

Beginner's Guide to IGCSE Education

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1. Introduction

Today, parents have a variety of educational boards to choose from, to enroll their children, it is not just the traditional SSC (Secondary School Certificate), CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) or ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education). JustInternationalSchools presents a beginners guide on the IGCSE curriculum in India.

The **International General Certificate of Secondary Education** (abbreviated **IGCSE** or **iGCSE**) is an internationally recognized qualification for school students, typically in the 15-16 age group. It is similar to the GCSE in England, Wales & Northern Ireland, Standard Grade in Scotland or Junior Certificate in the Republic of Ireland.

The International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) is a globally recognized qualification, conducted at the Class 10 level, similar to the Class 10 examinations of the CBSE and ICSE or the middle years programme of the IB. IGCSE, formed in 1988, is a comprehensive two-year programme, spread over Class 9 and 10, and leads to the final examinations offered every year in May and November.

A wide range of international schools in India offer high quality International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) programme's to students. IGCSE is one of the most sort-after and recognized qualifications in the world.

Cambridge IGCSE provides a broad study program and covers subjects from a variety of areas: Languages, Humanities, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Creative, Technical and Vocational. This is designed to make IGCSE suitable for students with varying levels of ability. Cambridge IGCSE allows teaching to be placed in a localized context, making it relevant in different regions. It is intended to be suitable for students whose first language may not be English and this is acknowledged throughout the examination process. The IGCSE has been introduced in the school for selected students of Std.8 in June 2007.

In 2009, Cambridge IGCSE papers in more than 70 subjects were taken by students in over 120 countries worldwide, including the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Egypt, Kuwait, Hong Kong, India, Bahrain, Peru, UAE, New Zealand ,Vietnam, Thailand and Costa Rica.

IGCSE caters for different levels of ability with a choice between core and extended papers in many subjects. The resulting qualification provides a foundation for higher level courses, such as the International Baccalaureate, A and AS Levels, the Advanced International Certificate of Education and the North American Advanced Placement programme.

The core curriculum is based on an overview of the subject and is suitable for students expected to achieve grades C to G. The extended curriculum is more challenging and designed for students who are expected to achieve grades A* to C. Grades achieved through either route have the same values. IGCSE offers a flexible course of study that gives candidates the freedom to choose subjects that are right for them, while providing them with a broad knowledge base and lifelong skills.

2. About JustInternationalSchools.com

JustInternationalSchools was started with an aim to making life simpler for parents. It started with a common goal of providing in-depth, relevant and true information about international schools in India, to all parents of school going children. JustInternationalSchools.com offers various online and print publications & services to international schools in India. JustInternationalSchools.com provides a unique platform for parent-school interaction.

Ambarish Verma, Proprietor of eduFYI, the parent company of JustInternationalSchools.com says, "International education develops and encourages vital educational skills, including oral skills, problem solving, team work, recall of knowledge, smartness and initiative. It is recognized by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) as being at par with CBSE, ICSE and other state boards. The curriculum of IGCSE board is balanced between education and co-curricular activities and tends to give an international perspective to studies. There are a good number of schools with IGCSE curriculum, distributed across geographies of India which offer quality international education".

JustInternationalSchools.com will be coming up with information directory services and would be adding different service verticals in near future. JustInternationalSchools.com plans to cover all international schools in India by 2010 year end.

3. Affiliations

The International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) is a globally recognised qualification, conducted at the Class 10 level, similar to the Class 10 examinations of the CBSE and ICSE or the middle years Programme of the IB. IGCSE assessment is conducted by two UK assessment bodies: Edexcel (also known as London Examinations) and Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). The Cambridge IGCSE was developed by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) in 1988. The examination board Edexcel, offers its own version, the IGCSE. IGCSEs were created by Edexcel for those international schools which are unable to offer GCSEs. They embrace the best practice of GCE O levels and GCSE.

The final qualification provides a foundation for higher level courses, like A and AS Levels, the North American Advanced Placement programme, the Advanced International Certificate of Education and the International Baccalaureate (IB). It is recognized by academic institutions and employers around the world. In entrance to U.K. higher education, UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) recognizes it as equivalent to 2 U.K. GCSE's.

From parent's or student's perspective, there is little difference between the two. Some schools are accredited to Edexcel and some to CIE. Schools that are accredited to Edexcel or CIE for the conduct of the IGCSE programme are known as Edexcel Centres or Cambridge International Centres. For example, DPS International in Delhi is an Edexcel IGCSE centre, while the Pathways World School in Gurgaon is a CIE IGCSE centre.

Then there are some like Calcutta International School in Kolkata and British School in Delhi, which are centres of both Edexcel and CIE. IGCSE is a high profile qualification. IGCSE has an excellent reputation amongst international schools worldwide. IGCSEs are recognised as a reliable record of attainment which counts towards entry to universities and colleges around the world.

4. Eligibility Criteria

More than the assessment body, parents need to think about which school is better for their child. IGCSE is designed to be taught as a two year course for students aged 14 to 17 years. In most subjects there is a choice between core and extended curricula, making IGCSE suitable for a wide range of abilities. Students can enter for the level that is most appropriate for them and this need not be the same across all subjects.

5. Cambridge Checkpoint Examination

The Cambridge Checkpoint is a standardized diagnostic test in English, Mathematics and Science conducted by IGCSE students at the end of Grade 8. Students of IGCSE class of Grade 8 will appear for the Checkpoint examination in April-May. IGCSE courses take two years to complete and exams are taken at the end of that period.

6. Subjects and the IGCSE curriculum

Most IGCSE subjects offer a choice of Core or Extended papers (in Cambridge), and foundation or higher papers (in Edexcel). There are currently 38 IGCSE subject qualifications available in the new IGCSE from 2009 suite - an increase from 22 IGCSE subjects in the legacy suite. Double awards are available for science.

At school, students are encouraged to study a wide range of subjects at IGCSE level, at the same time, in order to follow a broad and balanced curriculum, many students take courses from each of the IGCSE groups particularly if they're aiming to go on to further education. The course differs for each subject, but throughout there will be a mix of assessment methods, including coursework, practical exercises, oral and listening tests, projects and written examinations. Cambridge ICE is the group award of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and requires the study of subjects drawn from the five different IGCSE subject groups. It gives schools the opportunity to benefit from offering a broad and balanced curriculum by recognizing the achievements of students who pass examinations in at least seven subjects, including two languages, and one subject from each of the other subject groups.

There are five Subject Groups in IGCSE with several subjects to choose from, in each group:

- **Group 1:** Languages (First Language, Second Language, Foreign Language, etc)
- **Group 2:** Humanities and Social Sciences (Geography, English Literature, History, etc)
- **Group 3:** Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, etc)
- **Group 4:** Mathematics (Mathematics, Additional Mathematics, etc)
- **Group 5:** Creative, Technical & Vocational (Accounting, Business Studies, Computer Studies, Music, etc)

For each subject, the certificate merely indicates the grades scored, and not pass or fail.

Five scores of 'C' or higher indicates a students readiness to pursue +2 level qualifications, like the Class 12 CBSE, IB Diploma, Advanced Placement Diploma (US), etc.

Selection from five curriculum areas:

- Candidates hoping to gain the Cambridge ICE group award must enter and sit for at least seven subjects selected from the five IGCSE curriculum areas.
- The subjects selected must include two (different) languages from Group I (i.e. English; Hindi/French) and
- One subject from each of Groups II, III, IV and V. The seventh and eighth subjects can be opted from any of the subject groups II-V.
- A subject opted by less than 10 students may not be offered.

7. IGCSE Assessment

- IGCSEs are 100% externally assessed. This allows schools to offer an IGCSE qualification, even if teachers are not coursework specialists. Some IGCSEs contain a coursework option so that centres that do have the experience and expertise can offer coursework.
- IGCSEs are graded in the same way as GCSEs (A* to G). For tiered subjects, Foundation tier papers are targeted at grades C to G, and Higher tier papers are targeted at grades A* to D. This allows students of all abilities the opportunity to gain good results.

8. Comparison between IGCSE and other programmes like CBSE, ICSE or the Middle Years Programme of the IB

1. Like other modern programmes, IGCSE offers a wider range of subjects and encourages high academic standards through a practical approach to teaching and learning. Assessment is not limited to conventional written papers and they consist of a variety of tests e.g. oral and listening tests.
2. The assessment is aimed at a wide ability range of students, with an eight-point grading scale, from A+ to G, with A+ being the highest.
3. IGCSE is a balanced curriculum and a flexible course of study.
4. Most subjects offer a choice between core curriculum and extended curriculum.
5. This gives students of all ability levels the freedom to choose subjects that are right for them and, thereby, the opportunity to score good grades.
6. The core curriculum is an overview of the subject and is suitable for students who are expected to achieve grades C to G.
7. The extended curriculum is, sort of, a specialization in that subject. It is more challenging and designed for students who are expected to achieve grades A+ to C.
8. While the syllabi and curricula of both IB MYP (Middle Years Programme) and IGCSE have an international outlook, IGCSE appears to be slightly better, in that it is tailored for a more multi-cultural and more multi-lingual audience. In some subjects, IGCSE can be opted with or without coursework. Cambridge IGCSE allows teaching to be placed in a localized context, making it relevant in different regions.

9. Currently, IGCSE is a two-year programme starting at the Class 9 level. A student who has done his/ her early schooling from any other board can join the IGCSE programme at the Class 9 level.

11. CIE has declared the launch of its new Cambridge International Primary Programme in June 2009.

12. The introduction of this programme means students will be able to study the IGCSE from age four through age 18.

9. Parents Concerns: Why should one choose IGCSE curriculum for their children

1. IGCSE is one of the most sought-after and recognised qualifications in the world. It develops and encourages vital educational skills, including oral skills, investigative skills, problem solving, team work, recall of knowledge, and initiative.

2. The IGCSE programme has worldwide status and credibility. In India, the course is delivered in over 130 schools with the number expected to touch 600 soon. It is recognised by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) as being at par with CBSE, ICSE, etc.

3. Worldwide, it is delivered in schools in over 140 countries and is recognised by colleges and universities everywhere, more so in the UK and other Commonwealth countries.

4. The IGCSE curriculum is balanced and lends an international perspective to studies. It also takes account of differing abilities of students.

5. IGCSE students can take advantage of the Cambridge Checkpoint, a diagnostic service comprising of standardised tests, that pin-points a student's strengths and weaknesses in key curriculum areas.

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An  Venture

ABOUT JustInternationalSchools

JustInternationalSchools is a premiere information service provider, started by young entrepreneurs with an aim to cater to all international schools in India. JustInternationalSchools offers services like publications, brand management and advertising which are focused on international schools in India. JustInternationalSchools aims to be the one stop destination for any parent seeking information about international school education in India, by providing readily available up-to-date information to parents in India or parents from other countries who wish to provide international school education in India.

For more information about JustInternationalSchools, please visit www.JustInternationalSchools.com