

11 February 2021

Dear Cambridge International students and families,

### **Update on Cambridge exams and assessments in June 2021 – what students need to know**

This letter is an update on how we will be running our Cambridge exams in June 2021.

We know that the Covid-19 pandemic continues to disrupt the lives of Cambridge students in many parts of the world. It remains a tough and uncertain time for many teachers, students and parents.

We are regularly in contact with schools around the world and talk to them about the challenges they are facing with teaching, learning and holding exams. We are continually amazed by how resilient our school communities have been.

Our main aim is to help keep students and teachers safe, while also enabling you to learn and to progress through your educational journey. That's why we wanted to write to you with a few updates.

#### **Will Cambridge exams go ahead in June 2021?**

Yes. We are planning for **exams to go ahead** in June 2021 **where it is permitted and safe**. We know that exams are the best and fairest way of assessing a student's performance.

There is a small number of countries (such as Mexico and the UK) and regions within countries, where running exams may not be possible because of directives from national or regional authorities. For those countries and regions, we are looking at switching from exams to an approach based on teacher assessment.

We are monitoring the situation in the 160 countries where we operate. If it becomes clear that exams cannot go ahead in your country or region, your school will let you know and they will switch to an approach based on teacher assessment.

#### **What if exams go ahead in my country/region, but I can't take all components (parts /papers) of an exam?**

We know that some students are worried about being unwell or being asked to isolate on the day of an exam. For March and June 2021, we are making extra allowances for students who, for good reason, miss some parts of the exam that they were expecting to take. As long as you have taken at least **one** assessment component, you can receive a grade. Of course, we

strongly recommend planning to take all the components you can - it's better educationally and fairer for students, and reduces the risk that a student misses every component and cannot be given a grade.

### **Why is Cambridge running exams in 2021 when some other exam boards have decided not to hold them?**

Cambridge International is an international exam board, and we work with schools in 160 countries. This means that we need to ensure that the decisions we make about exams work for as many of our schools as possible.

Most of the schools we have surveyed have told us they want us to give students the opportunity to sit exams on the full syllabus, wherever it is possible. We also believe that exams are the best way to assess your knowledge and attainment. At the same time, we need to help students progress, even if they live in a country where the government has decided exams cannot go ahead.

### **How will Cambridge take account of lost learning time and other disruption when giving grades?**

Many of our schools told us they want us to help them manage the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning. That's why we have set up many extra measures this year to support schools and students. Schools can ask for adjustments to some aspects of assessments, and exemptions from many components that the pandemic makes harder to run. For example, we have adjusted aspects of the work students need to do, such as coursework, speaking tests, science practicals and more. Your school will know more about these adjustments.

We have also provided a whole range of free support to schools to help them manage the transitions between remote and face-to-face teaching.

### **Will exam grades be fair and comparable between students who sit exams and students who have teacher assessed grades?**

It is our responsibility to assess students fairly, and we take this responsibility extremely seriously. We will manage standards in 2021 with the aim of ensuring that grades are comparable whichever route a student takes.

### **Which exams does this relate to?**

These decisions relate to Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge O Level and Cambridge International AS & A Level. We will confirm how we will award grades for Cambridge Pre-U once we know the outcome of the Ofqual consultation, which will be published the week commencing 22 February.

### **If I live in a country or region within a country where exams cannot go ahead, will it affect my chances of getting into university?**

We are working closely with universities all over the world to make sure they understand our approach to 2021 and admit Cambridge International students in the usual way.

**I am a private candidate – how does this affect me?**

Many private candidates have been in touch with us. By allowing exams to be taken wherever possible, we will ensure that as many private candidates as possible can achieve grades.

**What will happen if the situation in my country/region changes suddenly?**

If there is any change due to the pandemic in your country or region, your school will let you know. For now, we encourage students to keep working on their studies and we wish them all the best.

If you have any further questions, please contact your school in the first instance, or check all the information on our website [here](#).

We wish you the very best.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Özden', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Christine Özden**

Chief Executive, Cambridge Assessment International Education