

Grade Descriptions for Cambridge International AS Level Global Perspectives & Research 9239

What are Grade Descriptions?

Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification. For Cambridge International AS Levels, they describe performance at three levels – grades ‘e’, ‘c’ and ‘a’.

Grade descriptions sit alongside other key documents that illustrate examination standards, including:

- the syllabus, which presents what students should be taught over a course of study and explains how this is assessed
- the specimen assessment materials, which exemplify the structure of the assessment and the kinds of tasks that candidates complete
- grade thresholds, which show the total mark required to achieve a grade.

Grade descriptions are produced with a wide range of audiences in mind. For teachers, they support lesson planning and curriculum development, while students may gain useful insights into what is required to achieve a high grade and what candidate performance at lower grades typically looks like. For university admissions staff and employers, and those less familiar with Cambridge, they paint a picture of typical performance at different grades.

Cambridge publishes grade descriptions for a qualification once examinations have taken place for the first time and we review them when a qualification is substantially revised. They are developed by highly experienced examiners who understand performance standards in the subject area and have studied samples of candidate work.

How do I use this resource?

Grade descriptions are presented as a grid, with content areas at the start of each row and the different grades at the top of each column.

The content areas group together various aspects of the syllabus – they reflect topics, assessment objectives, key concepts, syllabus aims and/or components. The way they are organised is specific to each subject.

For each content area there is a descriptor for each grade. Reading across the row from left to right, the descriptors represent increasing levels of performance, with each grade descriptor building on, and including, the last.

Each column represents overall performance at a particular grade. Reading down the column from top to bottom, the descriptors capture the range of knowledge, understanding and skills that a candidate comfortably achieving the grade is likely to demonstrate.

Cambridge produces grade descriptions to support teaching and learning and the interpretation of candidate scores and grades. We do not use them to set grade thresholds. As such, they cannot be used to challenge the grade awarded to any individual candidate.

Grade Descriptions

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade E	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Analyse arguments and perspectives	Students identify information from source material that is relevant to the topic from which the issue arises.	Students identify arguments and evidence from source material that are relevant to the issue being debated. They are beginning to demonstrate how different elements of arguments and evidence relate to one another.	Through consistent and focused analysis of complex and relevant source material, students identify the constituent parts of arguments, evidence and perspectives, demonstrating understanding of how they relate to one another.
Critical evaluation	Students apply one or two evaluation criteria to source material, but this may be assertive or only on occasion explain why source material is strong or weak.	<p>Students apply evaluation criteria to source material, identifying both strengths and weaknesses of arguments or evidence. They explain logically why evidence and arguments are strong or weak.</p> <p>They are beginning to evaluate source material critically and develop the ability to judge its suitability, though this may be generic in places.</p>	<p>Students apply a wide range of evaluation criteria to source material, identifying relevant strengths and weaknesses of arguments and evidence.</p> <p>Their critical evaluation is developed and reasoned, enabling conclusions to be made.</p>
Research	Students identify source material that is relevant to the topic from which the issue arises. The research material is often informative but lacks a clear line of argument.	Students identify a range of relevant research material emanating from different national and global contexts. Some research materials have lines of argument that are relevant to the issue under debate.	Students identify a wide range of research material emanating from different national and global contexts. They select materials that have well-evidenced arguments and perspectives. Research materials have complexity and credibility and are sharply focused on the issue under debate.

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade E	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Synthesis	Students juxtapose one or two source materials that have an identifiable relationship to one another.	Students show awareness of the links between research materials, though not always consistently. Links between different pieces of evidence are implicit rather than explicit and may inform judgements.	Students synthesise elements of credible source material to construct coherent perspectives. They apply synthesis consistently to corroborate evidence and support judgements.
Making judgements	Students make judgements, but they may be unsupported and assertive.	Students make judgements which follow on logically from the arguments presented, but they may not always be supported by evidence.	Students make well-supported judgements based on some insightful comparison of perspectives. Their judgements are reasoned and follow on logically from the perspectives presented.
Collaboration	Students come together as a group to identify an area of study. They describe how they have collaborated with others.	Students work together to determine a local issue with global significance that forms the basis of a group project. They reflect upon the effectiveness of collaboration and show insight into the dynamics of the group.	Students work effectively as a group to determine a local issue with global significance that forms the basis of a group project. They reflect upon the effectiveness of collaboration and show critical insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the group and their role within it.
Reflection	Students begin to reflect on one or two areas of their learning journey. Typically, they focus on areas such as time management and the accumulation of knowledge.	Students reflect on their learning journey, showing awareness of the knowledge they have gained. They are beginning to reflect upon the impact of alternative perspectives on their personal viewpoint.	Students reflect on their learning journey, showing awareness of the knowledge they have gained as well as identifying relevant areas for further research. They reflect on the impact of alternative perspectives and demonstrate how engaging with these has shaped their personal viewpoint.

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade E	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Communication	<p>Students communicate some ideas in spoken and written form. They use visuals, though these may not support the points being made.</p> <p>They are beginning to structure their arguments more coherently in places.</p> <p>They cite or reference some of the research materials used, but this information may be presented in an inconsistent manner.</p>	<p>Students communicate ideas in spoken and written form with some clarity. They support arguments with visuals that have some clear links to the points being made.</p> <p>They structure their arguments coherently, though inferential gaps may be evident, and they link points together, though this may not always be done consistently.</p> <p>They cite and reference the majority of research materials used. The referencing system applied is consistent and contains few errors.</p>	<p>Students communicate ideas in spoken and written form with clarity and focus. They support arguments with visuals that have consistent and clear links to the points being made.</p> <p>They structure their arguments coherently, with effective use of discourse markers showing a smooth and logical progression through the perspectives being presented.</p> <p>They cite and reference all research materials used. The referencing system applied is consistent and effective.</p>

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