



**Cambridge Assessment  
International Education**



# Cambridge International in US High Schools

An Admissions Toolkit  
for US Higher Education  
Admission Offices

## Contents

Understanding Cambridge students.....	3
Understanding the Cambridge program.....	4
Why Cambridge matters in the US.....	6
Support from Cambridge .....	8
Engaging with Cambridge.....	9

# About us

As a global organization with a 160-year history and a part of the University of Cambridge, we partner with schools and districts around the world with a shared goal of making education transformation a reality. Cambridge International offer a fully integrated and flexible K-12 educational system that aligns curriculum, pedagogy, and assessments. The result is students who demonstrate the higher order thinking skills needed for success in higher education – problem solving, critical thinking, independent research, collaboration and presenting arguments.

While many are familiar with our programs and examinations as it relates to international students, less are aware of our growth within secondary schools in the United States.

The purpose of this toolkit is to equip US admissions officers to effectively evaluate applicants with Cambridge AS Level, A Level, and AICE Diploma designations on their transcripts. We also hope that it will highlight the value of recruiting Cambridge students and their value to your campus.

Cambridge International is thoughtful about the impact we have on our planet. While we understand the importance of having physical resources at times, this toolkit has been equipped with QR codes to use less paper, and to allow you to access our information digitally.



**Learn more:** Access the Admissions Toolkit online for more detailed information.



# Why do Admissions Officers rate us so highly?

**98%** said Cambridge qualifications give students excellent preparation for university

**98%** said Cambridge qualifications help students succeed at university

**100%** agreed Cambridge students think logically and present coherent arguments

**100%** agreed Cambridge students have in-depth subject knowledge

**99%** agreed Cambridge students present reasoned explanations, understand implications and communicate them logically and clearly

"Cambridge students attack university work with confidence."  
*United Kingdom*

"Cambridge exams provide structure to learn and understand complex subjects."  
*United States*

"Cambridge students have achieved a level of mastery that is atypical of school graduates [here]."  
*United States*

"These well-rounded qualifications encourage independent skills that students need at university."  
*United Kingdom*

"Cambridge students are strong in critical thinking and writing..."

"...and are intellectually curious."  
*United States*

"Research and analytical thinking done by Cambridge students...  
...is a good foundation...  
...to succeed in higher education."  
*Australia*

"Students can communicate effectively...  
...carry out research...  
...and apply knowledge to real life situations."  
*United States*

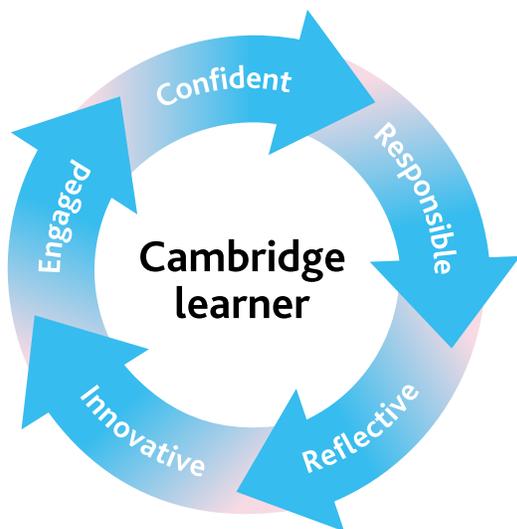
"Cambridge students are very prepared and knowledgeable on their subjects...  
...and tend to be more confident at presenting and speaking analytically."  
*United Kingdom*

We wanted to find out what university admissions staff around the world look for when selecting candidates. We also wanted to get their views about Cambridge programmes and qualifications, in particular how well they feel they prepare students for university study. We produced an online survey, supplemented with telephone interviews, and had responses from 130 higher education admissions staff in 10 countries, including the USA, UK, Australia and Canada. The respondents included admissions staff from Ivy League and Russell Group universities. Please note that for all questions, respondents who selected 'don't know' have been omitted.

# Understanding Cambridge students



At Cambridge International, we believe that all students have potential. Our programs challenge high performers and are designed to support students who are typically underrepresented in advanced coursework to prepare them for higher education.



Underpinning all of our curriculum are five key **learner attributes** and life skills that students need to develop along with their academic skills to be successful at university and in employment.

As a result, Cambridge students approach learning by being **confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged**.

The program asks students to skillfully employ a broad range of cognitive skills and socio-emotional skills, including resilience, self-motivation, and time management.



**Learn more about Learner Attributes:** explore case studies and testimonials.

# Understanding the Cambridge program

While we offer a fully integrated and flexible K-12 educational system, Cambridge high school students in the US will be applying to your institutions with four potential credentials on their applications:

## Cambridge Pre-Advanced

### Cambridge IGCSE

These courses and exams, in over 70 subjects, are comparable to the requirements of a US high school diploma.

## Cambridge Advanced

### Cambridge International AS Level

The 55 subjects offered at Cambridge International AS Level are typically a one-year course in high school with **180 teaching hours** that are equivalent to one semester of college-level coursework (typically receiving 3-4 college credits).

### Cambridge International A Level

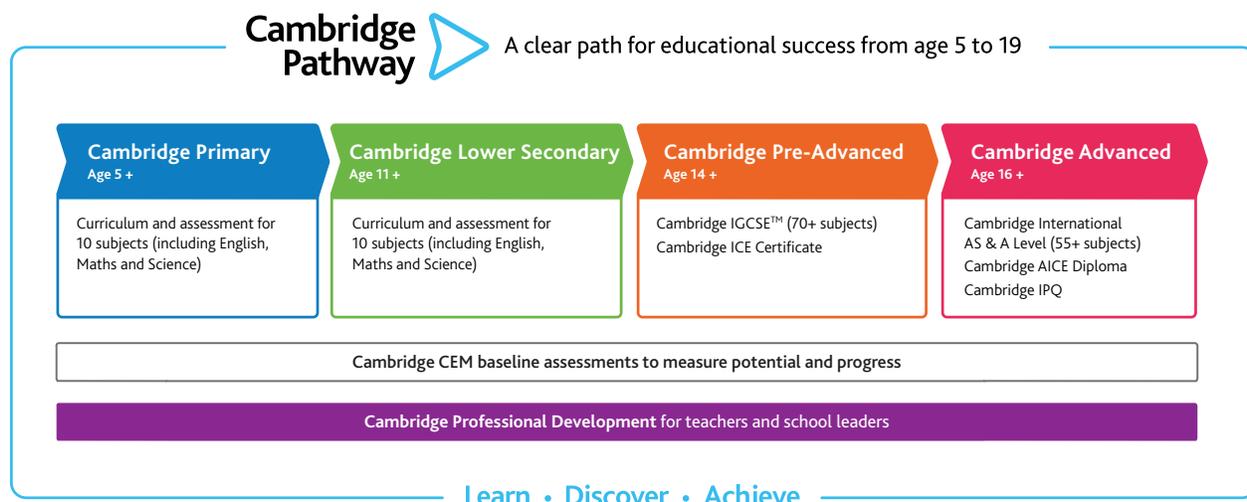
Cambridge International AS Level courses can be extended into a second year as a Cambridge

International A Level for even more in-depth study for a total of **360 teaching hours**, equivalent to two semesters of college-level coursework (typically receiving 6-8 college credits).

### Cambridge AICE Diploma

The Cambridge AICE Diploma allows students to tailor their studies to their individual interests, abilities, and future plans within an international curriculum framework. It requires students to study from three different subject groups, plus the core compulsory subject, Cambridge International AS Level Global Perspectives & Research.

With the Cambridge AICE Diploma students have the opportunity to demonstrate to universities that they have challenged themselves with the most rigorous option available in high school.



## Cambridge Advanced grading scale

Understanding our grading scale is critical to understanding Cambridge student performance. While we use similar letter designations as the standard US grading scale, there are some significant differences. First there are no pluses or minuses (B+ or B-, for example). Instead the distinctions are made by simply advancing to the next letter grade.

Passing grades for Cambridge Advanced are E (equivalent to a US letter grade of 'C') or higher. Unlike US systems, there is no letter grade to designate a failure (no 'F' equivalent). If a student does not pass, they simply do not receive a grade, and their exam result appears as 'ungraded.' In short, if a student receives any grade, they have passed their exam.

USA	AS Level	A Level
A+	a	A*
A	a	A
B+	b	B
B	c	C
C+	d	D
C	e	E
D+	U (ungraded)	U (ungraded)
D	U (ungraded)	U (ungraded)
F	U (ungraded)	U (ungraded)



Learn more about our Cambridge Advanced offerings, and our Cambridge AICE Diploma

# Why Cambridge matters in the US

Starting in 2015, we began an intentional outreach to underperforming schools across the US to partner on improving outcomes for their students. Like many colleges and universities, we think that the opportunity for higher education should be available to the whole of our society. Together, we can deliver on the promise to help close the opportunity gap and diversify your campuses while meeting the high standards of your faculty and institutions.



## Serving a Diverse Population

Understanding the students and teachers that are created through our learner attributes is, of course, important. However, understanding our schools and communities is just as important. Cambridge schools range from small, rural high schools in Kentucky,

Mississippi, and South Carolina, to large urban school districts like Miami-Dade County (FL). Many of our schools are in underserved communities, with higher percentages of poverty. 93% of Cambridge International schools in the US are public schools.



## Improving Secondary School Performance

If every child is to have an opportunity for success, every student must have a true opportunity to learn. To increase the achievement levels of minority and low-income students, we must focus on what really impacts education: high standards, a challenging and

engaging curriculum, development of good teachers, and assessments that truly measure learning. We invite you to review the outcomes in communities where Cambridge has positively impacted secondary school performance.



## Emphasizing the Power of Writing

Our programs understand not only the importance of mastering content and course skills, as well as the importance of writing in all disciplines. Embedded in all of our coursework is an emphasis on writing and

developing the skills to be an effective writer. Our courses prepare students for writing at the college-level, and support our students in being good communicators both in writing and verbally.



## Building Toward University Success

Not only are Cambridge International students more successful in their secondary school, our students also outperform their peers when they transition to university. A higher percentage of Cambridge students complete their bachelor's degrees in four years compared to peers who earned college credit

via other advanced coursework programs. Recent research (found on our digital toolkit) suggests that students who score an E or higher on their A or AS Levels continue to do well in subsequent courses and beyond.



## Nurturing Skills Employers Seek

Many key employability skills, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, are dependent on deep content knowledge and cannot be taught in isolation. The International Labor Organization (ILO) highlights the importance of a high-quality education in preparing young people with the fundamental skills that employers across the world are looking for. The ILO proposes a detailed framework, Core Skills for Employability,

which groups these skills into four broad skill categories: learning to learn, communication, teamwork and problem solving. The development of Cambridge learner attributes directly contributes to the development of these skills, allowing learners to develop as confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged young adults, preparing them well for their future career.



**Learn more about Cambridge Matters:**  
explore testimonials and research related to Cambridge student success within the US.

# Support from Cambridge

Cambridge International is here to serve as your partner in education. You are always welcome to contact us directly with any questions you may have. We also want to provide you with easily accessible information. You can find some important information below and a link to our resources page, which has the most up-to-date information.



SCAN ME

## Direct

Direct is a service which allows universities to verify students' paper transcripts.

**NEW** We recently began sending digital transcripts to universities for US Students. We encourage all universities to create a Direct account, and opt-in for electronic results.



SCAN ME

## Secondary School Information

We know that recruiting students who are prepared to be successful at your institution is important for admission offices. We want you to be able to easily find Cambridge students around the US.



SCAN ME

## Recognitions Database

Cambridge International maintains a database of institution's credit policies. Many Cambridge students will search this database to understand where they might receive credit for their Cambridge examinations. We encourage you to review your policy to ensure it is the most current. If you would like assistance in developing or updating your institution's policy, we would be happy to assist.



SCAN ME

## Toolkit Resources

Follow the QR code to access digital resources which include the following:

- Grading equivalency chart
- Explanation of grades
- Sample transcripts
- Course content FAQs
- English as a Second Language CREF equivalencies....



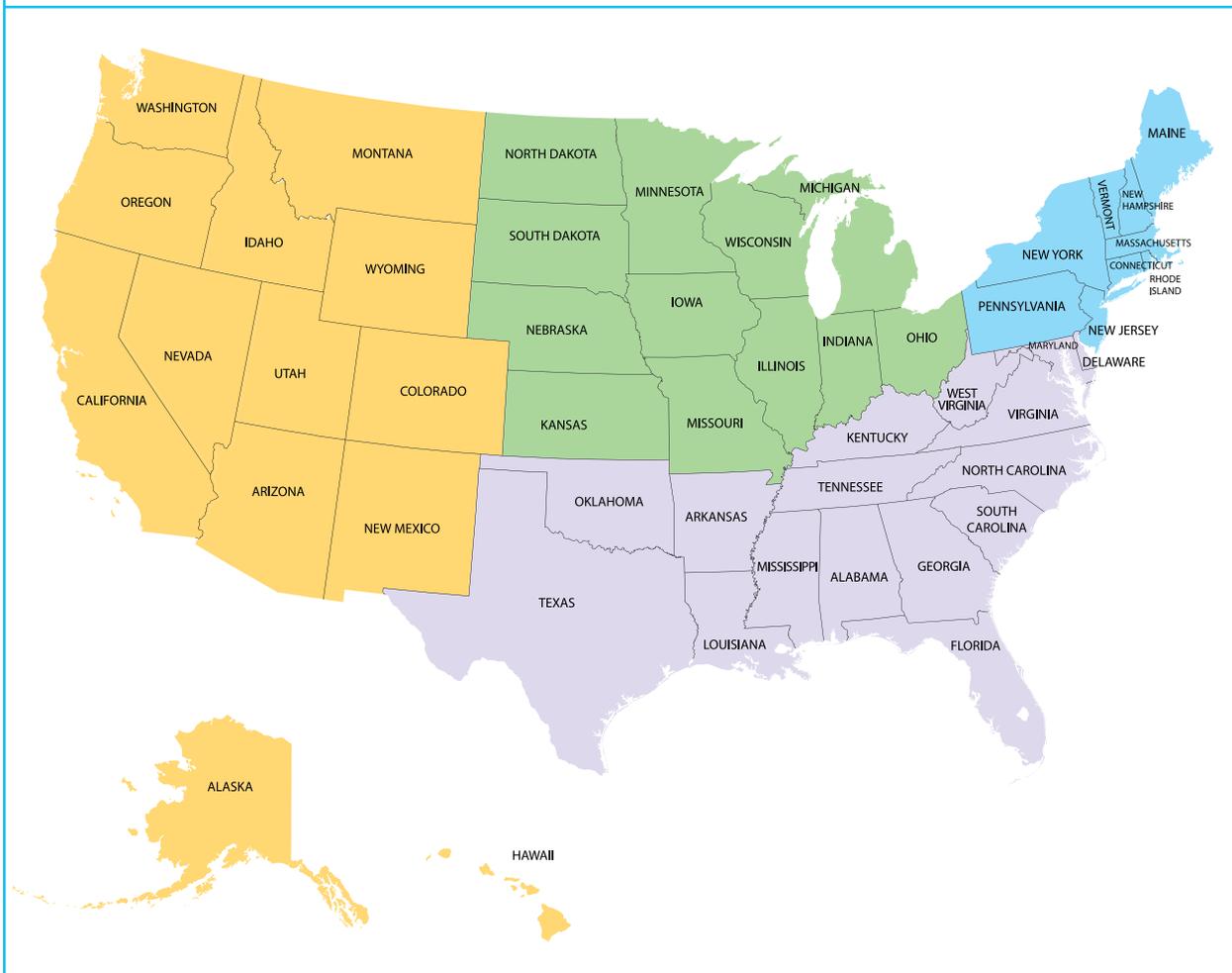
# Engaging with Cambridge

From recruitment to evaluation, Cambridge knows that the admissions office works hard to find and select students. As a K-12 partner, we offer free trainings and multiple resources to help build your offices' knowledge base about Cambridge in the US. Our US-based team is eager to work with you, no matter how much you know about Cambridge in the US.



## Higher education contacts

-  **Adina Chapman** – West; [adina.chapman@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:adina.chapman@cambridgeinternational.org)
-  **Chantel Reynolds** – South; [chantel.reynolds@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:chantel.reynolds@cambridgeinternational.org)
-  **Pam Kerouac** – Midwest; [pam.kerouac@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:pam.kerouac@cambridgeinternational.org)
-  **James Bishop** – Northeast; [james.bishop@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:james.bishop@cambridgeinternational.org)



We are committed to making our documents accessible in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 Standard. We are always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems or you think we are not meeting accessibility requirements, contact us at [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org) with the subject heading: Digital accessibility. If you need this document in a different format, contact us and supply your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.

Cambridge Assessment International Education  
The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road  
Cambridge, CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
t: +44 1223 553554  
[www.cambridgeinternational.org](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org)

© UCLES June 2021

