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Grade A* for Cambridge O Level and International A Level candidates in Pakistan

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is CIE introducing Grade A*?

CIE is introducing Grade A* at Cambridge O Level to bring the top grade in line with the top grade at Cambridge IGCSE and UK GCSE. This will enable the strong performance of Cambridge O Level candidates to be reported in line with UK GCSE and Cambridge IGCSE candidates.

The UK Government is introducing Grade A* to UK A Level in June 2010, and CIE will introduce Grade A* to Cambridge International A Level at the same time. This change will support the progression of Cambridge students to international universities, and will ensure that achievement at Cambridge International A Level is not capped at a level that is perceived to be lower than the UK A Level.

When will Grade A* be introduced in Pakistan?

Grade A* was introduced for Cambridge O Level in the November 2009 session in Pakistan.

Grade A* will be introduced for Cambridge International A Level starting from the June 2010 session. This is in line with the UK Government's timescale for the introduction of A* to the UK A Level, and means that candidates for both qualifications have access to the same range of grades.

What has changed?

The introduction of Grade A* will widen the grade scale for Cambridge O Level and International A Level. Grades will range from A* to E.

Grade A* will recognise the achievement of candidates at the top of Grade A and will provide them with additional recognition of this achievement. Grade A* will support Cambridge students in their progression to higher education both in Pakistan and overseas.

What is staying the same?

The standard for Grades A to E stays exactly the same. Grade A* recognises the achievement of candidates at the top of Grade A.

Is the Grade E threshold going to be lowered?

No. The grade threshold and standard of Grade E, and all other existing grades, will stay exactly the same.

How will a candidate's Cambridge International A Level final result be calculated if they took the Cambridge International AS Level in June or October 2009 before the A* grade was introduced?

It makes no difference to the final Cambridge International A Level grade if a candidate has sat Cambridge International AS Level components prior to June 2010. Candidates' Cambridge International A Level results in the June 2010 session will be calculated in exactly the same way, regardless of when they sat the Cambridge International AS Level components.

The UK Government is not introducing A* to UK AS Level, and A* is not being introduced for Cambridge International AS Level either.

Will Cambridge examination results be reported in the same way in other countries?

Yes. CIE is introducing Grade A* for Cambridge O Level and International A Level in the same way in other countries.

CIE introduced Grade A* for Cambridge O Level in Pakistan in the November 2009 session. Grade A* for Cambridge O Level will be introduced in other countries in the June 2010 session.

Grade A* will be introduced for Cambridge International A Level in the June 2010 session worldwide.

What is the IBCC equivalence policy for Grade A*?

The IBCC will extend its equivalence scale upwards with effect from June 2010. The Grade A* for Cambridge O Level, Cambridge International A Level and Cambridge IGCSE will have an equivalence of 90 marks.

This increases the total possible marks for Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) equivalence from 935 to 990 out of 1100.

How will the changes affect university admissions outside Pakistan?

The UK Government is introducing Grade A* to the UK A Level in the June 2010 session, and CIE is introducing Grade A* at Cambridge International A Level at the same time. Some UK universities have requested Grade A* in order to help them distinguish between the best A Level candidates.

UK universities recognise the new Grade A* at A Level. However, the vast majority of UK universities will not make provisional offers based on Grade A* until 2011.

How will Grade A* be reported on CIE results documents?

Please note that the following information about results reporting is mainly relevant to schools, not candidates:

- CIE certificates, statements of results, and syllabus results by component will show A*(a*) at syllabus level.
- Broadsheets will display an asterisk (*) where the A* grade is awarded.
- CIE Direct will show the A* grade in online documents and candidate results.

Where can I find more information?

If you have any further queries regarding the introduction of Grade A* at Cambridge O Level and International A Level, please contact CIE Customer Services at international@cie.org.uk