

Benchmarking ICCE Qualifications

A recent benchmarking study by UK NARIC has confirmed that the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) General and Advanced Certificates can be considered comparable to the overall Cambridge International O and A level standard respectively.

The work, carried out as a follow up to the 2008 benchmarking project, confirmed that overall the baccalaureate-style ICCE qualifications compare well with the highly-regarded Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) qualifications. The study highlighted many strengths within the ICCE programme whilst also presenting areas for improvement, whether through supplementing current course materials or considering alternative curriculum, for certain subjects. These recommendations, along with more general recommendations for development have been passed to ICCE Ltd.

The main purpose of the study was to establish how the ICCE General, Intermediate and Advanced Certificates, through its delivery in the UK, compared in terms of content, outcomes and rigour with the Ordinary, Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level qualifications awarded by CIE.

Using UK NARIC's methodology for benchmarking qualifications, which is founded on the key principles of credential evaluation, the study involved analyses of the qualifications' core components in terms of learning outcomes, content, duration, modes of learning and assessment and quality assurance. Examination of programme delivery in the UK was considered integral to the project, involving organised site visits by the UK NARIC team to a number of schools and home-schools. This provided an excellent opportunity both to observe the quality of delivery in the UK as well as to monitor the moderation and quality assurance procedures in place in both contexts.

The table below shows the outcome of the benchmarking work:

ICCE Qualification	Comparable level
General Certificate	Is considered comparable to the overall CIE O level standard.
Intermediate Certificate	Is not considered comparable to the overall CIE AS level standard. The Intermediate Certificate represents a progressive step between the ICCE General and Advanced Certificates while within CIE the difference between AS and A level lies in the volume and breadth of study rather than the complexity or assessment outcomes. As such this award falls between the CIE O level and the CIE Advanced Subsidiary / Advanced Levels.
Advanced Certificate	Is considered comparable to the overall CIE A level standard.

Further information on the ICCE can be found on the Christian Education Europe website, <http://www.christian-education.org/>. For information on the project work undertaken, please contact projects@naric.org.uk.

Notes:

When assessing and comparing qualifications, it is important to highlight that UK NARIC uses the term ‘comparable’ rather than ‘equivalent’. The latter term may imply that two qualifications are identical in terms of level, structure and content whereas the term ‘comparable’, used for the purposes of this study, acknowledges that two qualifications may be of the same academic standing, without necessarily having the same aims, curriculum or structure.

The ICCE qualifications involve a substantial, but not exclusive use, of Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum materials with students also able to obtain credit for studies using curriculum for languages and Biology from other established examination boards and providers. Study guides to be used with other non-ACE curriculum materials for certain subjects are also envisaged in the future. Furthermore the ICCE Ltd have developed the curriculum components of each of the ICCE qualifications to include individual and group learning activities, and crucially, compulsory extended essays and projects designed to develop and test higher order thinking skills. It is important to note therefore that the UK NARIC benchmark assessments apply to the individual ICCE awards and not the ACE curriculum materials in isolation.

This exercise used Cambridge (CIE) O, AS and A levels as an independent, international benchmark of good practice. Please note that the organisation did not participate in the benchmarking project.

UK NARIC Newsletter February 2012