



Partner Schools Global Network

A GUIDE TO SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

For more information and advice on school examination and other UK qualifications, please call us on (Sunday to Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) or write to us at info@britishcouncil.org

British Council website: www.britishcouncil.org.

Legal Disclaimer:

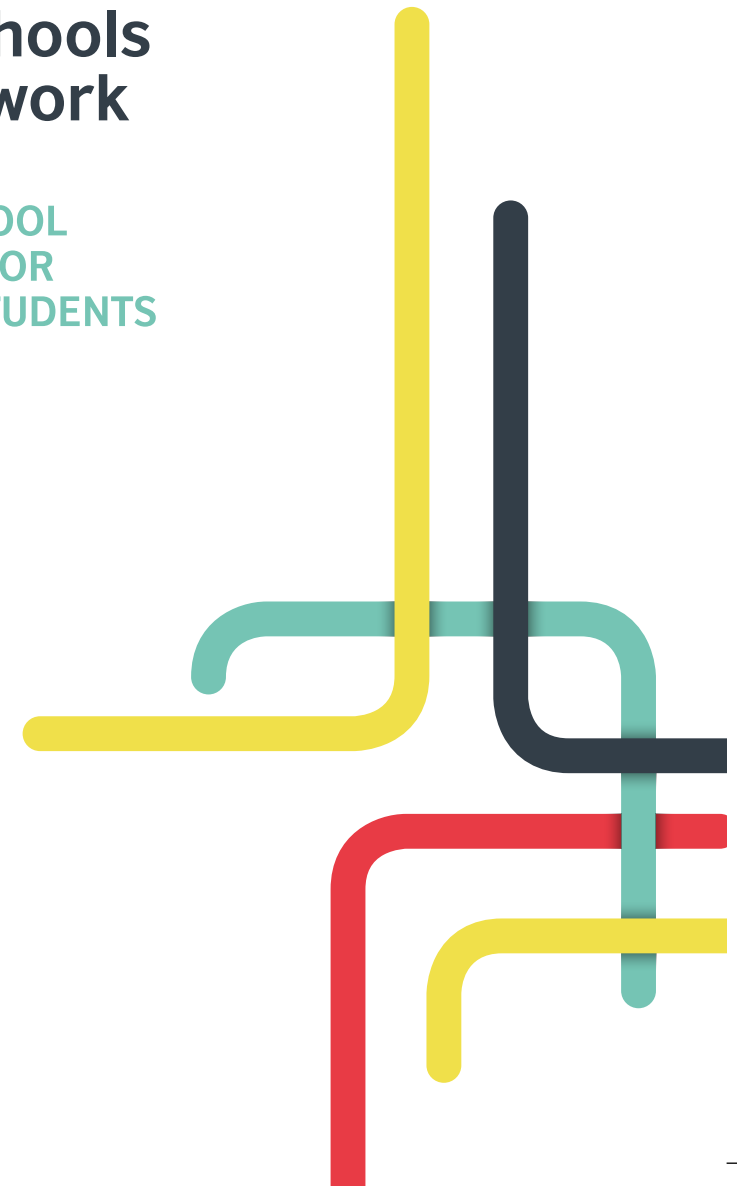
Every effort is made to ensure that the information given in this publication is accurate, but no legal responsibility is accepted for any errors, omission or misleading statements in the information caused by negligence or otherwise, and no responsibility is accepted in regard to the standing of any firm, individual or company mentioned.

© a British Council

Publication, 2016.



For more information on how to register, visit www.britishcouncil.org.





A GUIDE TO SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to give candidates and parents an introduction to school examinations.

INTRODUCTION TO SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS

Whether you are thinking of pursuing higher studies or planning for your future career, it is likely that you will be competing in a global market. This intense competition means universities and employers expect candidates to have a solid educational foundation, demonstrated by recognisable and renowned qualifications. UK qualifications provide this recognition.

UK qualifications are recognised by Governments, Universities, Professional bodies and Employers around the world.

With more than 50 years of experience in administering school exams worldwide, the British Council works in partnership with UK awarding body, Cambridge International Examinations on its behalf in

We create opportunity for nearly half a million people every year worldwide to achieve their life goals by obtaining UK qualifications. British Council offers its services in , and has a network of over 180

associated schools. It conducts exams at more than 15 venues throughout .

UK school qualifications are split into two levels.

International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) or General Certificate of Secondary Education Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) qualifications are taken at around the age of 16.

The General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A Level) qualifications are typically taken at 18.

What is an O-Level / IGCSE?

An O-Level / IGCSE is usually taken at the age of 15 or 16. You can take any number of O-Level / IGCSE examinations, depending on the qualifications that your chosen institution asks for. Most candidates in international schools take up to eight O-Level / IGCSE examinations after studying for two or three years in their chosen subjects, such as in the fields of Science, Commerce or Humanities. It is important that candidates who are considering taking more than the above number of examinations consult their school counsellor as well as their parents before doing so. Taking on an excessive workload could result in detrimental effects on the overall results a candidate ultimately attains.

Candidates in can sit for O-Levels or IGCSE or a combination of both.



Why should I take an O-Level / IGCSE?

Eight O-Levels / IGCSE are equivalent to different local countries' requirements, including the Pakistan Secondary School Certificate (SSC), but many parents and guardians are aware that UK qualifications have a much wider recognition and acceptance across the globe. They also consider that the style of learning and assessment provide a better foundation for future success. Please note that IGCSE is equivalent to UK GCSE.

What is an A-Level?

It is advanced level qualification for the students who want to go to Universities. The International A-Level is equivalent to the A-Level taken by students in the UK.

You can take any number of A-Level qualifications, they are available in a wide range of subjects. In the UK, most college candidates take three or four A-Levels for their final two years of study. The number of A-Levels you take will often depend on the qualifications that the University you have chosen requires.

Why should I take A-Level?

A-Level results can open door to undergraduate studies at some of the best higher education institutions in the world, and to a wide range of professional and vocational courses that can help build your skills for exciting and rewarding career.

A-Level qualifications are also accepted at nearly all national and private universities globally. Please contact the university directly.

Cambridge International A-Level

Cambridge International A-Levels are available in 55 subjects. They develop the deep understanding and thinking skills you need for university.

There are two types of qualification: Cambridge International A-Level and Cambridge International AS-Level. The AS-Level is half the content of the A-Level and is typically a one-year course.

You can choose from a variety of assessment options. For example, in most subjects, you can take the Cambridge International AS-Level as a stand-alone qualification, or it can count towards your final International A-Level grade.

Cambridge International AS-Levels help to broaden your learning, and you can study them alongside Cambridge International A-Levels. For example, if you are specialising in science subjects at Cambridge International A-Level, you might choose to study a foreign language at Cambridge International AS-Level.

Every year, thousands of learners use Cambridge International AS-Levels and A-Levels to gain places at leading universities, including those in the UK, US, Canada and Australia. All UK universities and over 500 US universities recognise these qualifications.

INTRODUCTION TO PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY PROGRAMMES

Cambridge International Examinations (for aged 14- 5 years) offer primary and lower secondary programmes which support pre-GCSE / IGCSE. These programmes are designed specifically for international schools for students and are available in English, Mathematics and Sciences. The test papers are marked by the awarding bodies and provide an external international benchmark for your child's performance.

These programmes cover all major areas of learning required in the early years of an international secondary education. Learners receive a statement of achievement, which gives an indication of their academic progress during this education stage and detailed feedback on their strengths and weaknesses.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does it make any difference which board I sit my examinations under?

No. If a university employer or government accepts O-Levels, IGCSE, GCSE and A-Levels, they will not ask which board awarded the certificate. Your school will choose the board after considering a number of factors such as the subjects on offer, the syllabus, the style of the examinations, the availability of resources and the preferences of the school governing board, teachers and parents.

Where are my examinations marked?

All O-Level, A-Level and IGCSE examination papers for the whole world are marked in the UK by examiners appointed, trained and monitored by the boards.

Can examiners be biased towards certain countries?

As candidates are only identified by a number, the examiner also has no way of knowing where they are from.

Do I have to register through a school?

Students who are enrolled at a registered school are normally expected to enter for their examinations through their school. If you are not a school student, you can register online with British Council as a private candidate and take the examination. The services provided to private candidates throughout the entire process are exactly the same as what a candidate from a recognised school would get. Registering independently would not make the process more difficult for you.

Will having foreign qualifications make it harder for me to find a job in any country?

No. The majority of employers welcome O-Level / IGCSE and A-Levels. Many prefer staff with an A-Level background as they appreciate the analytical and problem-solving skills which are a key part of success in UK qualifications. This is especially true for international organisations.

Do I need to sit for practical examinations?

If you are following the Cambridge subjects such as Chemistry, Biology and Physics, you will not be required to take practical examinations at O-Level, but will need to take 'alternative to practical' units instead, to demonstrate that you have completed the practical syllabus during your studies. However, you will be required to sit for a practical examination when sitting for certain A-Level subjects.

Does British Council do anything for schools and students apart from exams?

Yes. The PSGN (Partner Schools Global Network) is a new global initiative by British Council, aimed at strengthening our relationship with schools that offer UK qualifications. In alone, nearly schools are part of the PSGN. Although we already enjoy a healthy relationship with a large number of these schools, our goal is to add further value by going beyond exams delivery. To this end we offer:

Learners: *learning support via cutting-edge digital resources and extra-curricular opportunities that add value to their CVs when applying to universities*

Leaders: *conferences, networking events, study visits etc.*

Teachers: *training and workshops for professional development*

To find out more about the PSGN and how it can help you or your school, contact us at [info@ .britishcouncil.org](mailto:info@britishcouncil.org)





SOME FACTS ABOUT OUR EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION

How do we choose the venues?

We go to great lengths to identify suitable premises which meet the UK boards' and British Council regulations before contracting them as examination venues. We choose our venues based on a number of factors including size, location, lighting, air conditioning, emergency access and other facilities. But above all, we give priority to the security of our venues.

What items are candidates allowed to take into the examination hall?

Candidates must bring black or dark blue writing pens, pencils, erasers, non-programmable calculators and any other permitted equipment required for the examination, along with their Statement of Entry, valid identification card / passport or

Drinking water is available for candidates inside the examination hall. All candidates need to undergo strict security checks before they are allowed into the examination hall. Bring only permitted items and get through quickly. If you do bring your own drinking water, please make sure the bottle is transparent and unlabelled.

Where can I sit for examinations?

To cater to the needs of candidates who live outside of major cities, i.e. , and , we conduct examinations at a large number of outreach venues.

How are the examinations conducted?

In addition to our dedicated staff who are present at all venues to assure standards at every examination session, we have experienced and professional invigilators. After careful recruitment and selection, they all go through professional training on examination administration every year.

We ensure that all our invigilators are neutral and not connected in any way with the candidates sitting for the examination at the same venue.

We ensure that all our support staff are fully trained; every venue has at least one member of staff who is a trained First-Aider, though there are often more trained staff available to assist.

What arrangements are there for Special Needs candidates?

We make every effort to cater for candidates with special needs. If your circumstances require special administrative arrangements to be made, such as extra time, you must apply to us when you register for your examinations. Please inform us when you register if you have special needs.

What if a candidate suddenly falls sick?

We try to assess the candidate's condition as quickly as possible and contact the parent. If the candidate recovers within 15 minutes, we allow them to continue the examination. Additional time is not granted, but a report is made of the incident and sent to the exam board, who will take this into consideration.



What facilities are there for parents at venues?

Our primary concern is the security and comfort of the candidates. Hence, we are unable to offer parents any waiting facilities. Parents are requested to drop their children at the venue and pick them up at the end of the examination.

How do we communicate with candidates?

Our website www.britishcouncil.org is the prime source of information for all examination candidates. Both before and during the examination session, candidates are strongly

advised to regularly visit the British Council website for any important announcements regarding their examinations. For private candidates, we inform them of any urgent updates through SMS. We are also in constant communication with all schools and institutes. Candidates, whether private or with a school must communicate with their centre; not directly with the awarding body.

Study Tips

Cambridge International Examination provides study resources and advice for students on their respective website: www.cie.org.uk



© British Council 2017

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.

