

Understanding the  
**Cambridge**  
**Curriculum**  
in South Africa

# MATRICULATING IN SOUTH AFRICA

## NQF 4

- **DBE, CAPS and the NSC - what are they? Which exams are written?**
- **IEB - what it is and how it compares to DBE**
- **Foreign qualifications eg. GED and Cambridge**
- **NBT**
- **'Matric' and 'Matric with exemption/Bachelors pass'**



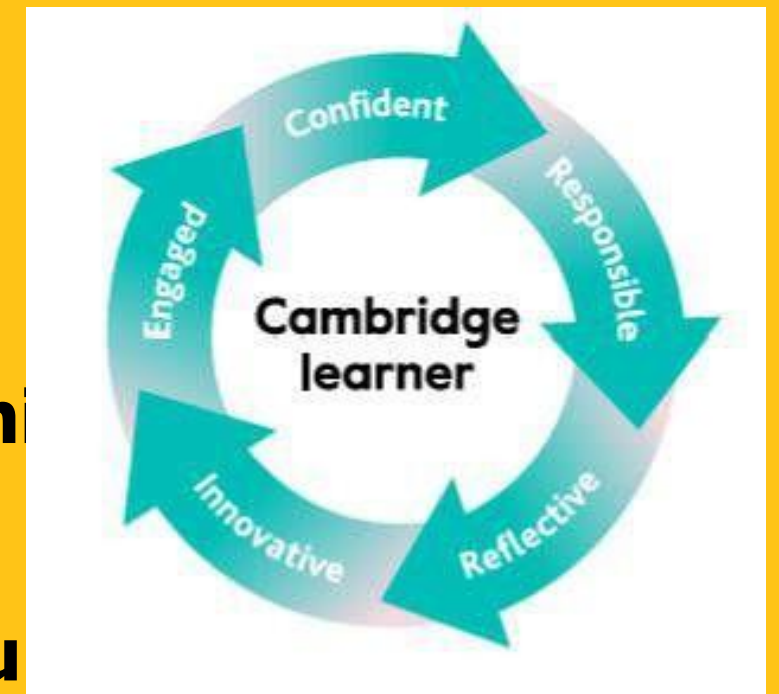
**Cambridge Assessment  
International Education**

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Cambridge International School

# WHY FOLLOW THE CAMBRIDGE CURRICULUM?

- **Global standard for education**
- **International recognition & acceptance**
- **Focus on skills, metacognition and active learning**
- **National value**
- **Incredible body of teaching and learning resources available**
- **Curriculum flexible, challenging and inspiring**



**Cambridge Assessment  
International Education**

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Cambridge International School

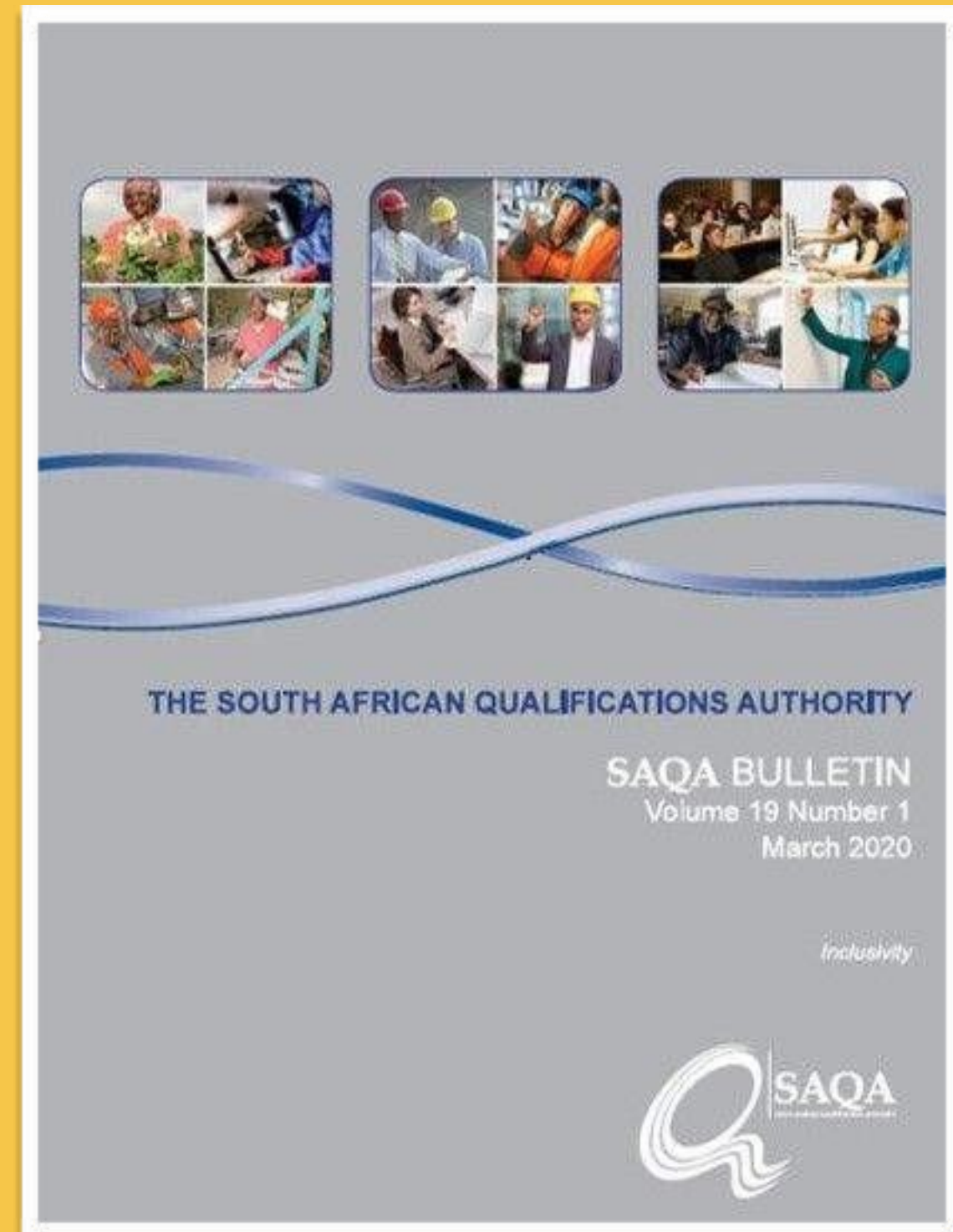


Cambridge Early Years	Cambridge Primary	Cambridge Lower Secondary	Cambridge Upper Secondary	Cambridge Advanced
<p><b>Age 3+</b></p> <p>A play-based programme, with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>a holistic curriculum</u></li> <li>• <u>engaging resources</u></li> <li>• <u>support to measure progress</u></li> </ul>	<p><b>Age 5+</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Clear, adaptable curriculum</u></li> <li>• <u>Flexible assessment options</u></li> <li>• <u>Support and resources</u></li> <li>• <u>Insight to understand potential</u></li> </ul>	<p><b>Age 11+</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Clear, adaptable curriculum</u></li> <li>• <u>Flexible assessment options</u></li> <li>• <u>Support and resources</u></li> <li>• <u>Insight to predict performance</u></li> </ul>	<p><b>Age 14+</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Broad, adaptable curriculum</u></li> <li>• <u>Fair, valid, reliable assessment</u></li> <li>• <u>Support and resources</u></li> <li>• <u>Insight to optimise achievement</u></li> </ul>	<p><b>Age 16+</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>In-depth, adaptable curriculum</u></li> <li>• <u>Fair, valid, reliable assessment</u></li> <li>• <u>Support and resources</u></li> <li>• <u>Insight to predict performance</u></li> </ul>
<p>6 curriculum areas including Personal, social and emotional development</p>	<p>10+ subjects including English, Mathematics and Science</p>	<p>10+ subjects including English, Mathematics and Science</p>	<p><u>Cambridge IGCSE™:</u> 70+ subjects <u>Cambridge O Level:</u> 40+ subjects <u>Cambridge ICE</u></p>	<p><u>Cambridge International AS &amp; A Level:</u> 50+ subjects <u>Cambridge AICE,</u> <u>Cambridge IPQ</u></p>



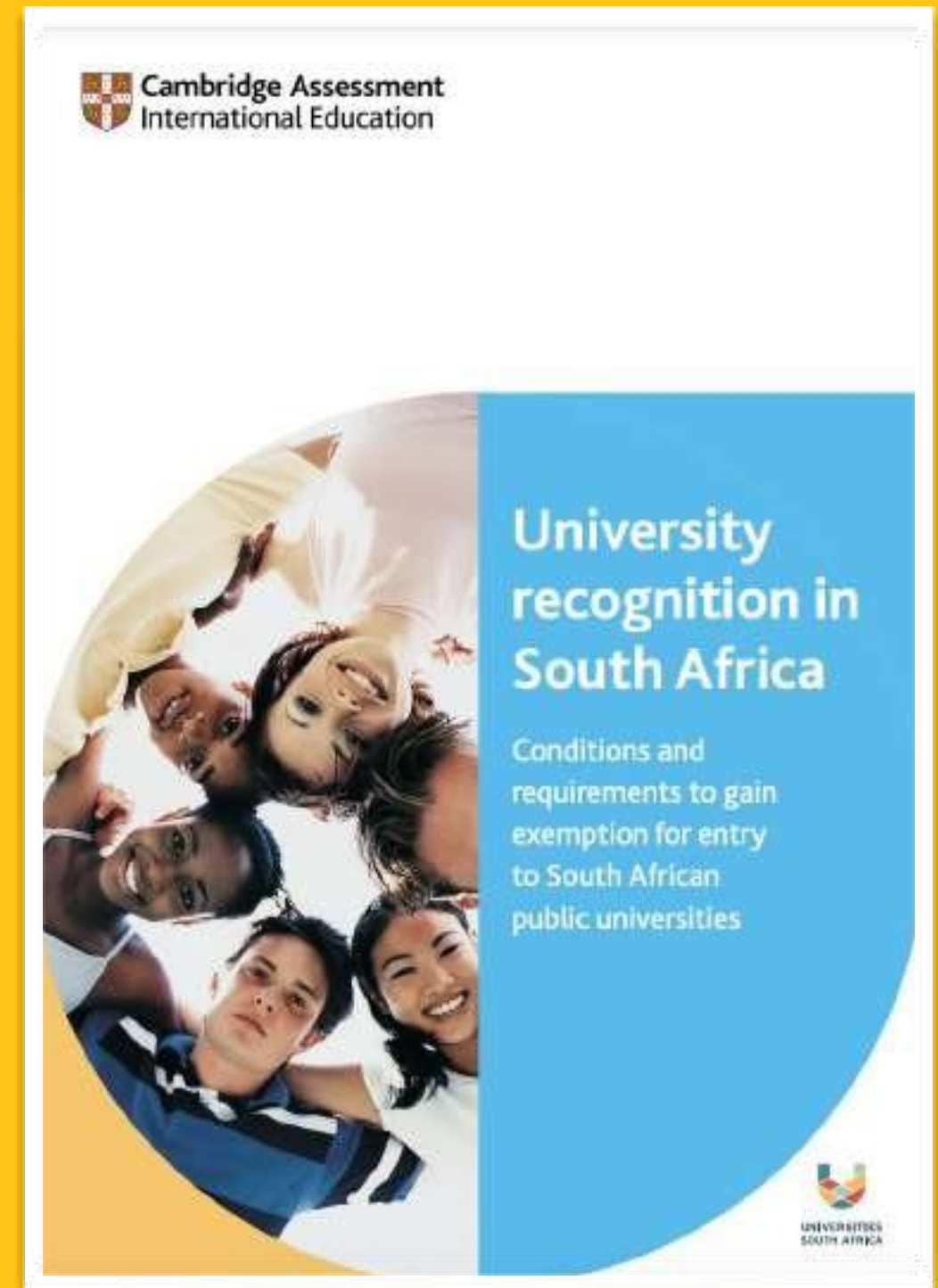
# WHAT IS SAQA?

- **South African Qualifications Authority**
- **Responsible for National Qualifications Framework (NQF)**
- **Set equivalency levels**
- **eg. Grade 11 = NQF 3, Grade 12 = NQF 4**
- **Matric without exemption requirements**



# WHAT IS USAF?

- **Universities South Africa**
- **The importance of IGCSEs**
- **Choosing subjects to meet USAF requirement**
- **AL, AS & IGCSE Combinations to achieve matric exemption**
- **Matric with exemption / Bachelors pass criteria**



# MATRIC VS MATRIC EXEMPTION

- **National Senior Certificate (Matric)**
  - not accepted by universities
  - accepted by most colleges
- **National Senior Certificate with exemption**
  - accepted by universities
  - results dependent



# SAQA

## GRADE 11 & MATRIC

	<b>TOTAL SUBJECTS</b> (including English Language / mother tongue as a First Language)	<b>LOWER</b>		<b>HIGHER</b>	
<b>LEVEL</b>		Ordinary / IGCSE		AS	Advanced
<b>GRADES</b>		A-E / 1-8	A-C / 1-6	A-E	A-E
<b>Evaluation: GRADE ELEVEN (11)</b>	5	5		-	-
<b>Evaluation: NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE (without Matriculation Exemption)</b>	4		3		1
	6	5			1
	5		3	2	
	7	5		2	





**OPTION 1: 3 \* IGCSE ('C') + 2 \* AS ('E')**

**OPTION 2: 5 \* IGCSE ('E') + 2 \* AS ('E')**

**OPTION 3: 3 \* IGCSE ('C') + 1 A level ('E')**

**A FIRST language is compulsory.**

# USAF SUBJECT REQUIREMENTS

Recognised subject list

Group I	Group II	Group III	Group IV	Group V	Ungrouped but recognised subjects	
English Language	Afrikaans	3rd Language (which is not offered as part of Group II requirement)	Art and Design	Accounting	Literature in English (see note below)	
English Language and Literature	Arabic	Biology	Biology	Business	Applied Information and Communication Technology	
Any other recognised First Language (see note)	Chinese	Chemistry	Chemistry	Computer Studies	Drama	
	Czech	Combined Science	Economics	Computing	Travel and Tourism	
	Dutch	Co-ordinated Science	Environmental Management	Computer Science	Information Communication Technology	
	French	Mathematics	Geography	Design & Technology		
	German	Physics	History	Divinity		
	Greek	Physical Science	Mathematics	Further Mathematics		
	Hindi		Music	Information Technology		
	IsiZulu		Physics	Religious Studies		
	Italian		Physical Science			
	Japanese					
	For the AS Level exemption students not offering AS English First Language or A Level English Language and Literature for Group I must offer IGCSE English First Language for Group II. For the A Level exemption students may offer IGCSE English First Language, AS English Language, AS English Language and Literature or A Level Language.	Korean				All Group V subjects at Cambridge International AS Level are only recognised for grouping purposes if the candidate has passed IGCSE or O Level Mathematics with a minimum of grade C. For detailed requirements please go to <a href="http://nb.usaf.ac.za/exemption-requirements/">http://nb.usaf.ac.za/exemption-requirements/</a>
		Latin				
		Malay				
		Marathi				
		Nepali				
		Portuguese				
		Russian				
Swahili						
Setswana						
Spanish						
Tamil						
Telugu						
Thai						
Turkish						
Urdu						

Summary of USAF minimum admission requirements for exemption for Bachelor Degree purposes

Complete exemption	Number of required subjects	Minimum qualification combination	Minimum grade required	Subject group requirements	Notes
Cambridge International A Level	5	2 subjects at A Level PLUS 3 subjects at IGCSE/O Level	E	Students must choose ONE subject from each of Groups I, II and III at either A Level or IGCSE/O Level. The fourth and fifth subjects for either A Level or IGCSE/O Level may be taken from any of the groups.	More than one subject can be chosen from a group providing that the minimum requirements have been met.
			C		
Cambridge International A Level	4	3 subjects at A Level PLUS 1 subject at IGCSE/O Level	E	Students must choose ONE subject from each of Groups I, II and III at either A Level or IGCSE/O Level. The fourth subject for either A Level or IGCSE/O Level may be taken from any of the groups.	More than one subject can be chosen from a group providing that the minimum requirements have been met.
			C		
Cambridge International AS Level	5	4 subjects at AS Level PLUS 1 subject at IGCSE/O Level	D	Students must choose ONE subject from Group I or II and another TWO subjects from two of Groups III, IV and V. English First Language must be offered and passed at an appropriate level. N.B. Two languages must be offered to qualify for complete exemption.	More than one subject can be chosen from a group providing that the minimum requirements have been met.
			C		
Cambridge AICE	5	5 subjects at AS Level (full credit)	D	Students must achieve passes in: – English Language – at least one subject from Group II – at least one of the following: Biology, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, 3rd Language The fourth and fifth subjects may be taken from any of the groups.	More than one subject can be chosen from a group providing that the minimum requirements have been met.

- subject groups
- minimum symbols



# SAQA & USAF



## CERTIFICATE OF EVALUATION

**Serial Number**  
854676

**Reference Number**  
02206270017

**Date of birth:** 2004-01-15

**Qualification:** General Certificate of Education (Advanced Subsidiary Level)

**Awarding Body / Institution:** Cambridge Assessment International Education (formerly Cambridge International Examinations)

**Date of Completion / Award:** 2021

**Closest Comparable South African Qualification / Qualification Type:** National Senior Certificate

**Organising Field:** Education, Training and Development

**Sub Framework Location:** General and Further Education and Training Sub-framework

**NQF Level:** 4

**Credits:** 130

SAQA verified that, at the time of award of qualifications listed on this certificate, the institutions were part of the national systems in their countries of origin and had the right to award these qualifications. SAQA took all responsible steps to ensure that the qualifications are authentic.


SAQA provides a foreign qualifications evaluation and advisory service in terms of the NQF Act 67 of 2008.

SAQA has confirmed the above information, for digital certification and sharing by PrivySeal Limited, at 10:57 AM (Africa/Johannesburg) on 29 Sep 2022



Appl. no: 2021090479 Student no: -

Public Universities South Africa  
Universities South Africa  
Reg. No. 2005/013211/08



**MATRICULATION BOARD**

Established under the Universities Act, 1955 and the Higher Education Act, 1997 and operating under auspices of Universities South Africa

Block E  
Harcfields Office Park  
1267 Pretorius Street  
Harcfield, Pretoria, 0083  
P.O. Box 3854, Pretoria 0001, South Africa

Tel: +27 10 591 4401/2  
Fax: +27 96 688 7273  
Email: [apptc@usa.ac.za](mailto:apptc@usa.ac.za)  
Website: <http://mb.usaf.ac.za/>

2021-10-07

This is to certify that

[Redacted Name]

satisfied the minimum general admission requirements for bachelors' degree studies at a South African university and that this


### CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETE EXEMPTION

is issued with effect from 2021-07-01 in terms of Section 7(1) (e) of Act No. 61 of 1995 as amended.

*Annie Viljoen*  
Annie Viljoen (PP)  
Date: 2021-10-07  
Receipt nr: 20210921-0003-006 Amount paid: R 610,00

[Redacted Signature]

(DISCLAIMER: Qualifying for Exemption does not guarantee meeting minimum Faculty requirements of a Higher Education Institution.)



# TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

- **Colleges & Universities of Technology:**
  - **certificates**
  - **diplomas**
  - **Vocational focus**
- **Universities:**
  - **under-graduate degrees**
  - **post-graduate degrees**
  - **academic focus**



# ENTRY INTO SOUTH AFRICAN COLLEGES

- **Cambridge specialist at some colleges**
- **Assist with registration with IGCSE qualification**
- **SAQA certificate for registration**
- **delay while waiting for SAQA**

STADIO

HIGHER EDUCATION



Cape Peninsula  
University of Technology

# ENTRY INTO SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

- **Cambridge specialist**
- **assist with registration with IGCSE certificate**
- **USAF Certificates required**
- **continue while USAF certificate pending**
- **very highly competitive**



# INTERNATIONAL STUDY

- **Specific requirements**
- **Further Mathematics A Level at several universities**
- **Some expect A or A\* at A Level**
- **3 A levels required minimum**



# CAMBRIDGE TEACHER?

- **To teach at any school in SA you need to be SACE registered**
- **Have to have a teaching qualification**
- **No 'Cambridge qualified teacher' but experience with the Cambridge curriculum and potentially have done Cambridge courses eg. marking, assessment, classroom management, subject specific**



# THE END IN MIND

- **Unique pathways**
- **Importance of the aptitude test**
- **Free aptitude tests:**
  - **[gostudy.net](http://gostudy.net)**



BLOGGER

ENGINEER

CHEF







**STRENGTHS  
APTITUDES?**



**CHOOSE  
SUBJECT**

**S**

**SA  
UNIVERSITY**

**CHECK WITH  
INSTITUTION**

**S A COLLEGE**

**APPLY WITH  
EXEMPTION**

**WRITE EXAMS**

**APPLY WITH  
MATRIC**

# LOWER SECONDARY

Grades 7, 8 & 9

## IGCSE

Grades 10 & 11

18 months (NQF 3)

7 IGCSE subjects

A, B, C symbol

## AS

Grade 12

18 months (NQF 4)

5 AS subjects

**OR**

## AL

Grade 13

12 months (NQF 5)

2 or 3 AL subjects

College or Vocational Training (NQF 5-8)

## EXIT

Online Study and/or work

## EXIT

SA University

Subject groupings apply



# Three Years in Upper Secondary

2023			2024			2025		
IGCSE (18 months)			AS (18 months)					
Grade 10	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 12
<b>Exams</b>			<b>Exams</b>					
May/June	Oct/Nov	May/June	Oct/Nov	May/June	Oct/Nov	May/June	Oct/Nov	Oct/Nov
Internal exams	Internal exams	<b>External Cambridge Exams</b>	Internal exams	Internal exams	Internal exams	Internal exams	<b>External Cambridge Exams</b>	<b>External Cambridge Exams</b>

## **MINIMUM MATRIC EXEMPTION REQUIREMENTS:**

**OPTION 1: 1 \* IGCSE ('C') + 4 \* AS ('D')**

**OPTION 2: 5 \* AS ('D')**

**OPTION 3: 3 \* IGCSE ('C') + 2 \* A level ('E')**

**OPTION 4: 1 \* IGCSE ('C') + 3 A level ('E')**

**English FIRST language is compulsory.**

**Students must take at least 1 subject from group 1,  
2 and 3**

# TWO SITTING RULE

- **USAF requirement ie. for matric exemption**
- **from the time IGCSE is written, one has 2 years in which to complete AS**
- **2 or more A Levels - 2 year sitting rule falls away**
- **AS and A levels have to be written within 13 months of each other**
- **rewriting an IGCSE to meet two year sitting rule**
- **a 'sitting' can be spread over two exam sessions eg. May and Oct, or Oct and following May**

# TWO SITTING RULE EXAMPLE

Series	Qualification	Grade
May/June 2010	IGCSE English Language	C
	IGCSE Mathematics	C
	IGCSE Biology	C
	IGCSE Geography	C
October/ November 2010	IGCSE Afrikaans	C
May/June 2012	AS English Language	D
	AS Mathematics	D
October/ November 2012	AS Geography	D
	AS Biology	D



# USAF & SAQA APPLICATION

- **responsibility of the parent/student**
- **application and payment online via websites**
- **USAF certification process can be started prior to writing the AS or A Level exams**
- **Original Cambridge certificates needed**

# NON-EXEMPTION SUBJECTS

- **widerange of subjects**
- **Popular non-exemption subjects:**
  - **Sociology**
  - **Psychology**
  - **Agriculture**
  - **someforeign languages**
  - **Enterprise**
  - **Marine Science**



# SUBJECTS WITH COURSEWORK

**\*\*FOR ALL SUBJECTS KEEP AN EYE ON SYLLABUS CHANGES\*\***

- **Some subjects require coursework**
  - **Art and Design**
  - **Design and Technology**
  - **Enterprise**
  - **Drama**
  - **PE**
  - **Music**
  - **Travel and Tourism**

# UNIVERSITY COURSE SPECIFIC SUBJECTS

- **compulsory Cambridge subjects for specific courses eg. BSc. requires BOTH Physics and Chemistry to a minimum of IGCSE**
- **contact university & faculty**
- **examples - medicine, engineering, veterinary science**

# EXAM CENTRE

- **Host the exams, do not set the exams or the mark schemes**
- **How to become an exam centre, inspectors**
- **Some of our staff mark exams - a supervisor from Cambridge guides you and ensures you keep to the mark scheme provided. Marking moderated.**

## **Exam entry process:**

- **Applications open November for May/June series, close early February**
- **Applications open June for Oct/Nov series, close early August**
- **Exam applications close soon after May/June results released, an extra time period given for retake applications.**



# EXAM CENTRE

- **Application form received and student temporarily entered into Cambridge exam**
- **Draft statement of entry and breakdown invoice sent to parents, check all the details are correct**
- **After school closing date, payments checked. All students paid for submitted for entry to Cambridge. Closing date is also the final date for withdrawals with reimbursement.**
- **Payment made in full to Cambridge**
- **Completed statement of entry sent to parents**

# EXAM CENTRE

- **After first entry date, late registration applications and fees open**
- **Afrikaans only available in Oct/Nov**
- **Some other languages only available in May/June**

# EXAM CENTRE

- **Access arrangements available - extra time, scribe, reader, transcript, prompter, reading pen, word processor, colour naming etc**
- **Access arrangements applied for per subject entered for.**
- **Psychologist report required as evidence of need.**
- **Extra payment required for scribe or human reader as separate room is organised so payment required for scribe/reader and invigilator**
- **External invigilators, no school teachers**

# EXAM DAY

- **Timetable is available online - Google search 2025  
June or November Cambridge exam timetable**
- **Centre timetable is only put together once entries close and we know what subjects have been entered for. Centre timetable exact same dates and session supplied by Cambridge. We cannot change the dates or times.**
- **Dates and session also stated on statement of entry**

# EXAM DAY

- **AM papers start at 10:00 (generally)**
- **PM papers start at 14:00 (generally)**
- **Keytime is 11:00 and 15:00 for South Africa**
- **Students to arrive 30 minutes before start time**
- **Students sign register on arrival**
- **Desks allocated in hall. Name tag with candidate number and photo on the desk.**



# EXAM DAY

- **Private candidates in appropriate civvies**
- **All candidates to bring their own stationery. Blue or black pen (non-erasable), pencil, eraser, ruler, calculator (no covers allowed), maths instruments, no correction fluid allowed**
- **Stationery to be stored in a transparent container**
- **Water is allowed, bottles need to be transparent with no writing**
- **No cellphones or smart watches allowed in exam room**

# RESULTS

- **Results are separated for IGCSE and AS/A Level for January, a week apart**
- **IGCSE and AS/A Level results released on the same date in August**
- **Log in details supplied by exam centre ahead of results day.**
- **A few days after results released centre receives component results. Email if you would like component results.**

# EXAM DAY

- **Centre able to supply electronic statement of results to apply to university. Email to receive.**
- **Remarks and script return is available at an extra cost. Email exam centre to apply. Cost per paper, not per subject. Not available for multiple choice papers.**

# GRADE THRESHOLD

- **Cambridge Grade Thresholds are the minimum marks a student needs to achieve a particular grade in their exam. For example, if the threshold for an A grade in a Physics paper is 28 marks out of 40 , then scoring 28 or more will secure an A. If the threshold for a C grade is 22 marks , then scoring 22 will earn a C.**
- **Cambridge Grade Thresholds are not set before the exams—they are carefully decided after the exams are marked. The process ensures that grades are awarded fairly, no matter how difficult or easy the paper was. Here's how it works:**

## Step 1: Analyzing the Exam

**After the exam is marked, Cambridge examiners review the overall performance of all students. They check:**

- **How challenging the exam questions were.**
- **How students performed compared to expectations.**

**For instance, if most students found the paper harder than usual, adjustments are made to the thresholds to ensure fairness.**



# GRADE THRESHOLD

## Step 2: Adjusting for Difficulty

**The thresholds are adjusted based on the exam's difficulty:**

- **If the exam was harder than expected , thresholds are lowered. This means students can achieve higher grades with fewer marks.**
- **If the exam was easier than expected , thresholds are raised to maintain consistency across different exam sessions.**

**This adjustment ensures fairness for students taking the exam in any given session, whether it's a tough paper or an easier one.**

## Step 3: Finalizing the Thresholds

- **Once the adjustments are made, the final Cambridge Grade Thresholds are published. These thresholds ensure that grades reflect both the performance of the student and the difficulty of the exam.**

# CAMBRIDGE RESULTS STATISTICS

## Cambridge International A Level candidate grades November 2024

### Cumulative world totals grades A\* - E

These figures may differ from those of previous November series. This is because there have been some substantial changes in the profile of candidates entered. Also, the awarding standard was adjusted from November 2020 to November 2022 in response to the Covid pandemic. The awarding standard returned to the pre-Covid standard in November 2023.

	% achieving A*	% achieving A or above	% achieving B or above	% achieving C or above	% achieving D or above	% achieving E or above	% receiving AS A-E grades	% candidates ungraded
Accounting	5.7	12.8	22.0	36.5	54.3	74.9	9.1	16.0
Art and Design	0.6	3.2	11.4	32.5	61.0	84.2	7.2	8.6
Biblical Studies	5.0	22.2	50.4	76.1	90.9	97.0	0.4	2.6
Biology	10.3	23.9	40.3	56.4	70.9	82.9	3.6	13.5
Business	2.1	7.2	17.2	34.3	53.7	71.7	4.2	24.1
Chemistry	12.8	27.3	42.3	57.5	71.2	84.6	4.6	10.8
Chinese Language and Literature	40.5	82.6	95.5	98.8	99.8	99.9	0.0	0.1
Classical Studies	2.5	8.0	27.3	51.9	73.7	89.0	2.0	9.0
Computer Science	6.1	14.3	24.2	35.7	50.9	70.8	7.6	21.6
Design and Technology	2.2	10.7	29.3	55.3	79.7	91.6	2.2	6.2
Economics	3.0	12.6	29.2	45.6	62.4	77.7	6.3	16.0
English Language	0.8	4.6	16.6	37.8	60.1	78.7	3.1	18.2
Food Studies	0.7	4.8	19.3	47.6	75.9	95.2	0.0	4.8
Further Mathematics	38.8	64.5	77.6	84.3	88.2	91.5	4.1	4.4
Geography	2.5	6.9	19.5	39.0	60.7	78.8	6.4	14.8
Global Perspectives & Research	0.7	3.9	16.0	43.0	68.7	85.2	8.2	6.6
History	1.3	6.5	21.6	46.6	71.4	88.0	5.0	7.0
Information Technology	2.2	7.3	13.8	25.0	37.7	56.1	13.0	30.9
Law	2.3	8.8	16.3	27.2	38.5	52.8	9.3	37.9
Literature in English	2.9	9.0	22.8	41.5	66.0	86.5	1.8	11.7
Mathematics	9.7	23.7	40.1	57.4	72.8	85.2	5.6	9.2

# CERTIFICATES

- **Statement of result certificate received approx a month after results released**
- **Examination certificate received 6 - 8 weeks after results released. Will be notified to collect. Sign for acceptance of certificates.**
- **Top achiever / Top in country certificates**
- **Very important to look after your certificates**
- **Certificates not collected within a year are sent back to Cambridge**

# INTERNAL VS EXTERNAL EXAMS

- **Internal school exams written twice a year (June and November) based on past Cambridge exams and marked according to Cambridge mark schemes**
- **Mark allocation and time allocation based on Cambridge papers to ensure students will cope with external exams**
- **From LS 7 level students are trained in Cambridge protocols for exams**









THANK YOU FOR  
JOINING US

[https://media.istockphoto.com/id/1187194357/photo/teenager-boy-wearing-headphones-and-using-smartphone-over-isolated-background-serious-face.jpg?s=612x\\_2&w=is&k=20&c=qK1RVYMAzyVtFuRIobjTN10wGagkxlgAKbyx-aqDTtg=](https://media.istockphoto.com/id/1187194357/photo/teenager-boy-wearing-headphones-and-using-smartphone-over-isolated-background-serious-face.jpg?s=612x_2&w=is&k=20&c=qK1RVYMAzyVtFuRIobjTN10wGagkxlgAKbyx-aqDTtg=)

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<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dreamstime.com%2Fphotos-images%2Fteen-boy.html&psig=AOvVaw16g-sCPhHTBXnVpFyRmQHt&us=>

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