

Syllabus

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Cambridge International AS Level General Paper
Syllabus code 8004
For examination in June and November 2012



UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

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1. Introduction

1.1 Why choose Cambridge?

University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) is the world's largest provider of international qualifications. Around 1.5 million students from 150 countries enter Cambridge examinations every year. What makes educators around the world choose Cambridge?

Recognition

A Cambridge International A or AS Level is recognised around the world by schools, universities and employers. The qualifications are accepted as proof of academic ability for entry to universities worldwide, though some courses do require specific subjects. Cambridge International A Levels typically take two years to complete and offer a flexible course of study that gives students the freedom to select subjects that are right for them. Cambridge International AS Levels often represent the first half of an A Level course but may also be taken as a freestanding qualification. They are accepted in all UK universities and carry half the weighting of an A Level. University course credit and advanced standing is often available for Cambridge International A/AS Levels in countries such as the USA and Canada. Learn more at www.cie.org.uk/recognition.

Support

CIE provides a world-class support service for teachers and exams officers. We offer a wide range of teacher materials to Centres, plus teacher training (online and face-to-face) and student support materials. Exams officers can trust in reliable, efficient administration of exams entry and excellent, personal support from CIE Customer Services. Learn more at www.cie.org.uk/teachers.

Excellence in education

Cambridge qualifications develop successful students. They not only build understanding and knowledge required for progression, but also learning and thinking skills that help students become independent learners and equip them for life.

Not-for-profit, part of the University of Cambridge

CIE is part of Cambridge Assessment, a not-for-profit organisation and part of the University of Cambridge. The needs of teachers and learners are at the core of what we do. CIE invests constantly in improving its qualifications and services. We draw upon education research in developing our qualifications.

1. Introduction

1.2 Why choose Cambridge International AS Level General Paper?

Cambridge International AS Level General Paper is accepted by universities and employers as proof of understanding and ability to communicate in English. The AS Level General Paper syllabus is multi-disciplinary, with subject matter drawn from across the curriculum. In broad terms, the syllabus encourages students to:

- Be more aware of the breadth and complexity of the contemporary world.
- Develop thinking and reasoning skills, and maturity of thought.
- Achieve an understanding of (and ability in) the English language which enables them to express arguments, ideas and opinions in a reflective and academic manner.

Although an awareness of the wider implications of particular issues will improve the quality of students' learning, the AS Level General Paper is not a test of general knowledge.

1.3 Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE)

Cambridge AICE is the group award of Cambridge International Advanced Supplementary Level and Advanced Level (AS Level and A Level).

Cambridge AICE involves the selection of subjects from three curriculum areas – Mathematics and Science; Languages; Arts and Humanities.

An A Level counts as a double-credit qualification and an AS Level as a single-credit qualification within the Cambridge AICE award framework. Half-credits are also available in English Language and Literature in English and may be combined to obtain the equivalent of a single credit.

To be considered for an AICE Diploma, a candidate must earn the equivalent of six credits by passing a combination of examinations at either double credit or single credit, with at least one course coming from each of the three curriculum areas.

The examinations are administered in May/June and October/November sessions each year. A candidate working towards the Cambridge AICE Diploma may use up to three sessions to take the equivalent of six credits as long as they are taken within a 13-month period.

1. Introduction

General Paper (8004) falls into Group C, Arts and Humanities.

Learn more about AICE at <http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/uppersec/aice>.

1.4 How can I find out more?

If you are already a Cambridge Centre

You can make entries for this qualification through your usual channels, e.g. CIE Direct. If you have any queries, please contact us at international@cie.org.uk.

If you are not a Cambridge Centre

You can find out how your organisation can become a Cambridge Centre. Email us at international@cie.org.uk. Learn more about the benefits of becoming a Cambridge Centre at www.cie.org.uk.

2. Assessment at a glance

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Written examination	2 hours
<p>The exam paper is divided into three sections, each section comprising five questions. See section 4.1 for possible topic areas.</p> <p>Candidates must choose two questions, each from a different section.</p> <p>Each essay should be about 500 to 600 words in length.</p> <p>Per question, up to 30 marks are awarded for content and up to 20 marks for English.</p> <p>Each question is weighted at 50% of the final mark.</p>	

Candidates are tested on their understanding and use of English, and the extent to which they are able to think maturely as appropriate for this level. They are not primarily tested on their general knowledge.

The examination time takes into account the need for candidates to study the questions and think before starting to write.

Availability

This syllabus is examined in the May/June examination session and the October/November examination session.

This syllabus is available to private candidates.

This syllabus is not available to Centres in Mauritius.

Centres in the UK that receive government funding are advised to consult the CIE website www.cie.org.uk for the latest information before beginning to teach this syllabus.

Combining this with other syllabuses

Candidates can combine this syllabus in an examination session with any other CIE syllabus, except:

- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

3. Syllabus aims and objectives

3.1 Aims

The aims of the AS Level General Paper are to:

- Promote the skills of rational thought, persuasion, analysis, interpretation and evaluation.
- Encourage the broad exploration and appraisal of social, cultural, economic, environmental, political, philosophical, scientific and technological issues.
- Promote maturity of thought and clarity of expression.
- Promote understanding and appreciation of individual, societal and cultural diversity.
- Encourage independent, critical reading.

3.2 Assessment objectives

In the AS Level General Paper syllabus, assessment objectives relate to the skills of:

- knowledge
- understanding
- analysis
- application
- communication
- evaluation.

In the assessment, candidates should therefore be able to demonstrate:

- Knowledge and understanding in relation to the topic areas identified in the syllabus.
- Knowledge of methods and techniques appropriate to a specific task.
- The ability to identify, select and interpret, through reasoned consideration, material (including knowledge) appropriate to a specific task.
- The ability to apply knowledge, understanding and analysis in relation to a specific task (e.g. in drawing inferences, providing explanations, constructing and developing arguments, understanding the implications of a suggested course of action or conclusion, etc.).
- The ability to exercise evaluation and discrimination in assessing evidence, ideas and opinions in order to formulate a supported conclusion.
- The ability to communicate information, ideas and opinions in a clear, concise, logical and appropriate manner.

4. Description of components

4.1 Topic areas and question focus

Topic areas are cross-curricular and comprehensive, and some may appear in more than one section. Teachers do not need to cover all the topic areas when teaching the course, as candidates should be able to draw upon knowledge and understanding gained when studying other subjects. The areas for consideration listed here are **suggestions only**. They are intended to help teachers devise and plan their own broad course.

Section 1: Historical, social, economic, political and philosophical topics

Possible areas for consideration might include:

- The role of history and war; terrorism.
- The role of the individual in society – the family, marriage, peer pressure, class.
- Cultural changes – youth and drug culture.
- Education and welfare.
- Sport, leisure, international competition.
- Wealth; changes in work practice.
- The importance and impact of tourism on a country – implications for the economy, employment, public transport, environmental concerns.
- The provision and politics of aid.
- The State and its institutions; development of State, democracy, post-imperialism, nationalism.
- Minority groups, pressure groups.
- Freedom of speech, action, thought.
- Judiciary.
- Matters of conscience, faith, tolerance, equality, opportunity.
- Corruption.

Section 2: Science, including its history, philosophy, general principles and applications; environmental issues; mathematical topics

Possible areas for consideration might include:

- Medical dilemmas and issues of research and ethics; concept of progress in science.
- Drug manufacture and provision.
- Diet, health education.
- Old and new industries.
- Spin-offs from space industry; weaponry.
- Information and communications technology; the Internet.

4. Description of components

- Environmental concerns; renewable energy resources; climate change.
- Migration; population dynamics.
- Feeding the global population; farming techniques for the twenty-first century.
- Public transport and travel.
- The uses and applications of mathematics in everyday life.

Section 3: Literature and language, arts and crafts

Possible areas for consideration might include:

- Literature, biography, diary, science fiction.
- Language – heritage, tradition, dialect.
- The global media – tv, radio, satellite; influence and controls; effects on lifestyle, culture and habits; cultural dilution and diversification; advertising; role models.
- Censorship; privacy; the right to know; freedom of the press, etc. uses and abuses.
- Traditional arts and crafts; creativity; national heritage/preservation; effects of tourism.
- Architecture; painting; fashion; photography; sculpture; music; heritage.

Questions are general in nature, demanding discussion and evaluation. In awarding marks, examiners will assess how well candidates have:

- Used their specialised knowledge to answer questions on the broad aspects of school subjects.
- Discussed general topics which are not directly related to school subjects.
- Used the English language.

NB Questions are not set on every topic in any single examination.

4. Description of components

4.2 Level descriptors for essay marking

Use of English

- Level 1** Highly fluent.
Very effective use of expressions/idioms.
Excellent use of vocabulary.
Near faultless grammar.
Excellent sentence structure and organisation of paragraphs.
Very few slips/errors.
Excellent spelling/punctuation.
- Level 2** Fluent.
Effective use of expressions/idioms.
Good use of vocabulary.
Sound grammar.
Good sentence structure/well-organised paragraphs.
Few slips/errors.
Good spelling/punctuation.
- Level 3** Reasonably fluent/not difficult to follow.
Generally appropriate use of expressions/idioms.
Fair range and apt use of basic vocabulary.
Acceptable grammar.
Simple but adequate sentence structure/paragraphing.
Some slips/errors, but acceptable standard overall.
Reasonable spelling/punctuation.
- Level 4** Hesitant fluency/not easy to follow at times.
Some inappropriate expressions/idioms.
Limited range of vocabulary.
Faulty grammar.
Some flawed sentence structure/paragraphing.
Regular and frequent slips/errors.
Regular spelling/punctuation errors.
- Level 5** Little/(no) fluency/difficult (almost impossible) to follow.
(Very) poor use of expressions/idioms.
(Very) poor range of vocabulary.
(Very) poor grammar.
(Very) poor sentence structure/paragraphing.
Almost every line contains (many) slips/errors.
(Very) poor spelling/punctuation.

4. Description of components

Content

- Level 1** Excellent focus: totally relevant and comprehensive coverage, perceptive, strongly analytical.
Coherent and engaging discussion displaying sensitivity, sophistication, awareness and maturity.
Thoughtful, enlightening illustration using local, national and international examples to support key points.
Very well structured.
- Level 2** Totally (near totally) relevant and good coverage, but less analytical and perceptive than Level 1.
Arguments well developed and discussion logical, but always sustained.
(Very) good range of examples/illustration to support key points.
Effectively structured.
- Level 3
UPPER** Largely focused on the question and relevant; reasonable coverage; fairly analytical.
Major points adequately developed.
Reasonable range of examples/illustration to support key points.
Reasonably structured.
- Level 3
LOWER** Less focus; less analysis and its quality more patchy.
Points mentioned rather than adequately developed.
Some digression, but generally sticks to the question.
Does not always support major points with apt illustration.
Tendency to assert/generalise rather than argue/discuss in detail.
May lack focus.
- Level 4** Limited focus and relevance (may be implicit/ tangential); little analysis.
Limited argument that may be unsubstantiated; restricted material/scope; ideas vague and undeveloped.
Limited examples/illustration to support anything.
An attempt at a structure.
- Level 5** Little if any relevance; no analysis.
(Very) vague; (totally) inadequate content with little/no substance.
Very little/(no) appropriate examples/illustration.
Very little/(no) structure.

5. Additional information

5.1 Guided learning hours

Advanced Subsidiary Level ('AS Level') syllabuses are designed on the assumption that candidates have about 180 guided learning hours per subject over the duration of the course. ('Guided learning hours' include direct teaching and any other supervised or directed study time. They do not include private study by the candidate.)

However, this figure is for guidance only, and the number of hours required may vary according to local curricular practice and the candidates' prior experience of the subject.

5.2 Recommended prior learning

We recommend that candidates who are beginning this course should have previously completed an O Level or IGCSE course in a broad range of subjects, or the equivalent.

5.3 Progression

Cambridge International AS Level General Paper will help to provide a suitable foundation for study in higher education. Depending on local university entrance requirements, it may permit or assist progression directly to university courses in many subjects, especially in the arts/humanities and the social sciences. It is also suitable for candidates intending to pursue careers or planning further study or as part of a course of general education.

5.4 Component codes

Because of local variations, in some cases component codes will be different in instructions about making entries for examinations and timetables from those printed in this syllabus, but the component names will be unchanged to make identification straightforward.

5.5 Grading and reporting

AS Level results are shown by one of the grades a, b, c, d or e indicating the standard achieved, Grade a being the highest and Grade e the lowest. 'Ungraded' indicates that the candidate has failed to reach the standard required for a pass at AS Level. 'Ungraded' will be reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate.

5. Additional information

For languages other than English, CIE will also report separate speaking endorsement grades (Distinction, Merit and Pass) for candidates who satisfy the conditions stated in the syllabus.

The content and difficulty of an AS Level examination is equivalent to the first half of a corresponding A Level.

Percentage uniform marks are also provided on each candidate's Statement of Results to supplement their grade for a syllabus. They are determined in this way:

- A candidate who obtains...
 - ... the minimum mark necessary for a Grade a obtains a percentage uniform mark of 80%.
 - ... the minimum mark necessary for a Grade b obtains a percentage uniform mark of 70%.
 - ... the minimum mark necessary for a Grade c obtains a percentage uniform mark of 60%.
 - ... the minimum mark necessary for a Grade d obtains a percentage uniform mark of 50%.
 - ... the minimum mark necessary for a Grade e obtains a percentage uniform mark of 40%.
 - ... no marks receives a percentage uniform mark of 0%.

Candidates whose mark is none of the above receive a percentage mark in between those stated according to the position of their mark in relation to the grade 'thresholds' (i.e. the minimum mark for obtaining a grade). For example, a candidate whose mark is halfway between the minimum for a Grade c and the minimum for a Grade d (and whose grade is therefore d) receives a percentage uniform mark of 55%.

The uniform percentage mark is stated at syllabus level only. It is not the same as the 'raw' mark obtained by the candidate, since it depends on the position of the grade thresholds (which may vary from one session to another and from one subject to another) and it has been turned into a percentage.

5.6 Resources

Copies of syllabuses, the most recent question papers and Principal Examiners' reports are available on the Syllabus and Support Materials CD-ROM, which is sent to all CIE Centres.

The General Paper is designed to use subject matter drawn from the other subjects studied by each candidate, the syllabus thus has no itemised resources list of its own. Resources for individual subjects are listed on CIE's public website at www.cie.org.uk. Please visit this site on a regular basis as the Resource lists are updated through the year.

Access to teachers' email discussion groups, suggested schemes of work and regularly updated resource lists may be found on the CIE Teacher Support website at <http://teachers.cie.org.uk>. This website is available to teachers at registered CIE Centres.

