



Cambridge Pre-U: Guide for UK Higher Education Admissions Staff

Cambridge Pre-U is a post-16 qualification available for teaching in the UK since September 2008. This qualification aims to better prepare students for higher education and is designed to help them gain an in-depth knowledge of the subjects studied and to develop the skills needed for university study.

Why was Cambridge Pre-U developed?

Cambridge Pre-U was developed in response to requests from UK schools for an alternative to A Level that would fully support successful progression from school to undergraduate study and beyond. It was developed in consultation with schools, higher education institutions and subject associations. Cambridge Pre-U has been accredited by Ofqual (UK regulatory body) and is funded for teaching in the maintained sector. The first cohort graduated in 2010.

Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (Principal Subject, Short Course and GPR)

There are over 20 individual Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects, certificated separately and assessed at the end of a two-year programme of study. Cambridge Pre-U Short Courses (one-year) are available for Modern Languages, Mathematics, Further Mathematics and Global Perspectives. A Short Course can be taken in the first or second year of study and is offered in order to encourage students to develop a broad subject portfolio. GPR (Global Perspectives & Research) is taught as two successive one-year courses and aims to develop students' critical, analytical and research skills.

Cambridge Pre-U Diploma



Students who have passed four components comprised of three Certificates (Principal Subjects) plus the core component, Global Perspectives and Research (GPR), can obtain a Cambridge Pre-U Diploma. Students will

receive a certificate for individual Principal Subjects, GPR and Short Courses and an **additional certificate** for the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma if they have met the necessary requirements. Up to two A Levels can be substituted for Cambridge Pre-U Certificates (Principal Subjects).

Global Perspectives and Research (GPR)

Global Perspectives and Research (GPR) constitutes the compulsory core of the Diploma, and can also be taken as a stand-alone qualification and certificated separately.

How do Cambridge Pre-U Certificates (Principal Subjects) compare with A Levels?

A Level	Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject
360 class contact hours	380 class contact hours
6 passing grades A*-E	9 passing grades D1- P3 with one grade higher than A*
Examinations are modular taken over the two-year period of study	Examinations are linear with all examinations taken at the end of the two-year period of study
Individual modules can be retaken	Re-sits only available one year later by taking all the examination papers for the whole subject
Includes one paper that looks across the different modules (synoptic assessment)	Papers are taken at the end of the course with candidates expected to make links between topic areas

What is GPR?

In order to encourage all students to develop the skills targeted by Global Perspectives and Research (GPR), it is available as a stand-alone course/examination in addition to serving as the core for the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma. It is comprised of Global Perspectives (a taught course) and a Research Report.

Global Perspectives encourages breadth across the curriculum through the interdisciplinary study of a number of themes of global relevance, developing critical thinking and a range of study and research skills. The Research Report promotes the application and development of the skills taught in Global Perspectives, and helps prepare students to cope with the demands of university study.

For further information regarding GPR, please refer to our *GPR: Information for Universities* document.

What are the UCAS Tariff recommendations?

The UCAS Tariff is a points system used to report achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. It shows how different types of qualifications compare, and provides comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.

The UCAS Tariff reflects the fact that the standard of work required for a Distinction 3 will be aligned to that required for an A grade at A Level. However, the Tariff awards 130 points to D3, against 120 for A grade at A Level. The Tariff thus takes into account several features that make Cambridge Pre-U distinctive:

Size: Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (Principal Subject) is larger than an A Level and has been assigned 380 Guided Learning Hours by Ofqual (compared with 360 for A Level). With more teaching and learning time available, students can delve even deeper into the subject.

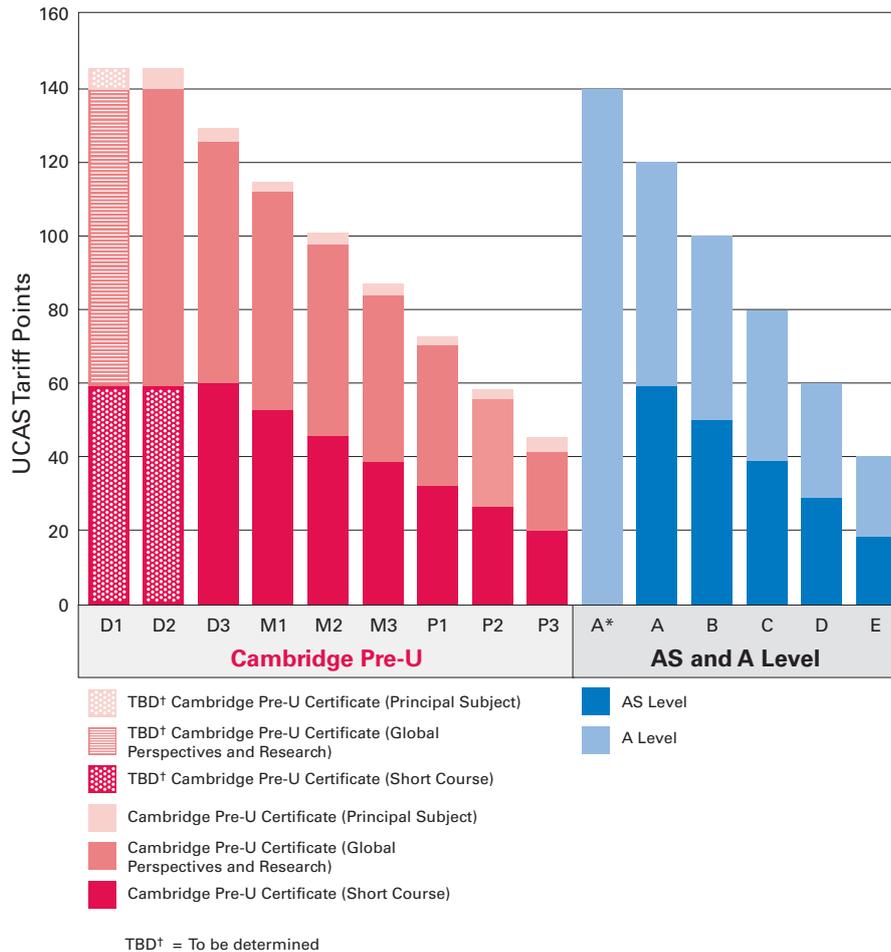
Stretch: All the examinations must be taken together at the end of the two-year period of study. Modules cannot be taken separately, nor can they be retaken, without retaking the entire qualification. The assessment also includes more open and challenging questions.

Structure: The 'linearity' of the assessment allows for a more coherent and synoptic experience of the subject.

While many universities do not use UCAS Tariff Points in framing their offers, they may nevertheless use the tariff to provide a benchmark for fair and objective comparison with A Levels. Using UCAS Tariff Points as the benchmark for comparison, universities can translate Cambridge Pre-U grades in a straightforward way.

Cambridge Pre-U Band	Cambridge Pre-U Grade	Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (Principal Subject) UCAS Tariff	Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (Short Course) UCAS Tariff	Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (GPR) UCAS Tariff	Equivalent A Level grades and comments
Distinction	D1	TBC	TBC	TBC	D1 has no equivalent A Level grade. It represents a standard of excellence across all papers in the subject.
Distinction	D2	145	TBC	140	D2 is set with the A* at A Level in view.
Distinction	D3	130	60	126	The D3 standard is aligned to that of an A grade at A Level, in that the standard of work required to achieve a D3 will be the same as that required for an A grade. But note: a Pre-U candidate has to cover more ground (the syllabus is bigger), additional stretch is built into the question papers and students have to take all papers in one session.
Merit	M1	115	53	112	M1 has a slightly lower tariff score to the A grade at A Level, reflecting the bigger syllabus and the fact that individual components cannot be retaken.
Merit	M2	101	46	98	M2 has a tariff score slightly higher than a B grade at A Level.
Merit	M3	87	39	84	M3 and P1 have tariff scores which are equidistant from that of a C grade at A Level.
Pass	P1	73	32	70	
Pass	P2	59	26	56	P2 has a tariff score similar to a D grade at A Level.
Pass	P3	46	20	42	The standard of work required for P3 is aligned to that of an E grade at A Level. The higher tariff reflects the characteristics described above.
Ungraded	U				

How does the UCAS Tariff apply to Cambridge Pre-U?



How is Cambridge Pre-U graded?

Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects, Short Courses and GPR are reported on a nine-grade scale, reflecting three broad bands of achievement: Distinction, Merit and Pass.

Each broad band is sub-divided into three grades: Distinction 1, 2, 3 that is D1, D2, D3; Merit 1, 2, 3 (M1, M2, M3) and Pass 1, 2, 3 (P1, P2, P3). Students achieve one score upon completion of the qualification, for example, D3.

The intention of the nine-grade scale is to differentiate more finely and extend reporting of achievement at the top end, while keeping the grading scale accessible to the full range of ability.

Cambridge Pre-U Applications

The majority of applicants will be applying with a combination of Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects and A Levels, and an increasing number with the overall Cambridge Pre-U Diploma. A small number of applicants will be applying with GPR alongside A Levels.

For further information regarding the scores of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma, please refer to page 16 of our document: *Cambridge Pre-U: A Guide for Schools*.

Sample Certificate



Cambridge International Level 3 Pre-U Certificate



University acceptance

Over 145 UK universities have accepted Cambridge Pre-U as equivalent to other Level 3 qualifications. The UK Russell Group has welcomed the academic rigour, retention of subject specialism and the linear approach of these qualifications.

The **University of Cambridge** and **University of Oxford** accept the Cambridge International Pre-U Certificates as an alternative to A-Levels and will accept the Cambridge International Pre-U Diploma as meeting the general entry requirement.

The **University of Warwick** welcomes mixed portfolios of Pre-U and A level subjects. Essential subject requirements can be satisfied by taking either the relevant Pre-U certificate or A Level. The Pre-U Diploma is acceptable and candidates working towards this are advised to contact the Undergraduate Admissions Team regarding Diploma offer levels.

Durham University will accept the Cambridge Pre-U qualification as suitable for admission to its undergraduate courses provided all other entry requirements, such as English Language proficiency, are met. Durham notes the academic rigour of the linear approach, the retention of subject specialism and the expanded reporting scale at the top end of achievement.

Cardiff University will consider applicants offering the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma qualification and formulate its offers on an equivalent basis with existing level 3 qualifications. The University will also accept Pre-U Principal Subjects in lieu of GCE A Level subjects.

The **University of Surrey** believes the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma to be a suitable preparation for entrance to its degree programmes. Principal Subjects within the Diploma will be considered in the same manner as A Levels and will also be accepted as free standing qualifications.

UCL Medical School states that candidates studying Cambridge Pre-U are required to study three Principal Subjects including Chemistry and Biology. A grade of D3 must be achieved in each Principal Subject. A combination of A level and Pre-U courses would also be acceptable.

University of Edinburgh College of Medicine states that for the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma grades D3, D3, D3 and M2 (or combination of D3 and A level grade A) are required. Global Perspectives and Research (GPR) at M2 or a further AS level at grade B can be accepted in lieu of the fourth subject. Principal subjects must include Chemistry and one of Biology, Mathematics or Physics. Biology at AS Level is required as a minimum.

Recognition of Short Courses

An increasing number of UK universities are confirming their acceptance of Cambridge Pre-U Short Courses in lieu of AS Levels for entry to undergraduate courses. For example, universities accepting the Short Course in lieu of an AS Level include the **University of Exeter**, the **University of Edinburgh**, the **University of Sheffield**, the **University of Bristol** and the **University of Oxford**.

Recognition of GPR

Universities have also commented on the value that Cambridge Pre-U GPR adds to a student's university application.

The **University of Exeter** will accept Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives and Research (GPR) in lieu of a third A-Level or equivalent, with D3 grade being regarded as equivalent to an A and an M2 grade equivalent to a B.

The **University of York** accepts Global Perspectives and Research (GPR) as equivalent to a Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject or an A Level.

Bristol University values the GPR, and encourages admissions tutors to make two alternative offers to students offering this qualification, one of which specifies achievement in the GPR.

The **University of Sheffield** will accept Global Perspectives and Independent Research Report (GPR) as equivalent to a Pre-U Principal Subject, or an A Level when is presented alongside two "acceptable" A Levels or Pre-U Principal Subjects. The university's policy on acceptable A Level or equivalent subjects can be found on its website.

The Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and International studies faculties at **University of East Anglia** will accept Cambridge International Pre-U Certificate (Global Perspectives and Independent Research Report)-GPR as equivalent to a Cambridge Pre-U Principal subject. The disciplines above will also accept Pre-U GPR as an alternative to an A Level or in lieu of an AS level where a fourth subject is required. Where GPR is accepted in lieu of an AS (as a fourth subject) then the recommended grade will be M1.

The Arts and Humanities, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, Biological Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Technology, International Studies and Medicine faculties at the **University of Oxford** will accept Global Perspectives and Research (GPR) in lieu of an AS level where a fourth subject is required. When GPR is accepted in lieu of an AS, the recommended grade is D3.

Who else accepts Cambridge Pre-U?

Universities around the world have confirmed their recognition of Cambridge Pre-U. Recognition statements from universities in the USA, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands can be found at www.cie.org.uk/recognitionsearch by searching on *Country, Higher Education and Cambridge Pre-U*.

Learn more! For more information on Cambridge Pre-U visit www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu or contact Customer Services on **+44 (0)1223 553554** or email info@cie.org.uk

