

# **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)**

for

**IGCSE**

and

**AS/A2 Levels, International A Level**

## **What is Cambridge IGCSE?**

Cambridge IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) is an international curriculum from University of Cambridge International Examinations (C.I.E), which is the world's largest provider of international qualifications for 14–19 year olds. It is a part of the University of Cambridge – In 2010, the University of Cambridge was ranked the number one university in the world.

## **How long do students study the IGCSE curriculum and when do they take exams?**

The curriculum is generally studied over a two-year period through years 10 and 11 (Standard 9 and 10) and at the end of this time the students take IGCSE examinations in March or in some cases, the October/November prior to March.

## **What's the difference between a Core and Extended examination syllabus?**

The core and extended examinations allow students of different levels of skill to study and take an exam which suits their level of ability. The extended examination includes the questions from the core exam with additional, generally more demanding questions.

## **What are the possible grades and what do the different grades mean?**

Possible grades for the core examination are C to G while possible grades for the extended examination are A\* to E or A\* to G depending on the syllabus. (NB Grades may be replaced with a 1-9 scale)

## **Will IGCSE help students to get accepted to a university or improve their chances of getting a good job?**

Cambridge IGCSE is very well known by higher learning institutes (universities and polytechnics) and employers from around the world as evidence of academic ability. After completion of IGCSE students will have greater options in terms of work and further education.

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language at grade C or above is recognised by almost all UK universities – and many in the U.S, Canada, Australia and New Zealand as evidence of adequate competence in the English language for university entrance purposes. This means that if a student achieves a grade C or better, their English will be considered proficient enough for them to be able to study at many universities in English speaking countries. You can look up specific universities to find out whether your qualifications are accepted at [www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/recognition](http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/recognition)

### **What type of skills does IGCSE develop?**

It develops and encourages vital educational skills, including oral skills, investigative skills, problem solving, team work, recall of knowledge, and initiative.

### **How does IGCSE compare with GCSE and O levels?**

Cambridge IGCSEs are recognised by universities in England and around the world as equivalent, grade-for-grade, with GCSE and O level qualifications.

### **What are the prerequisites for taking an IGCSE subject?**

There are none. You don't need to be a native English user, as long as your English language skills are sufficient for learning the course

### **Where is IGCSE accepted and recognized?**

The IGCSE is an internationally recognized qualification.

### **Is there course work in the IGCSE?**

This depends. While schools do have a coursework option in some subjects, it is also possible to take the 100% exam route with the IGCSE.

### **When do the results come out?**

The results are generally released in May (for the March exam session) and January (for the November session) Please check with the school.

### **What happens if I am dissatisfied with my results?**

You can discuss your options with the Deputy Head of Academics/Head of Secondary. It is possible to retake subjects. It might be worth considering having the paper remarked.

### **Can I retake my examination?**

A student that has entered for the March series can be entered for an examination in the same syllabus in June of the same year, but there is no carry forward option for the internally assessed work. This means that the candidate will need to sit the full examination as new. It is not considered a retake. It is not possible to carry forward marks from the March series to the June series. This is due to the two series being too close together.

### **Carrying forward internally assessed marks:**

Candidates wishing to take a syllabus again in a future exam series may want to retake the written components and carry forward the marks they achieved in their internally assessed components. Individual syllabuses specify whether candidates can do this or not. If the syllabus allows it, a student can carry forward Cambridge IGCSE marks once and Cambridge International AS Level marks twice within a 13-month period. Marks for the March 2018 series cannot be carried forward to the June 2018 series.

Examples:

- 1] An internally assessed mark for the March 2018 series may be carried forward to the November 2018 series or the March 2019 series only.
- 2] An internally assessed mark for the June 2017 series may be carried forward to the November 2017 series, the March 2018 series or the June 2018 series only.
- 3] An internally assessed mark for the November 2017 series may be carried forward to the March 2018 series, the June 2018 series or the November 2018 series only.

### **How many IGCSE subjects should I take?**

It really depends on the purpose for which you are taking them. The convention in UK schools is to sit eight to ten subjects. However, this is primarily a function of maintaining a broad curriculum in mainstream schools. Students in other educational systems or taking subjects in a different context may only need to take one or two subjects. Speak with the Deputy Head of Academics/Head of Secondary

### **When is the cut off time for withdrawing from an IGCSE subject?**

Candidates can withdraw from a subject any time up to the exam date. There may be charges however for late notice and loss of fees paid may be incurred if you withdraw after the enrolment deadline.

### **Can I get my exam paper back?**

It is possible to request a copy of the paper but it may not be possible for all subjects. There is a fee for this service.

## Answers GCE, AS/A2, International A-levels

### What is the difference between GCE A-level and International A-level?

The GCE A-level is a linear qualification taken over two years by students at school in the UK. International students can still take it but they should note they will take regional versions and will sit papers at slightly different times. The examinations carry UCAS tariff points.

The International A-level is especially for students studying outside of the UK. It follows a modular structure so you can build the qualification over time. International A-levels do not carry UCAS tariff points.

### Do I have to take an IGCSE in a subject before taking the GCE/International A-level in that subject?

This will depend on the pathways provided at Kings College India and the A level subject chosen. However, it would normally be recommended to sit the IGCSE as good preparation for the A level subject.

### What are the prerequisites for taking a GCE/International A-levels subjects?

There are some prerequisites in some subjects for taking a GCE/International A-level subject. Not meeting the pre-requisite will not automatically exempt you but an early discussion with Deputy Head of Academics/Head of Secondary is highly advisable.

### What do A-level, AS and A2 mean?

A-level means Advanced level and refers to the overall qualification.

In GCE A-level one examination takes place at the end of the course. There are GCE AS-levels which count as "half" an A-level although this is beginning to change to more like 40% of an A level in some subjects. University places are awarded on the basis of years at A-level but AS awards also attract UCAS points and are often counted towards university entrance.

The International A-level consists of two stages called AS and A2. AS stands for Advanced Subsidiary level. Students who complete the correct pattern of AS level units (usually 2 or 3 units at this level, depending on the subject) will be awarded an AS-level certificate or can continue the subject at A2.

**A2 refers to the final stage of International A-levels. Students who have successfully completed AS units in a subject move on to do A2 units, which are of a higher standard. Completing the correct sequence of units at both AS and A2 level means you have finished a full International A-level in a subject. University entrance is at the discretion of the university based on your AS and A2 years.**

### **How many GCE/International A-levels should I take?**

This depends on the reasons for which you are taking A-levels. If you are taking them as a stepping stone to a UK university, then the number you take will depend on what the university requires or the number of UCAS points you need to get into your course. The most common combinations call for three full A-levels.

For entry to universities in other countries, you will need to research their specific requirements.

While A-levels are useful for a number of other reasons such as high school completion, employment or career development, there are no requirements in terms of number of subjects for these uses.

### **Do some GCE/International A-level subjects have higher value than others?**

This depends on the caliber of the university you are targeting or the course you are hoping to get into. Some subjects are not seen as sufficiently 'academic' to be accepted by some universities. A number of universities don't give credit for marks achieved in General Studies, for example. Check with your chosen universities to see if they have a subject or two they won't recognize. (or talj to your UCAS Leader)

### **What is the difference between the different exam boards offering GCE/International A-level subjects?**

There is no difference in the level or standard of the A-level offered by different exam boards. There are differences in emphasis and also some differences in the format of the papers. The Joint Committee on Qualifications (JCQ) ensures that all the boards offering A-levels offer them at the same standard.

### **How many times a year are the GCE/International A-level exams offered?**

GCE A-levels are offered once in June.

International A-levels are offered in January and June. However, not every module in every subject is offered in both sessions. Check with your exams officer for details.

### **Can I retake an exam if I am unhappy with my mark?**

There are major changes which are now happening to GCE A-levels and one of the long term goals of these changes will be a reduction in what can be retaken and when. Under the current A-level specification retakes are possible although their availability is limited by when the exams are offered. The new specification, which will come into effect in a few years' time will have very different rules regarding retaking exams.

### **How is an A\* grade awarded?**

You will need to check the regulation for the specific board. Generally, you require an A average and an average of 90% in your A2 units to qualify for an A\*.

### **What are the UCAS tariff points for an A-level subject?**

UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admission Service) is the body through which applications to most UK degree courses are processed. It awards points to each grade in a variety of recognised, publicly examined qualifications from around the world. Accumulation of a points total determines the courses to which you can apply. See the UCAS site (below) for full details. Note that only GCE A levels carry tariff points.

*<https://www.ucas.com/>*

### **What is the cut-off time for withdrawing from a GCE/International A-level subject?**

If you have paid your exam fee and then you decide to withdraw and want a refund, it will depend on whether the Ed-excel date has already passed. This can be checked by emailing your exam centre. If you want to withdraw once the date has passed, you can but there will be no refund on exam fees. Finally, you may withdraw after the exam, but again, without refund.

### **Can I get my exam paper back?**

Generally, you can get your exam paper back. However, there is a fee for this type of post-results service.

### **Where can I find out about going to university in the UK?**

A good place to start is the UCAS website at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com). Kings College India's provides extensive advice, through discussion with your subject teachers, your UCAS leader/KS5 Coordinator and Head of Secondary. Your UCAS leader or assigned UCAS adviser will help you through university application process from choosing a course to submitting the application. This includes personal statement writing, report submission, predicted years and entrance test & interview preparation when appropriate.

### **Where can I get help with my UCAS application online?**

A good place to start is here:

*<https://www.ucas.com/>*

## **Retakes**

### **Do universities accept GCE/International A-level retakes?**

They are not obliged to and more popular destinations are unlikely to. If you miss your target years you will enter a process at UCAS called "clearing". This is designed to match unfilled courses to students with acceptable qualifications. If, after this process, you do not have a course and you still wish to pursue one you will have to reapply anyway and retakes may well be part of this strategy.

### **Do I have to resit all the AS/A2 units?**

Not if you are retaking a unit with the same exam board. You can retake any unit you want. The board will take your best result for that unit and that is the mark that will be considered for an award.

### **When can I retake A-level units?**

Retakes can only be taken during a session when the exam is offered. As not all units are examined in the January session it might not be possible to retake until the May/June session.

### **What happens to my old A-level result when I resit?**

You will receive the best mark of the unit or units being retaken. As long as your exam centre applies again for the appropriate cash-in, a new certificate will be generated if you qualify for an award.

### **What is a Unified Mark Scale?**

A Uniform Mark Scale, or UMS, is a way of standardising the marking of papers across different examination boards allowing someone to compare two marks marked by two different examination boards. Years are then calculated using grade boundaries set at particular UMS scores.