what you're good at. We want those tools to be within everybody's grasp."

"OCR's GCSE Computing provides an holistic approach where students have to think and make their own decisions, including doing their own research. Several students have gone on to study A Level Computing and I expect this to be a growing trend."

David Pearce, Head of ICT at Brynteg School, Bridgend where the number of students choosing OCR's GCSE Computing course has doubled over the past two years.

"The use of Raspberry Pi brings fun and challenge and the ability to experiment back into the classroom."

Lorna Panesar who teaches OCR GCSE Computing at The Emmbrook School in Berkshire.



Visitors engaging with the Cambridge Assessment stand.



Raspberry Pi's Rob Bishop delivering one of the 'Meet the Experts' sessions on the stand. He carried out a short demonstration of the Pi.

BETT 2013

Cambridge Assessment attended the 2013 BETT show – one of the largest education technology exhibitions in the world – to demonstrate how its exam boards effectively use and deploy modern technology.

Blazing a trail in computer science

Since the launch of OCR's pilot GCSE Computing qualification three years ago, the exam board has been at the forefront of development in this new and exciting area.

Education Secretary, Michael Gove's recent announcement that computer science will become part of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) – one of the measures used in school league tables in England – has been welcomed by OCR. OCR's GCSE in Computing is one of just two computing qualifications that will now count in EBacc performance tables.

Mark Dawe, OCR Chief Executive, said: "The inclusion of computer science in the EBacc will support the growth of this exciting and creative subject. Since we pioneered our GCSE in 2010, the number of entries has risen by over 3,000 per cent. We've led the way in developing qualifications in this subject, enabling an even greater range of learners to access computer science: alongside our GCSE we offer an A Level and a brand new Entry Level qualification, whilst programming is incorporated in OCR's Cambridge Nationals in ICT and will be in Cambridge Technicals in IT from September."

Language levels explained

The basic principles of language learning levels are explained in a new video from Cambridge experts.

Available on Cambridge English TV, 'Understanding the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)' is an introductory look at the language ability levels of the CEFR, how the framework is used and its growing influence around the world.

Dr Nick Saville, Director of the Research & Validation Group at Cambridge English Language Assessment said: "The CEFR is becoming increasingly influential and is relied on as a measure of language ability in a range of

sectors. The new video will help people understand the benefits of the CEFR and grasp the basics of this complex framework. The video will benefit individuals looking to choose an exam, along with parents, schools, organisations and anyone else interested in language learning levels."

The CEFR was developed by the Council of Europe over ten years ago with extensive support from Cambridge English Language Assessment. It's an



internationally recognised system used by businesses, immigration authorities and universities around the world to describe language ability and set standards.

To watch the video visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAehOcVfr3Y

Thought leadership in Asia Pacific

As reported in the autumn issue of *Achieve*, Cambridge Assessment has introduced an extensive programme of education events across Asia Pacific to explore educational issues affecting the region and to help share best practice between schools.

Educational Leadership Seminars are one of the new initiatives from Cambridge Assessment Singapore, the charitable educational organisation launched in November 2012. These seminars bring together school leaders and teachers to discuss current issues in education – such as how the West and East can learn from each other – and will lead to the publication of essays by leaders of high-performing schools. Dr Stephen Spurr, Principal, Westminster School attended the first seminar in Singapore in November 2012 along with principals from schools in Singapore, New Zealand, India and elsewhere in the region. He said his aim was “to find out more about the innovative teaching methods that are being used in the Asia Pacific area.”

Additionally there is also a new discussion series – Cambridge Horizons – aimed at policy makers, curriculum developers and educators. The first Cambridge Horizons, in Singapore in November 2012, examined the cognitive benefits of bilingual education and how to turn policy into practice. Cambridge Horizons are also taking place in China and Malaysia during 2013, with many delegates watching and participating in the debate online.

Cambridge has been a trusted education partner in Asia Pacific for over 130 years and works with over 2,000 schools in the region and in partnership with governments.

Learn more at

www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/singapore



Isabel Nisbet, Senior Education Advisor Asia Pacific, Cambridge International Examinations with Dr Stephen Spurr.



Professor Amy Tsui, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice President (Teaching and Learning) from the University of Hong Kong.



Delegates at the Educational Leadership Seminar in November 2012.



The launch of Cambridge Assessment Singapore, November 2012. Left to right: Ben Schmidt, Cambridge Regional Director Asia Pacific; Ann Puntis, former Chief Executive, Cambridge International Examinations; and Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge.

Finnish Universities place English language skills top of the agenda

New figures show an increasing number of universities in Finland are ensuring students have the right levels of English language ability.

The study – carried out by a department of Cambridge University – looked at 43 educational institutions across Finland who offer English medium degree courses. The figures showed that 36 of the organisations now use the high-level Cambridge English: Advanced exam as a minimum entry criteria for students wishing to study degree courses delivered in English. This represents an increase of 15 institutions in the past year which Cambridge says is really encouraging.

“We’ve seen huge growth in recognition of our high level Cambridge English Advanced exam from universities across Finland,” says Nicola Johnson from Cambridge English Language Assessment. “This is really encouraging as Finland is becoming an increasingly important destination for English medium degrees. It’s now the top overseas study destination for Russian students and is increasingly popular with students from other parts of the world. Students who pass Cambridge English Advanced have shown they can use and understand English to a really high level which gives them a competitive advantage when they take up their place at university.”

The figures come at a time when Cambridge English Advanced was added to the official admissions system for Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland.

Supporting multi-language learning

Bilingualism or multilingualism is important in many countries. Education in a local language can help to teach national values and root learners in their own culture, while learning an additional language can broaden learners’ horizons and improve educational outcomes across all subjects.

Below is a round-up of how Cambridge International Examinations is working with overseas governments to develop integrated bilingual programmes:

In the Netherlands, the TTO (Tweetalig Onderwijs) network of state-funded national bilingual schools teaches some subjects through Dutch and some subjects through English. The schools wanted to give their bilingual learners recognition for their English-medium work and provide an international benchmark. Cambridge qualifications are now offered alongside the national Dutch examinations so that learners can be recognised for their achievements in studying in English.

In Malaysia, the Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) – the Council of Trust for the Indigenous People – is using Cambridge IGCSE to implement a bilingual dual-certification programme at secondary

level. The exam board is working with MARA to help integrate Cambridge programmes into the Malaysian curriculum and train teachers.

Cambridge is also one of several international partners, including the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and Cambridge English Language Assessment, working on an education reform project in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstan government has created new schools, Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, with the aim of delivering a curriculum in three languages of instruction – Kazakh, Russian and English.

The objective of the Kazakhstan government is one shared by governments worldwide: to create a world-class education system that prepares learners for university-level study in English, and helps young people – and ultimately the country – compete internationally.

It doesn't add up: what's wrong with maths?

As experts in assessment, Cambridge Assessment believes a sensible debate is needed to help construct a better maths curriculum for England. The event, on 15 May at the British Library in London, will comprise three main sections, the central one being a debate entitled 'Numeracy, arithmetic, maths – what age and at what stage?' Other elements include discussions on how to make maths relevant and whether technology is changing maths for the better.

The event will bring together practitioners, researchers, policy makers and those with an interest in the field. To request a free place, please contact James Garnham at Cambridge Assessment on +44 (0)1223 558370 or email: expertview@cambridgeassessment.org.uk

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Photography: cover (left)
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Front cover and page 3: Adam Cash;
page 6: Nick Sinclair

Design: H2 Associates, Cambridge



Clarifying vocational education

The need for clarity in the different 'tracks' in vocational education training is critical – there are different populations, different purposes, different needs, says Tim Oates, Cambridge Assessment's Director of Assessment Research and Development.

His new paper 'Towards a new VET: Effective Vocational Education and Training' addresses the need for evidence-based analysis of the whole issue of vocational and technical education in Britain and Europe.

Tim Oates says: "The route to a successful increase in employer-based vocational training lies in careful policy formation. There is no magic bullet, such as new qualifications. Sophisticated, diverse, balanced and coherent policy is necessary, using the insights from research. As a nation, we are capable of both formulating the policy response needed, and effecting the debate and actions needed to establish a pathway towards the right set of arrangements. We just need to use the evidence wisely."

Spurred on by the continuing economic crisis, the major UK political parties now seem to agree the value of vocational and technical education has never been higher. Committed to informing the political debate in and around education, Tim's paper was written as part of major collaborative project between Cambridge Assessment and think tank Policy Exchange.

Policy Exchange's pamphlet, 'Technical Matters: Building a high quality technical and vocational route through the education system', was launched in January receiving widespread coverage. Both Tim Oates and the Policy Exchange pamphlet were later quoted in a heated exchange between UK Education Secretary Michael Gove and Shadow Education Minister Karen Buck at Education Questions.

Exam reform in Wales and Northern Ireland

While the exam reform programme in England has generated much debate, these are interesting times too for education in Wales and Northern Ireland.

The dynamics and timetable of exam reform are unique in each administration. The Welsh government, whose action on exam reform is six months ahead of Northern Ireland's, confirmed in January 2013 that it would retain GCSEs and A Levels, alongside a 'revised, more rigorous' Welsh Baccalaureate. It backed the findings of a 2012 Qualifications Review which also recommended:

- The establishment of Qualifications Wales as an independent regulator which could, in time, award qualifications.
- 14 – 16 vocational qualifications to have a maximum equivalence of 2 GCSEs.
- Programme-led funding is to be introduced post 16.

In Northern Ireland, the consultation started in November 2012 and the review is due to report to the Minister of Education in June 2013. The Minister is clear that he wants a suite of qualifications that are "robust,

fair and portable". They must be "credible in the eyes of employers and other education providers, including universities" and ensure that the interests of all learners across the North are protected.

It is therefore possible that the three countries will have parallel school qualifications, rather than the largely overlapping ones they do now.

Mark Dawe, OCR Chief Executive, whose Cambridge/Coventry-based exam board also has national offices in Cardiff and Belfast, said: "We support the Welsh move towards independent regulation, as in Northern Ireland, and will continue to support teachers and students in Wales and Northern Ireland who use our qualifications. The key is qualifications that people have confidence in so learners can move on in their learning and life, in their own countries and abroad."

Welcoming the Year of the Snake

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Cambridge English exams and the start of the Year of the Snake, Cambridge English Language Assessment sponsored the annual All Party Parliamentary China Group New Year reception at the House of Commons. Guests at the reception included MPs, Peers, business leaders and a delegation from the Chinese Embassy. Cambridge English Language Assessment has been involved in China since 1993.



Pictured left to right:
Roger Johnson of Cambridge English Language Assessment, H.E. Ambassador Liu Xiaoming, Richard Graham MP, APP China Group Chairman, Hugo Swire MP, Foreign Office Minister, Christine Nuttall and Dr Nick Saville, Cambridge English Language Assessment