

The Cambridge learner and teacher attributes

Cambridge International Examinations (Cambridge) uses ‘Cambridge learner attributes’ and ‘Cambridge teacher attributes’ to refer to five highly desirable **habits in learning** representing a combination of values, attitudes, motivation, empathy, knowledge and skills.

These attributes are based on self-awareness and an understanding of the processes of learning and teaching, not just the outcomes. The Cambridge learner and teacher attributes are focused on learning as an activity,

and schools can supplement them with additional attributes drawn from their school mission and aims if they wish. The precise nature of school engagement with the attributes will depend on school context and culture.

Cambridge learners	Cambridge teachers
<p>Confident in working with information and ideas – their own and those of others.</p> <p>Cambridge learners are confident, secure in their knowledge, unwilling to take things for granted and ready to take intellectual risks. They are keen to explore and evaluate ideas and arguments in a structured, critical and analytical way. They are able to communicate and defend views and opinions as well as respect those of others.</p>	<p>Confident in teaching their subject and engaging each student in learning.</p> <p>Cambridge teachers know their subject well and know how to teach it. They seek to understand their students and their educational needs. They strive to communicate a love of learning and to encourage students to engage actively in their own learning.</p>
<p>Responsible for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others.</p> <p>Cambridge learners take ownership of their learning, set targets and insist on intellectual integrity. They are collaborative and supportive. They understand that their actions have impacts on others and on the environment. They appreciate the importance of culture, context and community.</p>	<p>Responsible for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others.</p> <p>Cambridge teachers are highly professional in their approach to teaching and they are collaborative and supportive. They understand their actions will help shape future generations and they are concerned about the holistic development of every individual they teach.</p>
<p>Reflective as learners, developing their ability to learn.</p> <p>Cambridge learners understand themselves as learners. They are concerned with the processes as well as the products of their learning and develop the awareness and strategies to be life-long learners.</p>	<p>Reflective as learners themselves, developing their practice.</p> <p>Cambridge teachers are themselves learners, seeking to build on and develop their knowledge and skills through a virtuous circle of reflection on practice, involving research, evaluation and adaptation. They support students to become independent and reflective learners.</p>
<p>Innovative and equipped for new and future challenges.</p> <p>Cambridge learners welcome new challenges and meet them resourcefully, creatively and imaginatively. They are capable of applying their knowledge and understanding to solve new and unfamiliar problems. They can adapt flexibly to new situations requiring new ways of thinking.</p>	<p>Innovative and equipped for new and future challenges.</p> <p>Cambridge teachers are creative, experimenting with new ideas and pursuing an enquiring approach in their teaching. They are open to new challenges, being resourceful, imaginative, and flexible. They are always ready to learn and apply new skills and techniques.</p>
<p>Engaged intellectually and socially, ready to make a difference.</p> <p>Cambridge learners are alive with curiosity, embody a spirit of enquiry and want to dig more deeply. They are keen to learn new skills and are receptive to new ideas. They work well independently but also with others. They are equipped to participate constructively in society and the economy – locally, nationally and globally.</p>	<p>Engaged intellectually, professionally and socially, ready to make a difference.</p> <p>Cambridge teachers are passionate about learning within and beyond the classroom, sharing their knowledge and skills with teachers in the wider educational community.</p>



Why did Cambridge introduce the learner and teacher attributes?

Cambridge introduced these attributes in recognition of the fact that in order to be successful in completing Cambridge qualifications, and then in higher education and the modern world of work, learners need to demonstrate these habits in learning. They are compatible with other classifications of '21st century skills', for example, 'ways of thinking', 'ways of working', 'tools for working', 'skills for living in the world' (Griffin et al, 2012), and approaches including David Perkins' *A Dispositional Theory of Thinking* (1993) and Guy Claxton's *Building Learning Power* (2011).

The Cambridge teacher attributes reflect the fact that excellent teaching involves nurturing these habits in learners as well as teaching subject knowledge and understanding.

What are the advantages of defining the Cambridge learner and teacher in this way?

The Cambridge learner and teacher attributes recognise that the curriculum should be more than a collection of qualifications. They demonstrate:

- what learners should aim for in terms of developing the habits and skills they will need for success in higher education and the world of work as well as preparing for Cambridge qualifications
- what teachers should aim for in terms of improving their professional practice.

These attributes are interconnected. For example, being engaged and working well with others requires learners to be responsible. They are interdisciplinary and need to be nurtured and reinforced across the curriculum.

What are the challenges of promoting the Cambridge learner and teacher attributes?

Making sense of the attributes must be done in each school taking into account its own **unique culture and vision**. Without being properly integrated into, and supported by, the school community and embedded in the curriculum, there is a danger that the Cambridge learner and teacher attributes can become simply a list of desirable qualities, with schools making the assumption that students will learn these skills automatically.

Practical tips:

How can schools develop the Cambridge learner and teacher?

- Engage with and involve the whole school community in **promoting** these attributes, so that everyone understands what they mean, and why they are important.
- Consider what goes on **beyond formal instruction** as this will be important in developing these attributes because learning does not begin and end in the classroom.
- Offer a **broad and balanced curriculum** and co-curricular (also known as 'extra-curricular') activities which provide learners with the opportunity to develop both the inter- and intra-personal skills described in these attributes.
- Encourage teachers to engage with activities and practices that support on-going and evidence-based **reflective practice**.

Above all, these attributes are about how teachers teach and the creation of a **supportive learning culture** in the school.





How can teachers develop the Cambridge learner?

Learners need to explore these attributes in the context of real disciplinary learning; therefore **all** teachers should demonstrate these attributes and plan lessons and programmes of study that give ample opportunity for learners to develop and advance the learner attributes within the context of the subject being taught. **Active learning** and **Assessment for learning** (see separate Education Briefs) provide frameworks and practices that can help.

How can learners develop these attributes?

Learners can develop self-awareness and focus on the processes of learning as well as the products. Assessment for learning practices, which help learners understand what constitutes excellence and reflect on their own performance, help make learning visible and build confidence. Learners can also develop confidence, responsibility, reflection, innovation and engagement in different contexts by experiencing a broad and balanced education.

Where can you find more information?

- Claxton, G., Chambers, M., Powell, G. and Lucas, B. (2011) *The Learning Powered School: Pioneering 21st Century Education*. Bristol: TLO Ltd. See also: www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk
- Griffin, P., McGaw, B. and Care, E. eds. (2012). *Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills*. London, UK: Springer. See also www.atc21s.org
- *Implementing the Curriculum with Cambridge: A Guide for School Leaders* www.cie.org.uk/images/134557-implementing-the-curriculum-with-cambridge.pdf
- Perkins, D., Jay, E. and Tishman, S. (1993) *Beyond Abilities: A Dispositional Theory of Thinking*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/thinking/docs/merrill.pdf

How is Cambridge supporting schools with Cambridge learner and teacher attributes?

We support the development of the Cambridge learner and teacher attributes by:

- including educational **aims and objectives** in syllabuses to support the learner attributes. For example, Cambridge learners are responsible. This is developed in a number of ways depending on the subject. In Cambridge IGCSE Biology, for instance, learners will develop an awareness that applications of science may be both beneficial and detrimental to the individual, community and environment. In Cambridge Pre-U English, learners develop an awareness of contexts in which texts were written and the significance of cultural and historical influences upon readers and writers.
- supporting teachers to develop their professional practice in light of the learner and teacher attributes, for example through our **professional development qualifications**
- providing **support materials** to schools which embed the development of the learner attributes
- designing our **assessments** so that they assess critical thinking and require students to demonstrate understanding and applications of knowledge
- designing **specific syllabuses** that engage students in thinking beyond disciplinary boundaries, targeted at developing collaboration, research skills, inter-disciplinary understanding, presentation skills and creativity (for example Cambridge Global Perspectives® qualifications and Cambridge IGCSE® Enterprise).

Learn more! If you would like to know more about Cambridge Training please email info@cie.org.uk or visit www.cie.org.uk/events or contact Customer Services on +44 (0)1223 553554