



# Syllabus

## Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper 8021

Use this syllabus for exams in 2022, 2023 and 2024.  
Exams are available in the June and November series.  
Exams are also available in the March series in India only.



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## Why choose Cambridge International?

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Cambridge International prepares school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning. We are part of the University of Cambridge.

Our Cambridge Pathway gives students a clear path for educational success from age 5 to 19. Schools can shape the curriculum around how they want students to learn – with a wide range of subjects and flexible ways to offer them. It helps students discover new abilities and a wider world, and gives them the skills they need for life, so they can achieve at school, university and work.

Our programmes and qualifications set the global standard for international education. They are created by subject experts, rooted in academic rigour and reflect the latest educational research. They provide a strong platform for students to progress from one stage to the next, and are well supported by teaching and learning resources.

We review all our syllabuses regularly, so they reflect the latest research evidence and professional teaching practice – and take account of the different national contexts in which they are taught.

We consult with teachers to help us design each syllabus around the needs of their learners. Consulting with leading universities has helped us make sure our syllabuses encourage students to master the key concepts in the subject and develop the skills necessary for success in higher education.

Our mission is to provide educational benefit through provision of international programmes and qualifications for school education and to be the world leader in this field. Together with schools, we develop Cambridge learners who are confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged – equipped for success in the modern world.

Every year, nearly a million Cambridge students from 10 000 schools in 160 countries prepare for their future with the Cambridge Pathway.

**'We think the Cambridge curriculum is superb preparation for university.'**

**Christoph Guttentag**, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University, USA



### Quality management

Cambridge International is committed to providing exceptional quality. In line with this commitment, our quality management system for the provision of international qualifications and education programmes for students aged 5 to 19 is independently certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard, ISO 9001:2015. Learn more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/ISO9001](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/ISO9001)

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The latest syllabus is version 2, published April 2021. There are no significant changes which affect teaching.



# 1 Why choose this syllabus?

## Key benefits

The best motivation for a student is a real passion for the subject they're learning. By offering students a variety of Cambridge International AS & A Levels, you can give them the greatest chance of finding the path of education they most want to follow. With over 50 subjects to choose from, students can select the ones they love and that they're best at, which helps motivate them throughout their studies.

Following a Cambridge International AS & A Level programme helps students develop abilities which universities value highly, including:

- a deep understanding of their subjects
- higher order thinking skills – analysis, critical thinking, problem solving
- presenting ordered and coherent arguments
- independent learning and research.



**Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper** develops a set of transferable skills. These include comprehension, constructing an argument, presenting views, and writing English coherently and persuasively. Learners can apply these skills across a wide range of subjects and these skills equip them well for progression to higher education or directly into employment.

Our approach in Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper encourages learners to be:

**confident**, explaining, analysing and evaluating multi-disciplinary issues and communicating arguments

**responsible**, seeking a wide range of knowledge and opinion from varied sources, directing their own learning

**reflective**, considering and reflecting upon a diverse range of ideas, incorporating these into their responses

**innovative**, creating their own ideas and style as they explore topics and express ideas in writing

**engaged**, developing informed opinions, engaging with the challenges of our dynamic world.

**'Cambridge students develop a deep understanding of subjects and independent thinking skills.'**

Principal, Rockledge High School, USA

## International recognition and acceptance

Our expertise in curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment is the basis for the recognition of our programmes and qualifications around the world. Every year thousands of students with Cambridge International AS & A Levels gain places at leading universities worldwide. They are valued by top universities around the world including those in the UK, US (including Ivy League universities), Europe, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

UK NARIC, the national agency in the UK for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills, has carried out an independent benchmarking study of Cambridge International AS & A Level and found it to be comparable to the standard of AS & A Level in the UK. This means students can be confident that their Cambridge International AS & A Level qualifications are accepted as equivalent, grade for grade, to UK AS & A Levels by leading universities worldwide.

Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper helps to provide transferable skills which support further subject specific study. This syllabus also promotes an ability to communicate in written English relevant to the study of a wide range of courses in higher education. It is suitable for candidates intending to enter employment or further study, or as part of a course of general education.

We recommend learners check the Cambridge recognitions database and the university websites to find the most up-to-date entry requirements for courses they wish to study.

Learn more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition)



Cambridge Assessment International Education is an education organisation and politically neutral. The content of this syllabus, examination papers and associated materials do not endorse any political view. We endeavour to treat all aspects of the exam process neutrally.

**'The depth of knowledge displayed by the best A Level students makes them prime targets for America's Ivy League universities'**

Yale University, USA

## Supporting teachers

We provide a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance, and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your students the best possible preparation for Cambridge International AS & A Level.

### Teaching resources

- School Support Hub  
[www.cambridgeinternational.org/support](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/support)
- Syllabuses
- Schemes of work
- Learner guides
- Discussion forums
- Endorsed resources

### Exam preparation resources

- Question papers
- Mark schemes
- Example candidate responses to understand what examiners are looking for at key grades
- Examiner reports to improve future teaching

Support  
for Cambridge  
International  
AS & A Level

### Training

- Introductory – face-to-face or online
- Extension – face-to-face or online
- Enrichment – face-to-face or online
- Coursework – online
- Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications

Find out more at  
[www.cambridgeinternational.org/profdev](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/profdev)

### Community

You can find useful information, as well as share your ideas and experiences with other teachers, on our social media channels and community forums.

Find out more at  
[www.cambridgeinternational.org/social-media](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/social-media)

'Cambridge International AS & A Levels prepare students well for university because they've learnt to go into a subject in considerable depth. There's that ability to really understand the depth and richness and the detail of a subject. It's a wonderful preparation for what they are going to face at university.'

US Higher Education Advisory Council

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## 2 Syllabus overview

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### Aims

The aims describe the purposes of a course based on this syllabus.

The aims are to enable students to:

- develop understanding and use of English language in the context of contemporary topics
- encourage and appraise a broad range of topics
- develop a wider awareness and knowledge of contemporary issues through reading
- develop independent reasoning skills
- develop the skills of interpretation, analysis, evaluation and persuasion
- develop skills in writing structured and developed arguments, and present reasoned explanations
- develop the ability to present a point of view clearly, and consider and reflect upon those of others.

### Topics and skills overview

Learners will have the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of issues in these three broad topic areas:

- 1 Economic, historical, moral, political and social
- 2 Science, including its history, philosophy, ethics, general principles and applications; environmental issues; technology and mathematics
- 3 Literature, language, the arts, crafts, and the media.

Learners consider topics within local and international contexts. Learners should be able to draw upon knowledge and understanding gained from studying other subjects.

Through the study of these broad topic areas, learners develop effective reading and writing skills in English. They work with information, ideas and opinions. They analyse and evaluate opinions and ideas. They also learn how to build an argument. These skills are all highly transferable and will help learners in other subjects they are studying, and equip them for higher education or employment.

#### Support for Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper



The School Support Hub is our secure online site for Cambridge teachers where you can find the resources you need to deliver our programmes, including schemes of work, past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports. You can also keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community through our online discussion forums.

[www.cambridgeinternational.org/support](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/support)

## Assessment overview

### Paper 1

Essay 1 hour 15 minutes

30 marks

Candidates answer one essay question from a choice of 10.

Externally assessed

50% of the AS Level

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### Paper 2

Comprehension 1 hour 45 minutes

50 marks

Candidates answer compulsory questions on reading material.

Externally assessed

50% of the AS Level

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Candidates for Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper take Paper 1 and Paper 2 in the same series.



## Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

### AO1 Selection and application of information

- Demonstrate understanding of information from a variety of material.
- Identify, select and interpret relevant data, information and examples.
- Apply information that exemplifies ideas and opinions.

### AO2 Analysis and evaluation

- Demonstrate the ability to analyse the meaning of language as used in its context.
- Develop explanations with examples, analysis and evaluation.
- Develop, analyse and evaluate arguments and make supported judgements.

### AO3 Communication using written English

- Write structured responses, using a range of appropriate language for a variety of purposes.
- Communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and accurately.
- Construct cohesive and organised responses, linking ideas and arguments.

## Weighting for assessment objectives

The approximate weightings allocated to each of the assessment objectives (AOs) are summarised below.

### Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %	
	Paper 1	Paper 2
AO1 Selection and application of information	20	35
AO2 Analysis and evaluation	35	40
AO3 Communication using written English	45	25

### Assessment objectives as a percentage of each qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in AS Level %
AO1 Selection and application of information	28
AO2 Analysis and evaluation	37
AO3 Communication using written English	35

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## 3 Subject content

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### Topics

The syllabus sets out broad topics. The broad topics provide meaningful and stimulating contexts for skills development. These enable candidates to integrate knowledge and understanding from other subjects and to view issues from a range of perspectives.

Within these broad topics there are suggested areas to explore. Teachers do not need to cover all the suggested areas when teaching the course. They should select suggested areas to develop candidates' skills to make use of knowledge gained from studying other subjects.

In Paper 1, candidates will be assessed on how they use their knowledge and understanding of the topics and suggested areas to support their arguments and show understanding of a wide range of issues.

These broad topics may be useful in preparation for Paper 2. However, the paper will provide candidates with all the material necessary to answer the questions.

#### 1 Economic, historical, moral, political and social

Suggested areas to explore:

- The role and value of history in modern society
- Wars, conflicts and terrorism
- The state and its institutions
- Political systems, leadership, nationalism and forms of government
- The role of international organisations
- The provision and politics of aid
- Justice and the justice system; prison and rehabilitation
- The role of the individual in society
- Family, marriage and partnerships, social pressure, class and social attitudes
- Globalisation and its impacts
- Wealth and equality in society
- Population and migration
- Education
- Welfare
- Sport and leisure
- Work and employment
- Industry and commerce
- Freedom of speech, thought and action
- Human rights
- Animal welfare
- Matters of conscience, faith and tolerance

## **2 Science, including its history, philosophy, ethics, general principles and applications; environmental issues; technology and mathematics**

Suggested areas to explore:

- Medical and scientific advances and their ethics
- Drug testing, manufacture and provision
- Diet, health education and provision of healthcare
- Space exploration and its associated industry
- Information and communications technology
- Surveillance and privacy
- Environmental concerns
- Natural disasters including mitigation and management
- Rural and urban concerns
- Food and water security
- Transport, travel and tourism
- The uses and applications of mathematics

## **3 Literature, language, the arts, crafts, and the media**

Suggested areas to explore:

- Literature
- Non-fiction writing
- Language
- Performing arts
- Visual arts
- Applied arts
- Arts institutions and venues
- Traditional arts and crafts; heritage
- Print and digital media
- Advertising
- Censorship and freedom of the media and the arts

## Skills

Candidates following this course should be encouraged to develop a range of skills.

### Application of information

Candidates should develop the ability to identify, select and apply appropriate information to respond to a task. They are encouraged to understand different points of view on a topic. Candidates should use information as evidence to support an argument with examples and to develop ideas.

### Reading

Candidates are encouraged to read widely for general understanding and develop skills to identify relevant information from a variety of sources. Candidates should develop a wide range of vocabulary in English and the ability to understand the use of English words and phrases in context. They should understand how information is presented and how the English language is used to convey implicit as well as explicit meaning.

### Analysis and evaluation

Candidates should develop the ability to analyse data, interpret information and offer key points.

Candidates should learn skills of evaluation. They should go beyond observing or summarising the evidence. They should learn to draw out inferences, understand the implications of a course of action, develop and draw out the significance of an argument and examine other points of view. Candidates should learn to make supported judgements.

### Writing

Candidates should develop the skills to write in accurate English in a clear, coherent and structured way, including essays. They should also learn to write shorter responses for a variety of purposes. These might include explanation, description, summary, analysis, evaluation and persuasion. Candidates should learn to use a range of vocabulary, appropriate spelling, grammar and punctuation, and use of register, to communicate information, ideas and opinions appropriate to the task.

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## 4 Details of the assessment

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### Paper 1 – Essay

Written Paper, 1 hour 15 minutes, 30 marks, weighting: 50 per cent

There are 10 questions in total. Candidates choose **one** question.

There are three topics and the paper has questions from each topic.

- 1 Economic, historical, moral, political and social
- 2 Science, including its history, philosophy, ethics, general principles and applications; environmental issues; technology and mathematics
- 3 Literature, language, the arts, crafts, and the media.

Candidates are advised to write an essay of 600–700 words.

Questions will be set that encourage a range of possible responses. Candidates are assessed on how they use knowledge of a topic in their responses, and not on their knowledge itself. Candidates are assessed on how well they use a range of relevant examples to support their responses.

Candidates are assessed on how clearly they communicate their response. This includes the range, accuracy and appropriateness of vocabulary and spelling, use of register, grammar and punctuation. Candidates are assessed on how the essay is structured in order to develop an argument, link and evaluate ideas and draw supported conclusions.

The register used in the response should demonstrate the type of written communication skills required for entering employment or further study.

Dictionaries may **not** be used.

All three assessment objectives are assessed.

### Paper 2 – Comprehension

Written Paper, 1 hour 45 minutes, 50 marks, weighting: 50 per cent

This paper has two sections and each section is worth 25 marks.

Candidates must answer **all** questions in each of the two sections on the paper.

The sections consist of a range of sub-questions. These include questions which require short answers and more extended answers which require responses of up to 120 words.

In Section A, candidates are required to explain and interpret the information provided in the material to show understanding. They are also required to respond by writing a persuasive text that expresses an opinion and justifies a conclusion.

In Section B, candidates are required to demonstrate the ability to read for detailed understanding at word, sentence and paragraph level. They are required to demonstrate understanding of how language features are used in a variety of styles and registers. Candidates are assessed on how they analyse and evaluate the material to show an awareness of the strengths and weakness of different kinds of information presented. They are required to identify and analyse inference.

The register used in the responses to Sections A and B should demonstrate the type of written communication skills required for entering employment or further study.

All questions will be based on unseen material on an insert accompanying the question paper. The texts may come from the print(ed) media or online, for example, reports, reviews, essays, blogs, scripts, speeches and descriptions. Other material may include, for example, diagrams, data and notes.

The unseen material will be up to 900 words in length. The number of words does not include any introductory notes or glossary notes.

Dictionaries may **not** be used.

All three assessment objectives are assessed.

## Command words

The table below includes command words used in the assessment for this syllabus. The use of the command word will relate to the subject context.

Command word	What it means
<b>Analyse</b>	examine in detail to show meaning, identify elements and the relationship between them
<b>Assess</b>	make an informed judgement
<b>Compare</b>	identify/comment on similarities and/or differences
<b>Consider</b>	review and respond to given information
<b>Contrast</b>	identify/comment on differences
<b>Demonstrate</b>	show how or give an example
<b>Describe</b>	state the points of a topic / give characteristics and main features
<b>Develop</b>	take forward to a more advanced stage or build upon given information
<b>Discuss</b>	write about issue(s) or topic(s) in depth in a structured way
<b>Evaluate</b>	judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount, or value of something
<b>Examine</b>	investigate closely, in detail
<b>Explain</b>	set out purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things evident / provide why and/or how and support with relevant evidence
<b>Give</b>	produce an answer from a given source or recall/memory
<b>Identify</b>	name/select/recognise
<b>Justify</b>	support a case with evidence/argument
<b>State</b>	express in clear terms
<b>Suggest</b>	apply knowledge and understanding to situations where there are a range of valid responses in order to make proposals
<b>Summarise</b>	select and present the main points, without detail

Phrases such as 'To what extent ...?' may also be seen in the assessment for this syllabus.

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## 5 What else you need to know

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This section is an overview of other information you need to know about this syllabus. It will help to share the administrative information with your exams officer so they know when you will need their support. Find more information about our administrative processes at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

### Before you start

#### Previous study

We recommend that learners starting this course should have studied a Cambridge IGCSE™ or Cambridge O Level course in a broad range of subjects, including English.

#### Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge International AS & A Level syllabuses based on learners having about 180 guided learning hours for each Cambridge International AS Level. The number of hours a learner needs to achieve the qualification may vary according to local practice and their previous experience of the subject.

#### Availability and timetables

All Cambridge schools are allocated to one of six administrative zones. Each zone has a specific timetable.

You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables)

You can enter candidates in the June and November exam series. If your school is in India, you can also enter your candidates in the March exam series.

Check you are using the syllabus for the year the candidate is taking the exam.

Private candidates can enter for this syllabus.

#### Combining with other syllabuses

Candidates can take this syllabus alongside other Cambridge International syllabuses in a single exam series. The only exceptions are:

- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

#### Group awards: Cambridge AICE

Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) is a group award for Cambridge International AS & A Level. It allows schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum by recognising the achievements of learners who pass examinations in a range of different subjects.

Learn more about Cambridge AICE at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/aice](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/aice)

## Making entries

Exams officers are responsible for submitting entries to Cambridge International. We encourage them to work closely with you to make sure they enter the right number of candidates for the right combination of syllabus components. Entry option codes and instructions for submitting entries are in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*. Your exams officer has a copy of this guide.

### Exam administration

To keep our exams secure, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as administrative zones. We allocate all Cambridge schools to one administrative zone determined by their location. Each zone has a specific timetable. Some of our syllabuses offer candidates different assessment options. An entry option code is used to identify the components the candidate will take relevant to the administrative zone and the available assessment options.

### Support for exams officers

We know how important exams officers are to the successful running of exams. We provide them with the support they need to make your entries on time. Your exams officer will find this support, and guidance for all other phases of the Cambridge Exams Cycle, at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

### Retakes

Candidates can retake Cambridge International AS Level and Cambridge International A Level as many times as they want to. Cambridge International AS Levels are linear qualifications so candidates cannot re-sit individual components. Information on retake entries is in the *Cambridge Handbook* at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)



## Equality and inclusion

We have taken great care to avoid bias of any kind in the preparation of this syllabus and related assessment materials. In compliance with the UK Equality Act (2010) we have designed this qualification to avoid any direct and indirect discrimination.

The standard assessment arrangements may present unnecessary barriers for candidates with disabilities or learning difficulties. We can put arrangements in place for these candidates to enable them to access the assessments and receive recognition of their attainment. We do not agree access arrangements if they give candidates an unfair advantage over others or if they compromise the standards being assessed.

Candidates who cannot access the assessment of any component may be able to receive an award based on the parts of the assessment they have completed.

Information on access arrangements is in the *Cambridge Handbook* at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide)

## Language

This syllabus and the related assessment materials are available in English only.

## After the exam

### Grading and reporting

Grades a, b, c, d or e indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge International AS Level.

'a' is the highest and 'e' is the lowest grade.

'Ungraded' means that the candidate's performance did not meet the standard required for the lowest grade (e). 'Ungraded' is reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate. In specific circumstances your candidates may see one of the following letters on their statement of results:

- Q (pending)
- X (no result)
- Y (to be issued).

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

On the statement of results and certificates, Cambridge International AS Level is shown as General Certificate of Education, GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level (GCE AS Level).

**'Cambridge International A Levels are the 'gold standard' qualification. They are based on rigorous, academic syllabuses that are accessible to students from a wide range of abilities yet have the capacity to stretch our most able.'**

Director of Studies, Auckland Grammar School, New Zealand

## How students, teachers and higher education can use the grades

### Cambridge International AS Level

Assessment at Cambridge International AS Level has two purposes:

- to measure learning and achievement

The assessment:

- confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus.

- to show likely future success

The outcomes:

- help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful
- help students choose the most suitable course or career
- help decide whether students part way through a Cambridge International A Level course are making enough progress to continue
- guide teaching and learning in the next stages of the Cambridge International A Level course.

## Grade descriptions

Grade descriptions are provided to give an indication of the standards of achievement candidates awarded particular grades are likely to show. Weakness in one aspect of the examination may be balanced by a better performance in some other aspect.

Grade descriptions for Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper will be published after the first assessment of the AS Level in 2022. Find more information at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/alevel](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/alevel)

## Changes to this syllabus for 2024 and 2025

The syllabus has been updated. This is version 2, published April 2021.

**You must read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme.**

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### Changes to syllabus

- Information on page 16 regarding grade descriptions has been updated to reflect this is an AS Level syllabus.
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'While studying Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International A Levels, students broaden their horizons through a global perspective and develop a lasting passion for learning.'

**Zhai Xiaoning**, Deputy Principal, The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China

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