

# Update for schools

Cambridge Pre-U is an exciting post-16 qualification preparing learners for university

## A step ahead of A Level reform

**As we were writing this issue, Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, announced plans to reform A Levels. He called for a shift to a linear structure and closer consultation between exam boards and universities to develop qualifications.**

We find it very encouraging to hear about the central role to be played by universities in A Level reform, an endorsement of the approach that we used in developing Cambridge Pre-U. Its educational values are based on extensive research carried out with universities.

Schools that made the decision to adopt Cambridge Pre-U can feel proud that their experience has proved invaluable to the UK

education landscape. In terms of making the transition to a linear structure, Cambridge Pre-U schools have made the move ahead of time.

Ann Puntis, Chief Executive, University of Cambridge International Examinations, described the proposals as a significant step in the right direction. She said: "The problem of students arriving ill prepared in their first year of university has

been the subject of ongoing debate. We chose to address this in 2005 by developing Cambridge Pre-U, a new pre-university qualification in collaboration with universities and schools. And the growth of Cambridge Pre-U shows a growing appetite among schools for a qualification that is already proven to help students bridge the gap between school and university."

## Literature in English and History success story

**Cambridge Pre-U is growing across the board, as revealed by entries for our June 2012 exam series**

Overall entries for Cambridge Pre-U are up 30 per cent on June 2011, and take-up is now nearing 50:50 in terms of the state versus independent school split. In total, 170 schools are registered to teach Cambridge Pre-U.

Among the growth, two qualifications stand out: Literature in English and History. Entries for these qualifications have increased the most since last year.

Val Joyce, Head of English at Watford Grammar School for Girls, has taught Cambridge Pre-U Literature in English for three years. She said all the students who have taken the course "love it".



“ Teaching Cambridge Pre-U Literature in English has restored my joy in teaching English at Key Stage 5. ”

Val Joyce, Head of English, Watford Grammar School for Girls

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Cambridge Pre-U Literature in English includes a Personal Investigation – an essay of about 3000 words – so students can explore their own interests. Val Joyce says: “The freedom of choice of texts and areas of study for the Personal Investigation has been liberating. My students really value the truly independent nature of their study, and we have time and space in the syllabus to introduce a wide range of literature in different genres and from different times.”



She says the set texts stretch all levels of ability: “Cambridge Pre-U isn’t just for the very able – even those who are not ‘naturals’ can appreciate the high quality of the

literature studied, partly, I am sure, because they don’t have the anxiety of facing a public examination on the texts less than a year after their GCSEs.”

Ex-pupils report that they feel much better prepared for university study than their peers. She says: “They feel that the wide research and independent learning of Cambridge Pre-U have given them a head start.”

Find Cambridge Pre-U syllabuses at [www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu](http://www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu)

## University recognition – what’s new

We are continuing to extend university recognition of Cambridge Pre-U and smooth the progression path for students. Here is a quick summary of the latest developments.

### Our work with UK universities

More than 140 UK universities accept Cambridge Pre-U, including all universities in the Russell Group, and we continue to focus our efforts on extending recognition among UK universities and higher education institutions.

Most recently, we have been asking universities if they will accept Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives and Research (GPR) in lieu of an AS Level where a fourth subject is required, or as equivalent to a Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject/an alternative to an A Level. A good number of universities have responded to our request for recognition of Cambridge Pre-U GPR, including Oxford, Bristol, Manchester and UCL.

Cambridge Pre-U GPR may be accepted in lieu of an AS Level where there are subject-specific entry requirements for a particular course, such as medicine. In this instance, Cambridge Pre-U GPR may be accepted as an additional or fourth subject of a student’s portfolio. However, where there are no subject-specific entry requirements, Cambridge Pre-U GPR may be accepted as equivalent to a Principal Subject or an A Level, when taken in combination with two A Levels or equivalent.

We are also receiving confirmation from UK universities that they will accept a Cambridge Pre-U Short Course in lieu of an AS level, where a fourth subject is required for admission purposes. Such universities include Sheffield, Exeter, Manchester and Edinburgh.

At the time of going to press, we are in positive discussions with the Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE] concerning the appropriate inclusion of Cambridge Pre-U on the list of qualifications which might be taken by high-performing students. The Cambridge team works hard to keep both schools and universities briefed and is always ready to answer any queries concerning students’ admission to university.

A useful guide called *Informed Choices*, produced by the Russell Group, gives advice to students on the best subject combinations for a wide range of university courses. Cambridge Pre-U is included in *Informed Choices*. Take a look at the guide – go to [www.russellgroup.ac.uk](http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk)

### Recognition of Cambridge Pre-U spreads worldwide

Our work to extend Cambridge Pre-U recognition among universities internationally is yielding results, which is good news for the growing numbers of students applying to universities outside the UK.

In the US, more than 60 universities and education institutions accept Cambridge Pre-U, including all Ivy League universities, MIT and Stanford. We have also received formal recognition statements from universities in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong and the Netherlands.

To find out which universities accept Cambridge Pre-U, search our database at [www.cie.org.uk/recognition](http://www.cie.org.uk/recognition)

# Bridging the gap to university with Cambridge Pre-U

Language students who attended our latest *Bridging the Gap* event said it had reaffirmed their decision to study languages at university.

Almost 70 language students from 12 schools joined teachers and language experts for the second Cambridge Pre-U *Bridging the Gap* event at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, on 21 March 2012. They came to find out more about language study at university, and develop their language skills in university-style seminars. For teachers, the event offered a chance to explore how best to prepare students for the transition to university.

“More challenging ways of thinking”

Dr Helen Swift, tutor in French at the University of Oxford, and a guest speaker, said the event gave students insight into the type of thinking required at university.

“In their groups, the students were particularly looking at the challenges facing young people in Europe – and they were looking at those challenges from a genuinely European perspective. Most people are quite familiar with news coverage and relating it to current affairs in the UK, but looking at news events from a French perspective or a German perspective and doing so in an authentic way starts to prepare students for those more challenging ways of thinking about culture that you experience at university level,” she said.

“Preparing students for university”

We consulted with universities during the development of Cambridge Pre-U, and continue to listen closely to their views. The Cambridge Pre-U Modern Foreign Language syllabuses put language learning firmly in the context of the countries where the language is spoken, preparing



Dr Helen Swift, tutor, University of Oxford.

students for authentic language study at university. The day after our seminar, a House of Lords committee called for all primary and secondary school children to learn a language. And evidence suggests that language learning in secondary schools is starting to increase after years of decline. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBac) may, in part, be responsible for this.

Cambridge Pre-U Modern Foreign Language courses are designed to develop positive attitudes to language learning, and the reaction to our event has been exceptional. Teachers and students talk about it creating a buzz around language study.

“A fantastic experience”

The final word goes to Gail Braybrook, a student from Oakham School, who took part in the *Bridging the Gap* event: “After today, I’d urge anyone either to carry on with a language or take up a new one. Languages are not only useful, particularly in terms of employment opportunities, but enjoyable too.”



Student workshop at the event.

## Key facts about Cambridge Pre-U Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

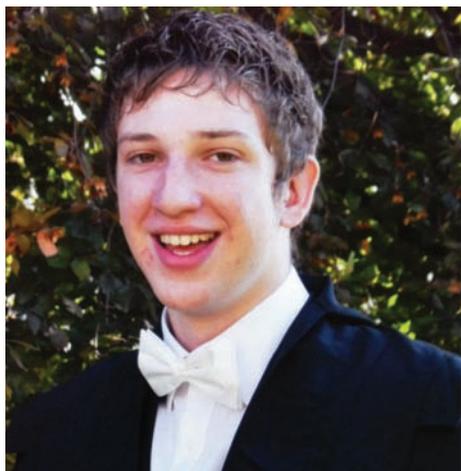
- Choose from French, German, Spanish, Russian and Italian.
- Available as Principal Subjects (two-year courses) and Short Courses (typically one-year).
- Syllabuses engage students with the culture of the target language, include study and discussion of literary texts, and develop skills in speaking, writing, reading and listening.

## Coming soon... more *Bridging the Gap* events in 2012

- Science – 26 June 2012 (see page 8 for details)
- English – autumn 2012
- History – autumn 2012.

## Cambridge Pre-U gave me a head start at university

The Education Secretary wants to put qualifications into the hands of universities so they can help develop courses that prepare students for the rigour of university study. Students taking Cambridge Pre-U have blazed a trail. They are already taking a qualification based on extensive research with universities and developed with their input.



“ It is a real bonus that Cambridge Pre-U allows more time to understand the course material and go deeper into interesting topics.

The exams require true understanding rather than just remembering several equations for a couple of months. This understanding definitely helped with my interview for Oxford and confirmed my choice to do physics at university.”

Rob Hall studied Cambridge Pre-U Physics at Barnard Castle School, County Durham. He is now studying physics at Oxford University. He wants to pursue a career in research, engineering or financial services.

“ I liked the flexibility of Cambridge Pre-U when it came to answering exam questions. When I started university I felt like I had a head start on research and referencing skills. Cambridge Pre-U gave me an introduction to literature research and taught me the importance of wider research, which I now know are crucial for university study.”

Conall McCoy studied Cambridge Pre-U Philosophy and Theology at Wimbledon College. He is now studying politics at Sheffield University and wants to pursue a career in government or political journalism.

“ I enjoyed the breadth of study of Cambridge Pre-U. Two years free from exams meant I was able to explore different areas that interested me, rather than just the exam syllabus. Studying Cambridge Pre-U Literature in English helped me to develop a more independent approach to choosing, reading and writing about literature which has helped me with my university studies.”

Clarissa Knowles from Westminster School is now studying English literature at Bristol University. She wants to be a journalist or novelist.



“ I really enjoyed the course. The structure of Cambridge Pre-U allowed a greater in-depth understanding of history and also prepared me better for university interviews.”

Amy Bond studied Cambridge Pre-U History at Watford Grammar School. She is now studying history at the University of Cambridge and wants to work in the voluntary sector.

### November exam series for re-sits introduced in 2013

We are introducing a November exam series for Cambridge Pre-U, for re-sit purposes. The first series will take place in 2013. Re-sits will be available for all Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects, with the exception of Art and Design. Re-sits will not be available for Cambridge Pre-U Short Courses.

## Cambridge IGCSE®: prepares students well for Cambridge Pre-U

More than 750 schools in the UK teach Cambridge IGCSE, with entries for June 2012 up 104 per cent on June 2011. Many of the features that schools like about Cambridge Pre-U – linear structure, more freedom for teaching and learning, good preparation for further study – are also common to Cambridge IGCSE.

We are starting to do research with schools that teach both Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge Pre-U. We want to find out what support we can offer teachers to help them transition students from one qualification to the next.

As part of our research, we have found that teachers think Cambridge IGCSE is a good lead on to Cambridge Pre-U. A languages teacher told us: "Cambridge IGCSE has a greater grammatical content and a broader vocabulary content. We find therefore that the transition [to Cambridge Pre-U] is eased."

Twenty Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses are approved by Ofqual and funded for teaching in state schools in England. Many also count towards the English Baccalaureate. It is easy to make the switch from GCSE to IGCSE. If you are interested, come to our next INSET workshops for Cambridge IGCSE in autumn 2012. They are open to teachers who are interested in offering Cambridge IGCSE, as well as those already teaching it. You can find more details on our website at [www.cie.org.uk/ukigcse](http://www.cie.org.uk/ukigcse)



### Resources for teachers

#### Cambridge Pre-U Teacher Guides

Every Cambridge Pre-U subject is supported with a teacher guide. New guides are now available for Biology and Global Perspectives, and we have revised and updated the guide for Economics.

#### Cambridge Pre-U Example Candidate Responses

Genuine student answers are shown alongside examiner comments to help you and your students understand the standards required to achieve each grade, and the breadth of knowledge needed.

These resources are available free to Cambridge schools on our secure Teacher Support website at <http://teachers.cie.org.uk>

#### Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses approved by Ofqual

English – First Language	Greek – Foreign Language
English – Literature	Hindi as a Second Language
English – Second Language (count-in oral)	Spanish – Foreign Language
Mathematics	Geography
Biology	History
Chemistry	Art and Design
Physics	Business Studies
Chinese (Mandarin) – Foreign Language	Enterprise
French – Foreign Language	Information and Communication Technology
German – Foreign Language	Music

The Ofqual-approved syllabuses are listed on the Register of Regulated Qualifications as Cambridge International Level 1/Level 2 Certificates.



## Case study: Richmond upon Thames College

**Richmond upon Thames College will offer Cambridge Pre-U in eight subjects from September 2012. They are a top-performing further education college in London, offering a variety of programmes to around 3600 full-time students aged 16 to 19 years. We spoke to Kathleen Wildman, Curriculum Divisional Director, to find out more.**



*Kathleen Wildman, Curriculum Divisional Director, Richmond upon Thames College.*

### **Q. Why did you decide to offer Cambridge Pre-U?**

**A.** We liked the syllabuses, which are challenging and exciting for both students and staff. Cambridge Pre-U gives excellent preparation for university, particularly with the emphasis on independent study and research.

We were drawn to the linear nature of the courses, which give more time for the learning process. This is particularly the case for subjects where time is needed for the development of skills and aptitudes without the pressure of modular exams. Our art, music and drama teachers are particularly excited about the possibilities of developing holistic schemes of work. Our history teachers, too, were very enthusiastic about the choice of areas offered.

We also very much liked the inclusive nature of the courses. Cambridge Pre-U provides stretch and challenge for Gifted and Talented students, while also being accessible to the whole breadth of our intake.

### **Q. What key benefits do you think Cambridge Pre-U will offer your students and teachers?**

**A.** For students, I think a real benefit is to be able to specialise in a subject in which they have an interest or passion and perhaps already know they want to continue into higher education. For teachers, benefits include the flexibility of the syllabus, the opportunity to choose the order of topics and cover material in depth, and the time to develop students' skills and abilities.

### **Q. How are you offering Cambridge Pre-U?**

**A.** We are offering Cambridge Pre-U alongside AS Levels. At present our AS students typically choose a programme of four AS Levels (some choose five), and a programme of three A2 subjects in year two. We expect students to choose one Cambridge Pre-U course alongside three AS Level subjects, or two Cambridge Pre-U courses alongside two AS Level subjects.

In their second year they will continue with Cambridge Pre-U and embark upon their choice of A2 subjects. They will study at least three subjects in year two, and their university offers will be based on a combination of Cambridge Pre-U and A Level points.

### **Q. What has been the reaction from parents and students?**

**A.** We held a Cambridge Pre-U information evening, which included presentations by subject teachers. Over 100 people attended, with many prospective students and their parents staying behind to ask questions. It was clear that a number of people had already visited the Cambridge Pre-U website and were aware of the qualification. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

### **Q. How have you found the support from Cambridge?**

**A.** I have been delighted with the support from Cambridge. We were very impressed with the original presentation given by Cambridge staff, and since then I have had answers to every question. Teaching staff were very pleased with the training provided.



Richmond upon Thames College will offer Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects in Classical Heritage, Drama and Theatre, Economics, Literature in English, Fine Art, History, Music, Philosophy and Theology from September 2012.

# Cambridge Pre-U INSET calendar

Book a place on a Cambridge Pre-U workshop – for teachers new to Cambridge Pre-U or considering teaching it for the first time. Attendance is free and lunch is provided. We are holding INSET workshops in autumn 2012 for the following subjects:

Art and Design	French	Research Report
Biology	Geography	Mathematics
Chemistry	German	Philosophy and Theology
Drama and Theatre	Global Perspectives	Physics
Literature in English	History	Spanish

The sessions will cover:

- unique features of the Cambridge Pre-U syllabus in this subject
- resources to support teaching and example materials
- building a support network with other teachers.

## How to book:

Dates and locations will be available on our website soon.

Go to [www.cie.org.uk/events](http://www.cie.org.uk/events)

## Register your interest for INSET in other subjects

If you would like to attend an INSET workshop for a subject that is not listed above, please let us know. Simply go to [www.cie.org.org/events](http://www.cie.org.org/events) and find the 'Register your interest' event listing for your subject. Click on 'register for this event' and fill in your contact details. If there is enough demand for INSET in other subjects, we would be pleased to run sessions. You do not need to be teaching Cambridge Pre-U to register your interest or attend our INSET.

What teachers say about our INSET courses...

“ This is the first INSET I have attended in a couple of decades, which actually cheered me up and left me feeling happy and confident at the end of the day. ”

Cambridge Pre-U English

“ A very inspiring course – I am presenting the content to my department tomorrow, and I am convinced that they will be as inspired as I was. ”

Cambridge Pre-U Physics

“ Very useful to listen to colleagues who already have experience of teaching this course. ”

Cambridge Pre-U History

Come along in September and find out for yourself!

## Are you attending these events?

We are attending the following events. Come and talk to us about Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge Pre-U.

Date	Event
June 2012	Conference for HMC (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference) Deputy Heads
June 2012	EBEA (Economics and Business Education Association) Annual Conference
June 2012	Sixth Form Colleges Forum Summer Conference
June 2012	SSAT (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust) Maths, Computing and Science Conference
June 2012	NATE (The National Association for the Teaching of English) Conference
July 2012	ATP (Association for the Teaching of Psychology) Conference
September 2012	ATSS (Association for the Teaching of the Social Sciences) Annual Conference
October 2012	SSAT (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust) Humanities Conference
October 2012	SSAT (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust) Annual Languages Conference
October 2012	9th Annual National Admissions to Higher Education Conference
November 2012	SSAT (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust) 19th National Conference
November 2012	IPSEF (International and Private Schools Education Forum) Annual Conference 2012

## **Bridging the Gap for science students, 26 June 2012 – book now**

**We are offering your science students a unique opportunity to gain experience of working in a university lab, and learn more about studying science at university.**

Our *Bridging the Gap* one-day seminar for biology, chemistry and physics students will take place at the University of Cambridge Chemistry Department on Tuesday 26 June 2012. Cambridge Pre-U *Bridging the Gap* seminars provide:

- valuable insight from university staff about degree-level study
- university-style learning through group-work activities
- advice for teachers on transitioning students to university
- a chance to inspire students and build confidence.

Guest speakers will include Dr Siân Owen, Physics Access Officer at the University of Oxford, who will advise students wanting to study sciences at university. The students will then work in labs according to their specialism – biology, chemistry or physics. Subject experts including Dr Peter Wothers, a chemist at the University



of Cambridge, will lead the sessions. At the end of the event, students will present their findings, thereby building confidence in communicating science to an audience.

Teacher sessions will take place alongside the student sessions, offering a chance to develop your practice alongside other Cambridge Pre-U teachers.

Places are limited for this free event, so we recommend you book early. To book, please contact our Events team at [events@cie.org.uk](mailto:events@cie.org.uk)

### **Cambridge Chemistry Challenge competition**

Have you entered your students for the Cambridge Chemistry Challenge Lower 6th Competition? This 90-minute written paper is set by experienced teachers and university chemists, and will be taken in schools in June 2012. It is designed to help Year 12 students think about science in the way they would at university. The top-performing students will be invited to a residential course at the University of Cambridge in August 2012.

“The Cambridge Chemistry Challenge is a marvellous resource for stretching and enthusing students, their teachers and anyone with a lifelong interest in chemistry.”

Chemistry A Level examiner

The Cambridge Chemistry Challenge is supported by University of Cambridge International Examinations. You need to register your students by 1 June 2012 – go to [www.c3L6.org](http://www.c3L6.org)

### **Facts and figures**

**170 schools** registered to teach Cambridge Pre-U

Entries for June 2012 up **30%** on June 2011

**The most popular Cambridge Pre-U subjects are:**

1. Literature in English
2. French
3. History
4. Mathematics
5. Global Perspectives and Research.

**20%** more schools have entered candidates for June 2012

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