

The Cambridge Path

Written by Judith Tizzard

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Doing the "Cambridge Walk" has been an interesting experience. Having been educated in England I did have a bit of a head start as it is not dissimilar to the system under which I was educated in the dim past. For the uninitiated it can be somewhat scary particularly if you have the NCEA system in your head as well.

Cambridge works quite differently so a clean brain white board is a good starting point. The Curriculum is written for the International market not for New Zealand and is used by at least 100 countries worldwide. The Cambridge Exams are set and marked in England. The marks are out of 100 and you receive a grade as well; A being the highest pass and G saying that the minimum requirement has been reached.

There are 3 levels to Cambridge :

International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) usually taken at the end of Year11 (15 -16 years) There are 70 subjects listed on the web site at this level about 30 of them are languages. Each subject is a 2 year course of study culminating in an examination at the end comprising two or three papers staggered over a three week period. In England it is pretty standard to take at least 6 of these subjects in any one year. Following are some points remember:

There is no Cambridge certificate as such, i.e. each subject stands on its own. So a student at the end of a successful course of study may well say they have 7 IGCSEs whereas at the end of an NCEA Level 1 course of study they would have NCEA level1 (having accumulated the right number of points)

There is a numeracy and a literacy requirement at all tertiary institutions in New Zealand. These vary depending on which institution and which courses.

Any level of exam is merely an entry to the next level so if you have a career path make sure you include all that needs to be done.

If there is no clear path at this stage then this is an ideal

syllabus to do a broad range of subjects : Maths, English Literature, English language, General Science, History , Geography. This will cover all the bases

Private Candidates are NOT able to participate in any course work papers; so the alternative paper has to be taken. This rules out: Art, Art and Design, Drama and Music. at the moment. Next Level is AS (Advanced Staged). These papers are an enormous step from IGCSE papers. It is strongly recommended that you do not start at the AS level if there is an IGCSE level unless you know your student is at that level in the topic. There are at least 60 subjects to choose from. This level is the first year of the Advanced level which is a 2 year course.

The 3rd level is the A level (Advanced)

The A levels are two year course which may be staged by taking exams at the end of the 1st year. Most students would work towards up to 3 of these papers.

Always keep in mind the requirements of the tertiary institution you are heading for.

This is a very condensed conversation that could go on for hours if not days!! The Cambridge website is very comprehensive: www.cie.org.uk you just need to give yourself plenty of time to come to grips with it. Don't decide in January to do Cambridge that year!! You need some time to digest the information.

The web site gives resources, full syllabus, old exam papers and model answers and marking schedules for all the papers.

There is a Cambridge yahoo loop for other queries and to talk to other parents in the midst NZHomeEdCambridge@yahoo.com

**There is no school
equal to a decent home
and no teacher equal to
a virtuous parent.
~ Gandhi**