



Syllabus

Cambridge IGCSE® (9–1) First Language English 0990

For examination in June and November 2020, 2021 and 2022.



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

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Changes to this syllabus

For information about changes to this syllabus for 2020, 2021 and 2022, go to pages 29–31.
The latest syllabus is version 3, published February 2018.



1 Why choose this syllabus?

Key benefits

Cambridge IGCSE® syllabuses are created especially for international students. For over 25 years, we have worked with schools and teachers worldwide to develop syllabuses that are suitable for different countries, different types of schools and for learners with a wide range of abilities.

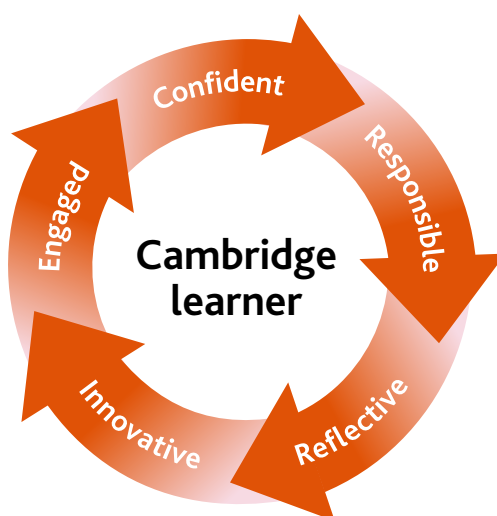
Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) First Language English allows learners to:

- develop the ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively when speaking and writing
- learn how to use a wide range of vocabulary, and the correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
- develop a personal style and an awareness of the audience being addressed.

Learners are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and to further their awareness of the ways in which English can be used. Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) First Language English also develops more general analysis and communication skills such as inference, and the ability to order facts and present opinions effectively.

Our programmes balance a thorough knowledge and understanding of a subject and help to develop the skills learners need for their next steps in education or employment.

Our approach encourages learners to be:



'The strength of Cambridge IGCSE qualifications is internationally recognised and has provided an international pathway for our students to continue their studies around the world.'

Gary Tan, Head of Schools and CEO, Raffles International Group of Schools, Indonesia

Recognition and progression

The combination of knowledge and skills in Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) First Language English gives learners a solid foundation for further study. Candidates who achieve grades 4 to 9 are well prepared to follow a wide range of courses including Cambridge International AS & A Level English Language.

Cambridge IGCSEs are accepted and valued by leading universities and employers around the world as evidence of academic achievement. Many universities require a combination of Cambridge International AS & A Levels and Cambridge IGCSEs or equivalent to meet their entry requirements.

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 IGCSE and found it to be comparable to the standard of GCSE in the UK. This means students can be confident that their Cambridge IGCSE qualifications are accepted as equivalent to UK GCSEs by leading universities worldwide.

Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition

Supporting teachers

We provide a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance, and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your learners the best possible preparation for Cambridge IGCSE.



'Cambridge IGCSE is one of the most sought-after and recognised qualifications in the world. It is very popular in Egypt because it provides the perfect preparation for success at advanced level programmes.'

Mrs Omnia Kassabgy, Managing Director of British School in Egypt BSE

2 Syllabus overview

Aims

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

The aims are to enable students to:

- read a wide range of texts, fluently and with good understanding, enjoying and appreciating a variety of language
- read critically, and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- write accurately and effectively, using Standard English appropriately
- work with information and with ideas in language by developing skills of evaluation, analysis, use and inference
- listen to, understand, and use spoken language effectively
- acquire and apply a wide vocabulary, alongside a knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology and linguistic conventions.

Content overview

Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) First Language English offers candidates the opportunity to respond with understanding to a rich array of reading texts during the course as a whole. Candidates will use these texts to inform and inspire their own writing, and write in a range of text types for different purposes and audiences.

Candidates will develop both their speaking and their listening skills, delivering a presentation, and responding to questions and engaging in conversations.

Candidates are encouraged to become appreciative and critical readers, writers, speakers and listeners.



Support for Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) First Language English

Our School Support Hub www.cambridgeinternational.org/support provides Cambridge schools with a secure site for downloading specimen and past question papers, mark schemes, grade thresholds and other curriculum resources specific to this syllabus. The School Support Hub community offers teachers the opportunity to connect with each other and to ask questions related to the syllabus.

Assessment overview

All candidates take two papers. Paper 1, and one of Paper 2 or Component 3. Component 4 is optional and assesses speaking and listening skills. This component is separately endorsed and marks will not contribute to a candidate's overall grade.

All candidates take:

Paper 1 2 hours
 Reading 50%
 80 marks
 Structured and extended writing questions
 Questions will be based on three reading texts
 Externally assessed

and:

Paper 2 2 hours
 Directed Writing and Composition 50%
 80 marks
 Extended writing question and a composition task
 Externally assessed

or:

Component 3
 Coursework Portfolio 50%
 80 marks
 Three extended writing assignments
 Internally assessed and externally moderated

Centres may also choose to enter candidates for the Speaking and Listening Test. Marks for this optional component do not contribute to the overall grade candidates receive for the written components. Instead, where candidates perform to an appropriate standard, certificates record achievement of grades pass, merit or distinction.

Candidates can also take:

Component 4 Approx. 10–12 minutes
 Speaking and Listening Test
 40 marks Separately endorsed
 Individual Talk and Conversation
 Internally assessed and externally moderated

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

AO1 Reading

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to:

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
- R4 demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers
- R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

AO2 Writing

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to:

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W4 use register appropriate to context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

AO3 Speaking and listening

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to:

- SL1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- SL2 present facts, ideas and opinions in a cohesive order which sustains the audience's interest
- SL3 communicate clearly and purposefully using fluent language
- SL4 use register appropriate to context
- SL5 listen and respond appropriately in conversation.

Weighting for assessment objectives

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

Assessment objectives as a percentage of the qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in IGCSE %
AO1 Reading	50
AO2 Writing	50
AO3 Speaking and listening	Separately endorsed

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %		
	Paper 1	Paper 2 and Component 3	Component 4
AO1 Reading	80	20	0
AO2 Writing	20	80	0
AO3 Speaking and listening	0	0	100

3 Subject content

The skills covered in the syllabus are outlined below.

Reading

- Demonstrate understanding of written texts, and of the words and phrases within them
- Summarise and use material for a specific context
- Develop, analyse and evaluate facts, ideas and opinions
- Demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve their effects and influence readers
- Select appropriate information for specific purposes
- Recognise and respond to linguistic devices, figurative language and imagery.

In developing reading skills, candidates should engage with a range of genres and text types from the twentieth and/or twenty-first centuries, including literature, fiction and non-fiction, and other forms of writing, such as discursive essays, reviews and articles. This study should include focus on writers' use of language and style and the ways in which writers achieve effects and influence readers. Candidates should study how influence may include fact, ideas, perspectives, opinions and bias.

Writing

- Express what is thought, felt and imagined
- Organise and convey facts, ideas and opinions effectively
- Demonstrate a varied vocabulary appropriate to the context
- Demonstrate an effective use of sentence structures
- Demonstrate an understanding of audience, purpose and form
- Demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

As developing writers themselves, candidates should be introduced to a range of writing skills, including the ability to create and compose texts with a variety of forms and purposes, e.g. descriptive, narrative, discursive, argumentative and persuasive. This study should include focus on the following text types: letter, report, article, journal, speech, interview and summary.

Speaking and listening

- Describe and reflect on experience, and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- Organise and convey facts, ideas and opinions effectively
- Understand and convey complex ideas
- Communicate with clarity, focus and purpose
- Communicate appropriately for the context
- Engage appropriately in conversation.

Candidates should explore a range of speaking and listening skills, including the ability to participate in engaging conversations and to respond spontaneously to questions and prompts. This study should include focus on presentation skills in employing and organising content, and language devices, such as irony, tone and emphasis.

4 Details of the assessment

Paper 1 – Reading

Written paper, 2 hours, 80 marks

Candidates answer three compulsory questions on three texts which may be on a similar topic. Candidates write all their answers in the space provided on the question paper.

Text A and Text B will be 700–750 words in length and Text C will be 500–650 words in length. Candidates should spend approximately 15 minutes reading the texts.

The texts will be printed on the question paper insert.

Dictionaries may **not** be used.

Question 1 Comprehension and summary task (30 marks)

Comprehension task: this question requires candidates to respond to Text A.

Candidates respond to a series of sub-questions. These include short answers testing understanding of both explicit and implicit meanings.

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (15 marks):

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

Summary task: this question requires candidates to respond to Text B.

Candidates answer a selective summary task in their own words. Candidates write their summary as continuous writing of no more than 120 words.

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (10 marks):

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

This question also tests the following writing assessment objectives (5 marks):

- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 2 Short-answer questions and language task (25 marks)

Short-answer questions: this question requires candidates to respond to Text C.

Candidates respond to a series of sub-questions which require answers of different lengths.

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (10 marks):

R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings

R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes

R4 demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers.

Language task: this question requires candidates to respond to Text C.

Candidates write about 200–300 words.

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (15 marks):

R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings

R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes

R4 demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers.

Question 3 Extended response to reading (25 marks)

This question requires candidates to respond to Text C.

Candidates write about 250–350 words, responding in one of the following text types: letter, report, journal, speech, interview and article.

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (15 marks):

R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings

R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes

R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text.

This question also tests the following writing assessment objectives (10 marks):

W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined

W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect

W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context

W4 use register appropriate to context

W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Paper 2 – Directed Writing and Composition

Written paper, 2 hours, 80 marks

Candidates answer two questions, one from each section.

The texts will be printed on the question paper insert.

Dictionaries may **not** be used.

Section A Directed Writing (40 marks)

Candidates answer one compulsory question on one or two texts totalling 650–750 words in length.

Candidates use, develop and evaluate the information in the text(s) to create a discursive/argumentative/persuasive speech, letter or article.

Candidates write about 250–350 words.

This question tests the following writing assessment objectives (25 marks):

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W4 use register appropriate to context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

This question also tests the following reading assessment objectives (15 marks):

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
- R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

Section B Composition (40 marks)

Candidates answer one question from a choice of four titles: two descriptive and two narrative.

Candidates use the title to develop and write a composition.

Candidates write about 350–450 words.

This question tests the following writing assessment objectives (40 marks):

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W4 use register appropriate to context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Component 3 – Coursework Portfolio

Written assignments, 80 marks

This information should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of the *Cambridge Handbook*.

The forms required for the conduct and assessment of the portfolio may be downloaded from www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples

Candidates submit a portfolio of three assignments, each of about 500–800 words. The assignments may be completed in any order, and are:

Assignment 1: writing to discuss, argue and/or persuade in response to a text or texts

Assignment 2: writing to describe

Assignment 3: writing to narrate.

The Coursework Portfolio tests the following writing assessment objectives (65 marks):

W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined

W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect

W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context

W4 use register appropriate to context

W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

For Assignment 1 only, the following reading assessment objectives are tested (15 marks):

R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings

R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes

R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text

R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

Work may be handwritten or word-processed.

Dictionaries may be used.

Candidates **must** include the first draft of one of the three assignments submitted. The first draft will not contribute to the final internally assessed mark or to the externally moderated mark for the portfolio.

The Coursework Portfolio **must** also include the text(s) used for Assignment 1.

If more than one teacher in your centre is marking internal assessments, you must make arrangements to moderate or standardise your teachers' marking so that all candidates are assessed to a common standard. Further information on the process of internal moderation can be found on the samples database at www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples

External moderators will produce a short report for each centre with feedback on your application of the mark scheme and administration of the assessment.

Additional information for Component 3 Coursework Portfolio

Please read this information in conjunction with the relevant sections of the *Cambridge Handbook*.

Assignments: general issues

- Assignments should arise from the programme of study undertaken by the teaching group.
- The best assignments are usually those that come from a shared learning experience but are finally chosen by individual candidates; negotiation of assignments with the teacher is recommended.
- All tasks set should be sufficiently challenging to stretch candidates to their full potential. For example, a class might study types of short story and their structures and conventions before individual candidates choose their own titles and write their own short stories for Assignment 3.
- Questions from past examination papers should not be used for coursework.
- Candidates are not expected to work under timed conditions.
- Assignments 1–3 may be completed in any sequence during the course. It is generally better that candidates complete more than three assignments during the course from which a suitable choice can eventually be made for the final portfolio.
- The assignments must clearly demonstrate different writing intentions and styles to the reader.

Assignment 1

- Assignment 1 is a piece of directed writing in response to a text or texts chosen by the teacher (or by the candidate, with the teacher's approval).
 - This assignment is assessed for both writing and reading skills.
 - Centres are advised to select text(s) of approximately two sides of A4 in total. Text(s) may consist of facts, opinions and/or arguments which can be selected, analysed and evaluated by the candidate and can be integrated into their own views.
 - Note that literature texts are not usually suitable for this assignment.
 - Text(s) may be of local, national or global interest – or all three – and should be suitable for the ability range of the candidates. They may be drawn from a variety of sources, e.g. newspapers, magazine articles, travel writing, text-based websites and media.
 - Note that text(s) that are mainly informative or that provide content which has no development/discussion should not be set.
 - Candidates should be able to give an overview of the argument as a whole and illustrate their understanding by commenting on specific ideas presented by the author of the text. This should include an explanation of any ideas of interest and an argument for or against them, as well as examining them for inconsistencies and substituting complementary or opposing views (e.g. recognise and comment on bias).
 - The assignment may be written in any appropriate form, e.g. an article, a letter, or the words of a speech.
 - A copy of all texts used for Assignment 1 must be included with the sample of portfolios sent to the external moderator.
-

Assignment 1

Discuss/argue and/or persuade in response to text(s)

Two examples:

- **You are a local resident and feel very strongly about the ideas suggested in your local newspaper. Write a response to the editor in which you argue for or against the proposed ideas.**

In your discussion you will need to evaluate the ideas and opinions presented in the text and centre your arguments around what is said.

Text: a letter or article from a local newspaper arguing in favour of or against a controversial local issue. For example: plans to make changes to the local transport system, proposals to build a community building on public land or a plan to address the behaviour of young people in the area.

Note to teachers: responses could be in any appropriate form, e.g. a letter or an article.

- **You have read the transcript of a speech by a well-known person about an important topical issue. Write a response to that person in which you try to persuade them to change their minds about what they have said.**

In your discussion you will need to evaluate the ideas and opinions presented in the speech and centre your arguments around what they have said.

Text: a speech about a current topical, local or global issue. For example: a teacher's speech about space travel, a celebrity's speech about an environmental issue, or a doctor's speech about medicine.

Note to teachers: responses could be in any appropriate form, e.g. a speech or a letter.

Assignment 2

- Assignment 2 is a piece of descriptive writing which is assessed for writing skills only.
- Candidates may submit poetry for Assignment 2, but this must be accompanied by some form of commentary by the candidate, e.g. about how the poem(s) came to be written. The commentary will be included in the word count.
- The candidate should develop ideas and images which create a convincing, well-defined picture, with varieties of focus.

Assignment 2

Writing to describe

Two examples:

- **You are in a busy place waiting for a friend who is late. Describe your surroundings and your thoughts and feelings as you wait.**

Note to teachers: a busy place can be any place which provides a definite sense of place/atmosphere and will contain a range of sights, sounds and/or characters for candidates to describe, e.g. cafes, train or bus stations, airport arrival or departure areas, sports stadiums, beaches and markets.

- **Describe an important gathering or celebration.**

Note to teachers: candidates should be encouraged to choose a celebration or gathering of which they have personal experience. Appropriate occasions could be any event which provides a definite sense of place/atmosphere and will contain a range of sights, sounds and/or characters for candidates to describe, e.g. weddings, significant anniversaries or birthdays.

Assignment 3

- Assignment 3 is a piece of narrative writing which is assessed for writing skills only.
 - Candidates may write in any form.
 - The candidate should ensure the plot is well defined and developed with features of fiction writing, such as description, characterisation and convincing details.
-

Assignment 3

Writing to narrate

Two examples:

- **Write a narrative piece in which the following words appear '*and then they finally realised that it didn't really matter anymore*'.**

Note to teachers: the words may appear in any part of the narrative writing. Candidates may write in a range of appropriate narrative forms, e.g. the opening or closing chapter of a novel or a short story.

- **Write a fictional or autobiographical account of an important or life-changing event.**

Note to teachers: candidates may write in a range of appropriate narrative forms and perspectives, e.g. a short story or several diary entries.

Marking: general principles

Marking of the Coursework Portfolio should be positive, rewarding achievement where possible but clearly differentiating across the whole range of marks available.

In approaching the assessment process, the marker should look at the work and then make a 'best-fit' judgement as to which level it fits. In practice the work does not always match one level precisely so a judgement may need to be made between two or more levels.

Table A: Level descriptions for writing in Assignment 1 (15 marks)

Level	Marks	Description
6	13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly effective style capable of conveying subtle meaning. (W1) Carefully structured for benefit of the reader. (W2) Wide range of sophisticated vocabulary, precisely used. (W3) Highly effective register for audience and purpose. (W4) Spelling, punctuation and grammar almost always accurate. (W5)
5	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective style. (W1) Secure overall structure, organised to help the reader. (W2) Wide range of vocabulary, used with some precision. (W3) Effective register for audience and purpose. (W4) Spelling, punctuation and grammar mostly accurate, with occasional minor errors. (W5)
4	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes effective style. (W1) Ideas generally well sequenced. (W2) Range of vocabulary is adequate and sometimes effective. (W3) Sometimes effective register for audience and purpose. (W4) Spelling, punctuation and grammar generally accurate though with some errors. (W5)
3	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent style, expression sometimes awkward but meaning clear. (W1) Relies on the sequence of the original text. (W2) Vocabulary is simple, limited in range or reliant on the original text. (W3) Some awareness of an appropriate register for audience and purpose. (W4) Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, sometimes serious. (W5)
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited style. (W1) Response is not well sequenced. (W2) Limited vocabulary or words/phrases copied from the original text. (W3) Limited awareness of appropriate register for audience and purpose. (W4) Persistent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expression unclear. (W1) Poor sequencing of ideas. (W2) Very limited vocabulary or copying from the original text. (W3) Very limited awareness of appropriate register for audience and purpose. (W4) Persistent errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar impede communication. (W5)
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No creditable content.

Table B: Level descriptions for reading in Assignment 1 (15 marks)

Level	Marks	Description
6	13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully evaluates ideas and opinions, both explicit and implicit. (R1, R2, R3) Assimilates ideas from the text to give a developed, sophisticated response. (R3, R5)
5	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some successful evaluation of ideas and opinions, both explicit and implicit. (R1, R2, R3) A thorough response, supported by a detailed selection of relevant ideas from the text. (R3, R5)
4	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begins to evaluate mainly explicit ideas and opinions. (R1, R2, R3) An appropriate response that includes relevant ideas from the text. (R3, R5)
3	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selects and comments on explicit ideas and opinions. (R1, R2, R3) Makes a general response including a few relevant ideas from the text. (R3, R5)
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies explicit ideas and opinions. (R1, R2, R3) Makes a limited response with little evidence from the text. (R3, R5)
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited response with minimal relation to the text. (R1, R2, R3, R5)
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No creditable content.

Table C: Level descriptions for composition: content and structure in Assignments 2 and 3 (10 marks each)

Level	Marks	General and specific marking criteria	
6	9–10	General	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is complex, engaging and effective. (W1) Structure is secure, well balanced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. (W2) 	
		Specific – descriptive <i>Many well-defined and developed ideas and images create a convincing overall picture with varieties of focus.</i>	Specific – narrative <i>The plot is well-defined and strongly developed with features of fiction writing such as description, characterisation and effective climax, and convincing details.</i>
5	7–8	General	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is developed, engaging and effective. (W1) Structure is well managed, with some choices made for deliberate effect. (W2) 	
		Specific – descriptive <i>Frequent, well-chosen images and details give a mostly convincing picture.</i>	Specific – narrative <i>The plot is defined and developed with features of fiction writing such as description, characterisation, climax and details.</i>
4	5–6	General	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is relevant with some development. (W1) Structure is competently managed. (W2) 	
		Specific – descriptive <i>A selection of relevant ideas, images and details, even where there is a tendency to write in a narrative style.</i>	Specific – narrative <i>The plot is relevant and cohesive, with some features such as characterisation and setting of scene.</i>
3	3–4	General	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is straightforward and briefly developed. (W1) Structure is mostly organised but may not always be effective. (W2) 	
		Specific – descriptive <i>The task is addressed with a series of relevant but straightforward details, which may be more typical of a narrative.</i>	Specific – narrative <i>The plot is straightforward, with limited use of the features of narrative writing.</i>
2	2	General	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is simple, and ideas and events may be limited. (W1) Structure is partially organised but limited in its effect. (W2) 	
		Specific – descriptive <i>The recording of some relevant events with limited detail.</i>	Specific – narrative <i>The plot is a simple narrative that may consist of events that are only partially linked and/or which are presented with partial clarity.</i>
1	1	General	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is occasionally relevant or clear. (W1) Structure is limited and ineffective. (W2) 	
		Specific – descriptive <i>The description is unclear and lacks detail.</i>	Specific – narrative <i>The plot and/or narrative lacks coherence.</i>
0	0	No creditable content.	

Table D: Level descriptions for composition: style and accuracy in Assignments 2 and 3 (15 marks each)

Level	Marks	Description
6	13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precise, well-chosen vocabulary and varied sentence structures, chosen for effect. (W3) Consistent well-chosen register suitable for the context. (W4) Spelling, punctuation and grammar almost always accurate. (W5)
5	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly precise vocabulary and a range of sentence structures mostly used for effect. (W3) Mostly consistent appropriate register suitable for the context. (W4) Spelling, punctuation and grammar mostly accurate, with occasional minor errors. (W5)
4	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some precise vocabulary and a range of sentence structures sometimes used for effect. (W3) Some appropriate register for the context. (W4) Spelling, punctuation and grammar generally accurate, but with some errors. (W5)
3	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple vocabulary and a range of straightforward sentence structures. (W3) Simple register with a general awareness of the context. (W4) Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar, occasionally serious. (W5)
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited and/or imprecise vocabulary and sentence structures. (W3) Limited and/or imprecise register for the context. (W4) Persistent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently imprecise vocabulary and sentence structures. (W3) Register demonstrates little or no sense of the context. (W4) Persistent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar impair communication. (W5)
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No creditable content.

Component 4 – Speaking and Listening Test

Individual Talk and Conversation, approximately 10–12 minutes in total, 40 marks

This component is separately endorsed with grades of pass, merit or distinction. Marks for Component 4 do **not** contribute to a candidate's overall grade.

Teachers must treat this component as a non-coursework speaking test and must read this information in conjunction with the relevant sections of the *Cambridge Handbook*.

There are two parts to the Speaking and Listening Test. In Part 1, candidates present an individual talk. In Part 2, candidates engage in a conversation with the teacher/examiner on their chosen topic.

There is no question paper for the test. The test must be taken within the Speaking and Listening Test window. You should record all candidates. Candidates must only take the Speaking and Listening Test **once** and both parts of the test **must** be recorded as one.

Part 1 Individual Talk (3–4 minutes) (20 marks)

The candidate talks for about 3–4 minutes on a single topic or theme which they have selected before the test. The candidate talks about a topic of particular interest, for example, about the candidate's reactions to meeting a famous person or about a recent film, which would include suggestions as to why others would also like it.

Candidates need to show that they are able to prepare and organise material, are aware of audience, and can select and employ a range of language devices. Candidates are encouraged to make presentations which are lively, by perhaps incorporating more creative presentational styles, such as taking up a 'voice' or presenting a dramatic monologue.

There is no question paper and each candidate chooses their own subject with guidance from their teacher. Teachers should advise on the suitability of topics or themes, but must **not** be involved in the preparation of material for the Individual Talk. The interaction is between the candidate and the teacher only, although the class may be present as an audience.

Candidates may bring one 'cue card' (about postcard size) into the examination room, to remind them of the main points they wish to make. The cue card should contain a list of key points, not continuous sentences. Candidates may write their points on one side of the cue card only. Candidates may also use a limited quantity of illustrative material, which may include maps, diagrams, statistics and pictures. Reading from, or reliance on, a script or extended notes is **not** allowed. Recitation of a memorised script is unlikely to be successful. The cue card and illustrative material must be retained by centres until six months after publication of results. The cue card and illustrative material must be labelled with the candidate's name and number.

The talk should be continuous. If absolutely necessary the teacher/examiner may prompt a candidate who is finding it difficult to continue within the advised time of 3–4 minutes. Teachers/examiners should interrupt to ask questions, and begin Part 2, if the candidate shows no sign of finishing after 4½ minutes.

Dictionaries may be used to prepare the Individual Talk, but they may **not** be taken into the test.

This part of the test is to be assessed using the level descriptions in Table A on page 22.

The Individual Talk tests the following speaking and listening assessment objectives (20 marks):

- SL1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- SL2 present facts, ideas and opinions in a cohesive order which sustains the audience's interest
- SL3 communicate clearly and purposefully using fluent language
- SL4 use register appropriate to context.

Part 2 Conversation (7–8 minutes) (20 marks)

The Individual Talk leads into a conversation with the teacher/examiner about the candidate's chosen topic. For example, an account of meeting a famous person could be developed into a discussion of wider issues such as the nature and role of 'celebrity' and media intrusion; a talk about a film could be developed into discussion of wider issues such as censorship, popular culture and the film industry.

Candidates should be encouraged to consider how a conversation might develop around their chosen topic; if they cannot think of six questions they **could** be asked, the topic is unlikely to be easy to discuss.

During the Individual Talk, teachers/examiners are likely to make notes in order to help them ask appropriate questions.

Candidates must be prepared to supply additional factual material where appropriate and to express and defend a point of view. In order to give the candidate every opportunity, questions should be open, such as 'tell me more about...', 'why?' and 'how?', rather than closed questions which may be answered by 'yes/no'. Candidates should not be made to feel embarrassed about expressing viewpoints that are not those of the teacher/examiner. The teacher/examiner may wish to ask questions about those views, but these questions must not be judgemental.

The teacher/examiner should normally allow 7–8 minutes for each candidate. If a candidate 'dries up' after a few minutes, teachers/examiners should be ready to explore another aspect of the topic or theme; they should keep trying to make conversation so that the candidate is given every opportunity to demonstrate their ability. Questions should be rephrased (rather than repeated) in an attempt to continue the dialogue.

Teachers/examiners should beware of talking too much and of candidates being given credit for what the teacher/examiner has actually said. Candidates are responsible for showing that they can converse adequately; at the same time the teacher/examiner must make sure the candidate is given every opportunity to converse by following up any opening given.

Dictionaries may **not** be used in the test.

This part of the test is to be assessed using the level descriptions in Table B on pages 23 and 24.

The Conversation tests the following speaking and listening assessment objectives (20 marks):

- SL1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- SL2 present facts, ideas and opinions in a cohesive order which sustains the audience's interest
- SL3 communicate clearly and purposefully using fluent language
- SL4 use register appropriate to context
- SL5 listen and respond appropriately in conversation.

Marking instructions

The teacher must mark each candidate's test out of a total of 40, in line with the level descriptions. The total mark for the test is divided into 20 marks for Speaking in Part 1 (Individual Talk), and 10 marks for Speaking and 10 marks for Listening in Part 2 (Conversation).

For information, dates and methods of submission of the Speaking and Listening Test marks and sample, please refer to the *Cambridge Handbook* and the samples database at www.cambridgeinternational.org/samples

Marking: general principles

Marking of the Coursework Portfolio should be positive, rewarding achievement where possible but clearly differentiating across the whole range of marks available.

In approaching the assessment process, the marker should look at the work and then make a 'best-fit' judgement as to which level statement it fits. In practice the work does not always match one level statement precisely so a judgement may need to be made between two or more level statements.

Table A: Level descriptions for Component 4, Part 1 – Individual Talk (20 marks)

Level	Marks	Description
5	17–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full and well-organised use of content. • Lively delivery which fully engages the audience. • Employs a wide range of language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) accurately and sometimes eloquently. • Sustained, appropriate and accurate use of language throughout.
4	13–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound use of content. • Delivery may occasionally be stilted but often attempts to engage the audience. • Employs a good range of language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) soundly. • Mainly appropriate and accurate use of language.
3	9–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate use of content. • Delivery is secure but at times unimaginative, with some attempt to engage the audience. • Language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) are used safely and appropriately. • Appropriate and accurate use of language demonstrated but some inaccuracy may be present.
2	5–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is thin or perhaps inconsistently used. • Delivery is not secure, with little attempt to engage the audience. • Limited employment of language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) with some inaccuracy. • Some appropriate use of language but with some inaccuracy.
1	1–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is mostly undeveloped and/or very thin. • Delivery is weak, with no attempt to engage the audience. • Not able to use language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) or devices used with serious error. • Language is not used appropriately, or is used with serious inaccuracy.
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not meet the above criteria.

Table B: Level descriptions for Component 4, Part 2 – Conversation (20 marks)

For Part 2, record separate marks for speaking and for listening.

Speaking			Listening		
Level	Marks	Description	Level	Marks	Description
5	9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extends the subject matter and elicits responses from the listener; speaks on equal terms with the listener. Employs a wide range of language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) accurately and sometimes eloquently; sustained, appropriate and accurate use of language throughout. 	5	9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A natural and fluent conversation. Responds fully to questions and develops prompts; deals confidently and sometimes enthusiastically with alterations in the direction of the conversation.
4	7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject matter is organised and expressed competently; attempts to speak on equal terms with the listener but with a varying degree of success. Employs a good range of language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) soundly; mainly appropriate and accurate use of language. 	4	7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conversation is occasionally fluent and sometimes shaped by the candidate. Consistently responds appropriately and in extended detail to questions and prompts; deals appropriately with most of the changes in the direction of the conversation.
3	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deals with the subject matter adequately; the listener is generally but not always prominent. Language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) are used appropriately; appropriate and accurate use of language demonstrated, but some inaccuracy may be present. 	3	5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conversation is maintained through the candidate's responses. Responds to questions adequately but deals less effectively with prompts; changes in the direction of the conversation are occasionally dealt with.
2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is evidence of some linking together of ideas relating to the subject matter but it is inconsistent; accepts that the listener is in full control of the conversation. Limited use of language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) with some inaccuracy; some appropriate use of language but with some inaccuracy. 	2	3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conversation is driven by the listener's questions. The candidate provides limited response to the questions and struggles to develop prompts; tends to maintain the direction of the conversation.

Speaking			Listening		
Level	Marks	Description	Level	Marks	Description
1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple facts and ideas are expressed with generally unsuccessful attempts at organisation; barely capable of engaging in a two-way conversation. Not able to use language devices (e.g. tone, irony, emphasis) or devices used with serious error; language is not used appropriately or is used with serious inaccuracy. 	1	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A two-way conversation is not successfully maintained. The candidate responds simply or is unable to respond to questions or prompts; cannot recognise changes in the direction of the conversation.
0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not meet the above criteria. 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not meet the above criteria.

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
Describe	state the points of a topic / give characteristics and main features
Explain	set out purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things evident / provide why and/or how and support with relevant evidence
Give	produce an answer from a given source or recall/memory
Identify	name/select/recognise

5 What else you need to know

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/examsOfficers

Before you start

Previous study

We recommend that learners starting this course should have studied an English Language curriculum such as the Cambridge Lower Secondary programme or equivalent national educational framework such as the Key Stage 3 programme of study within the National Curriculum for England.

Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses based on learners having about 130 guided learning hours for each subject during the course but this is for guidance only. 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

You can enter candidates in the June and November exam series. You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables

All Cambridge schools are allocated to one of six administrative zones. Each zone has a specific timetable. This syllabus is **not** available in all administrative zones. To find out about the availability visit the syllabus page at www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse

Private candidates can enter for this syllabus. Some components are not available to private candidates. For more information please refer to the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*.

Combining with other syllabuses

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

- Cambridge IGCSE First Language English (0500)
- Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language (0510)
- Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language (count-in oral) (0511)
- Cambridge O Level English Language (1123)
- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) and Cambridge O Level syllabuses are at the same level.

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/examsOfficers

Retakes

Candidates can retake the whole qualification as many times as they want to. This is a linear qualification so candidates cannot re-sit individual components.

For information on the resubmission of internally assessed coursework and carrying forward internally assessed marks, please see the *Cambridge Handbook*.

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/examsOfficers

Language

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

After the exam

Grading and reporting

Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or 9 indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge IGCSE (9–1).

9 is the highest and 1 is the lowest. 'Ungraded' means that the candidate's performance did not meet the standard required for grade 1. '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 (result pending)
- X (no result)
- Y (to be issued)

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

How students and teachers can use the grades

Assessment at Cambridge IGCSE 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 the levels described in the grade descriptions.

- 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.

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 IGCSE (9–1) First Language English will be published after the first assessment of the IGCSE in 2020. Find more information at www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse

Changes to this syllabus for 2020, 2021 and 2022

The syllabus has been reviewed and revised for first examination in 2020. This is version 3, published February 2018.

Changes to syllabus

This syllabus is no longer restricted to centres in the UK. Please check the syllabus page at www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse to see if this syllabus is available in your administrative zone.

Changes to version 2 of the syllabus, published November 2017

- On page 24 a full stop has been added at the end of the second bullet in Table B: Level descriptions for Component 4, Part 2 Conversation: Speaking Level 1.

Changes to syllabus content

Aims and assessment objectives

- The syllabus aims and assessment objectives have been refreshed and updated.
- The wording of the assessment objectives has been revised to make them more concise. The newly worded assessment objectives test the same knowledge and skills.

Subject content

- The syllabus content has been reworded for clarity and to provide further guidance to teachers.
- Administrative information for Component 4 (Speaking and Listening Test) has been removed from the syllabus. Teachers must refer to the relevant sections of the *Cambridge Handbook*.
- A list of command words has been added to the syllabus.

Changes to assessment (including changes to specimen papers)

- Tiering has been removed from the qualification. This means that there is now only one Reading paper and this will be accessible to all candidates. At syllabus level all candidates now have access to grades 1–9.
- All candidates now take Paper 1 (Reading), and **one** of Paper 2 (Directed Writing and Composition) or Component 3 (Coursework Portfolio). Component 4 (Speaking and Listening Test) is optional.

Paper 1

- The style and format of the questions in Paper 1 (Reading) will be familiar to teachers and candidates. Candidates will answer three compulsory questions. The questions will be based on three texts which will be provided in an insert. Questions 1 and 2 will have part questions.
- The number of marks for Paper 1 (Reading) has increased to 80 and the duration of the paper is 2 hours. We have increased the number of marks to allow candidates to show us more clearly what they can do and to differentiate more effectively.

continued

**Changes to assessment
(including changes to specimen
papers) continued**

Paper 2

- The style and format of questions in Paper 2 (Directed Writing and Composition) are unchanged. However, the number of marks for the paper has increased to 80. We have increased the number of marks to allow candidates to show us more clearly what they can do and to differentiate more effectively.

Component 3

- The marking for Component 3 (Coursework Portfolio) has changed. Teachers will no longer give one holistic mark considering the three assignments as a whole; instead they will mark each assignment and add the marks together to produce the overall total mark.
- The overall total mark for the three assignments is 80. We have increased the number of marks to allow candidates to show us more clearly what they can do and to differentiate more effectively.
- Candidates will continue to submit a portfolio of the three assignments, each of about 500–800 words. The assignments may be completed in any order.
- The three assignments have changed, although the skills required have not changed. The new assignments are:
 - Assignment 1: writing to discuss/argue and/or persuade in response to a text or texts
 - Assignment 2: writing to describe
 - Assignment 3: writing to narrate.
- Assignment 1 is based on the previous Assignment 3. The text(s) may contain facts, opinions and/or arguments and candidates will respond by selecting, analysing and evaluating the ideas and opinions presented in the context of the texts.

Component 4

- Component 4 (Speaking and Listening Test) is optional and separately endorsed and does **not** contribute to a candidate's overall grade.
- The style and format of the Speaking and Listening Test remains unchanged, except Part 2 is now called 'Conversation' and the total marks for component 4 have increased to 40.
- The Speaking and Listening Coursework Component (formerly Component 6) has been removed from the qualification.

Mark schemes

- The format and layout of the mark schemes have been updated. The level descriptions have been updated for clarity and to reflect the changes in assessment structure and mark allocation.
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In addition to reading the syllabus, teachers should refer to the updated specimen assessment materials.

The syllabus and specimen papers use our new name Cambridge Assessment International Education.

You are strongly advised to read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme.

Any textbooks endorsed to support IGCSE First Language English (0500) for examination from 2020 are suitable for use with this syllabus.



'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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