



Cambridge Assessment  
International Education

# Cambridge Schools Conference

Right grade, first time, on time

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# Right grade, first time, on time

*This session will offer an overview of Cambridge's philosophy and standards, and how our processes and procedures ensure the robust delivery of each examination series.*

*Find out why Cambridge qualifications are recognised by the world's best universities.*

# Icebreaker



*What are the things you most value about Cambridge?*

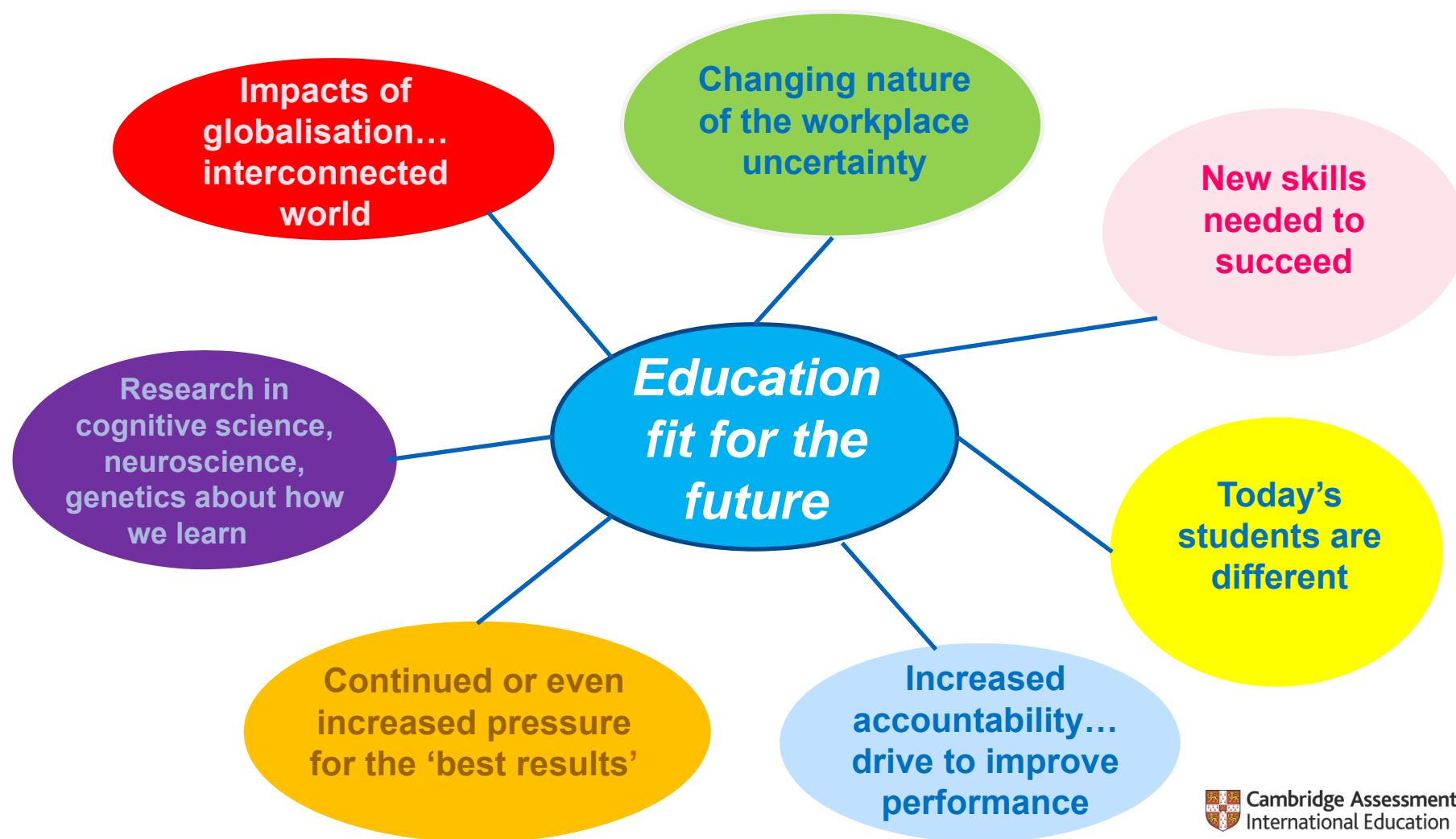
*What do we need to improve on?*

# Agenda

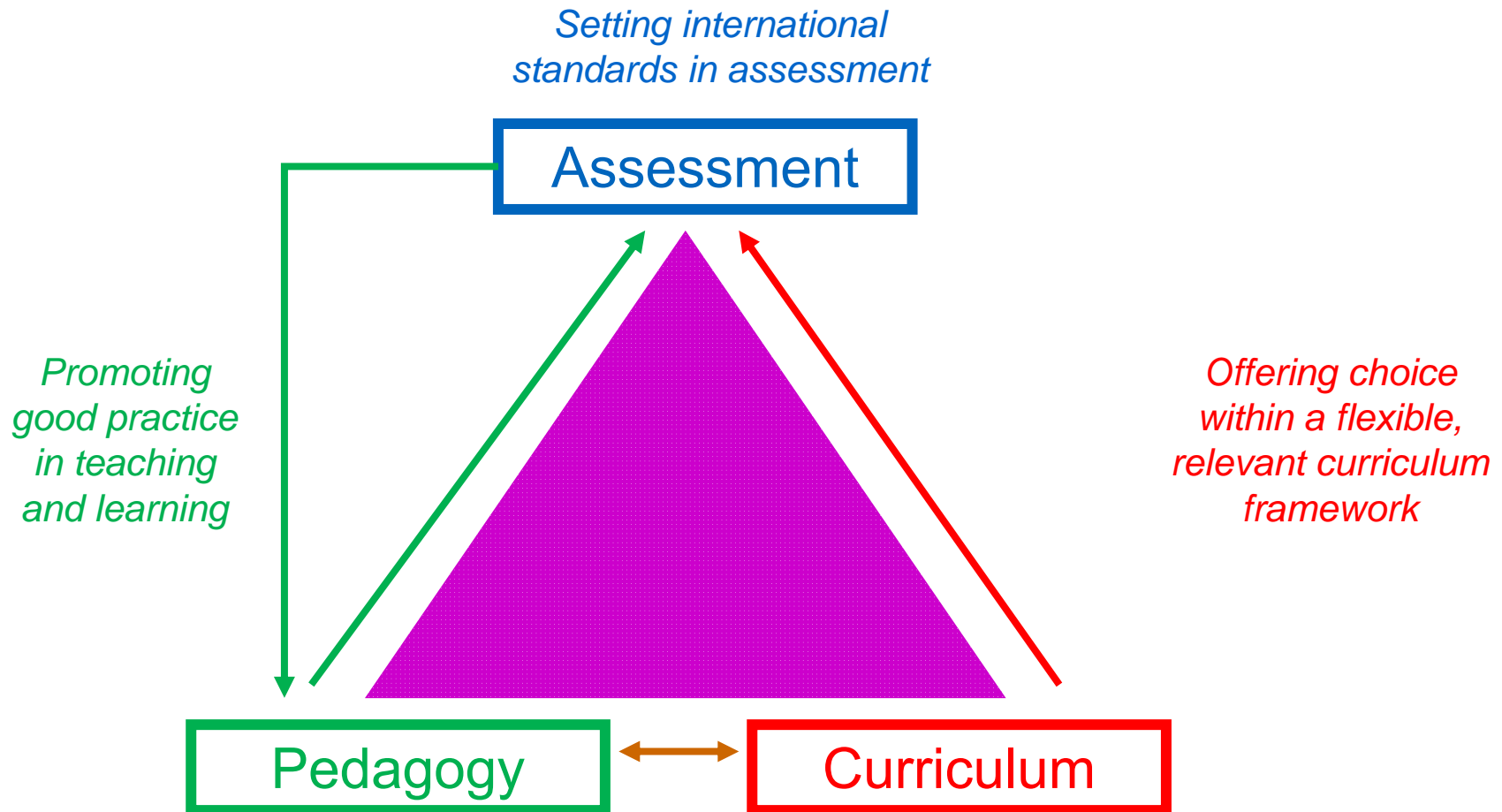
- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Standards
- ▶ Cambridge Code of Practice
- ▶ Syllabuses, question papers and mark schemes
- ▶ Marking
- ▶ Grading
- ▶ Questions and answers – opening out to general assessment-based questions

# Education fit for the future

Schools are complex social organisations, an intricate web of interdependent parts, and they are becoming more complex...



# Our educational vision



...discussion

*‘What is meant by standards?’*



# Standards internationally

The term is used differently

- ▶ USA – standards as content; attainment and aptitude measured by psychometric tests
- ▶ China – standards viewed as ideas and incentives for continuous improvement, but do not use a year-to-year standard
- ▶ East Asia – clear learning outcomes and goals
- ▶ Europe – the ideal of teachers' judgement of student learning standards pervades
- ▶ UK – standards (and accountability) of examinations are important (both between subjects and over time)



# Curriculum-based exam standards

- **Content standard**

- ▶ What has to be learned (i.e. the curriculum/syllabus)?

-does not include concept of demand or difficulty

- **Demand standard**

- ▶ How demanding are the questions/tasks (in terms of the skills and knowledge that are required)?

-does not include concept of the level of performance required

- **Marking standard**

- ▶ How are responses rewarded?

- **Awarding standard**

- ▶ What quality of performance is required (e.g. for a grade/pass)?

- **Attainment standard**

- ▶ Preparedness for further progression to study/employment

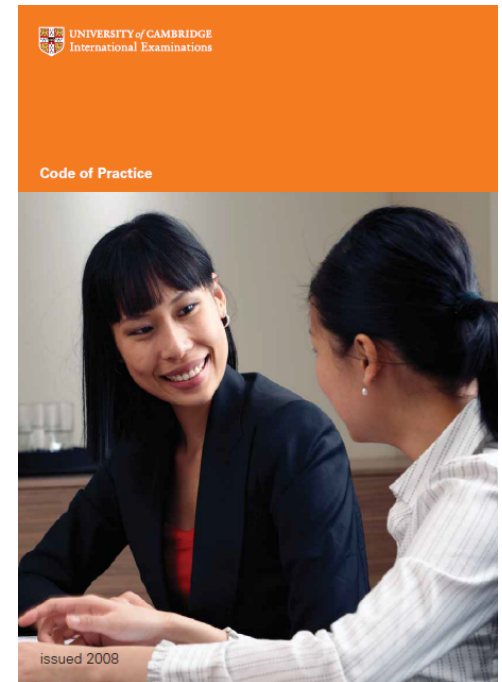
# Our research priorities

- ▶ Validating our curriculum frameworks, syllabuses, qualifications and assessments
- ▶ Informing best practice
- ▶ Maintaining standards
- ▶ Comparability of standards
- ▶ Investigating impact
- ▶ Ensuring fair measurement and reporting reliability



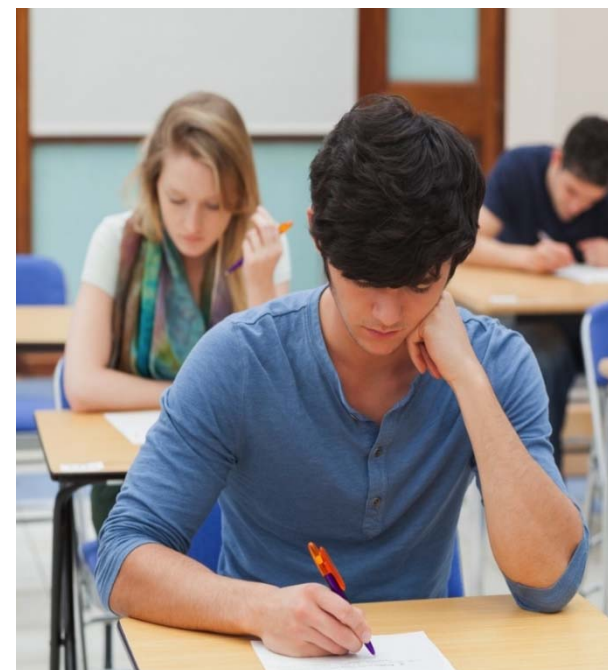
# Cambridge Code of Practice

- ▶ Outlines how we apply the Cambridge Approach principles to ensure that our examinations are valid, reliable and fair
- ▶ Covers the full assessment cycle
- ▶ Schools now base appeals on 'whether we used procedures which were consistent with our C of P'
- ▶ Currently under review, for update in 2017, provisionally retitled 'Assessment Code of Practice'
- ▶ Review will ensure it is clearly focused, fit for purpose and captures the current and future needs of assessment and awarding-related activities



# Code of Practice – four sections

1. Devising suitable syllabuses
2. Setting valid tests (question papers, mark schemes, coursework tasks)
3. Getting candidates' scripts marked reliably
4. Changing marks to grades accurately



## ...discussion

*‘What is the purpose of a syllabus?’*



# A good syllabus

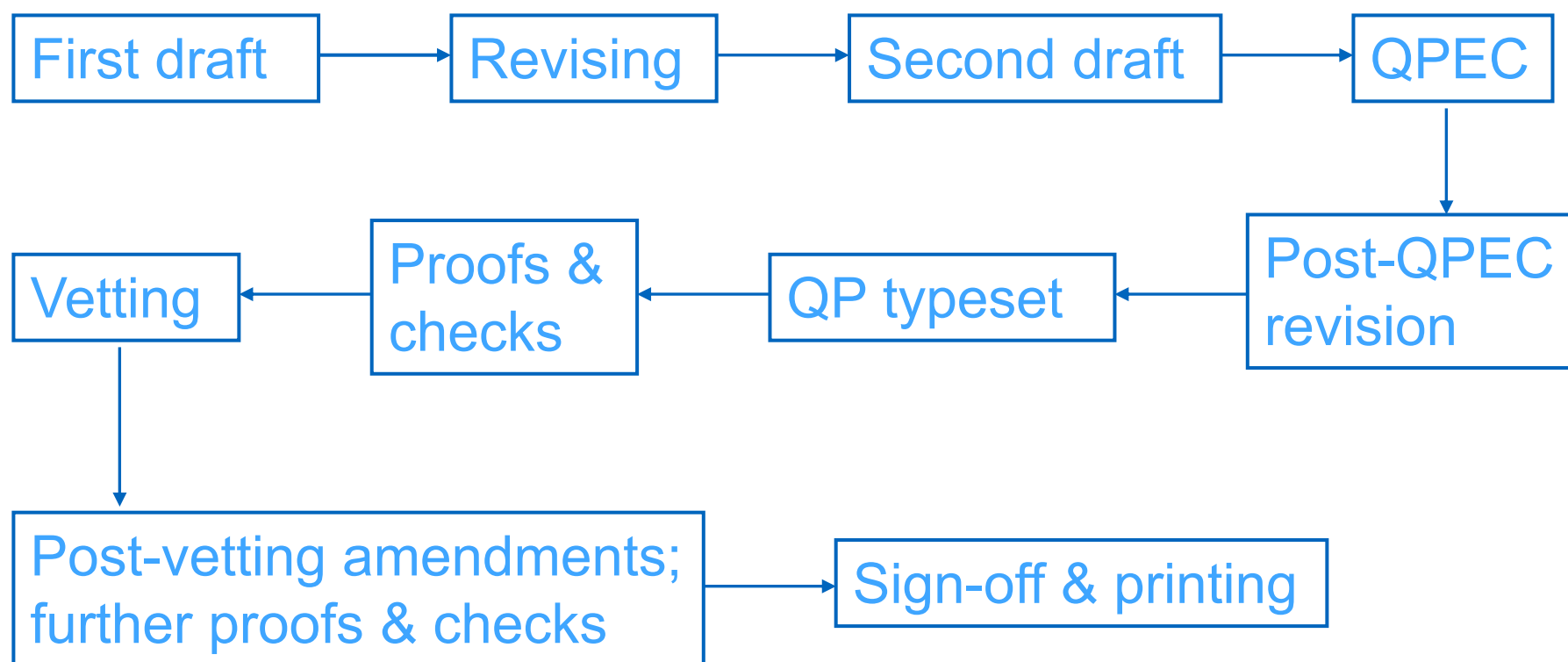
- ▶ Has clear aims and purpose
- ▶ Is clear about what is assessed, and how
- ▶ Samples the subject appropriately for the level
- ▶ Has up-to-date content
- ▶ Permits progression to a higher level in the subject while also being appropriate if this is the last level the learner attempts in the subject
- ▶ Provides scheme of assessment to produce assessment that is valid, reliable and practicable for schools, and likely to have a good impact on teaching
- ▶ Is clear for end-users as to what grades mean

# Question papers

*Must meet requirements regarding:*

- ▶ Validity – conforms to syllabus
- ▶ Validity – avoiding irrelevant matters
- ▶ Choice of questions – they are equally hard
- ▶ Discrimination (enabling us to distinguish between A\* and A students, A and B students, and so on...)
- ▶ Coverage – covers a fair proportion of the syllabus
- ▶ Accuracy of content (no mistakes)
- ▶ Other considerations, including practicability and impact

# Question paper – development





# Question paper – Mark schemes

*As with question papers, mark schemes must be:*

- ▶ Accurate
- ▶ Conducive to reliability
- ▶ Conducive to discrimination

*It is crucial that mark schemes are developed alongside question papers.*

*Their purpose is to:*

- ▶ Ensure that all markers mark the paper in the same way, to the same standard
- ▶ Inform teachers about standards

# Marking

*Getting the marking accurate and consistent*

- ▶ Recruitment of markers
- ▶ Standardisation process
- ▶ Monitoring the work of markers
- ▶ Grade Review

# The aim of grading and awarding

‘CIE’s grading processes will ensure that the standard of a qualification is maintained from one year to another...’

CIE Code of Practice 2008, 5.2(d)

# What else has to be aligned?

- ▶ One year with another
- ▶ Different options within the syllabus
- ▶ Different variants within the syllabus
- ▶ Different subjects within the year
- ▶ One series with another
- ▶ Different qualifications that are declared to be equivalent

# The two key questions in grading

- ▶ How does the difficulty of the assessment compare to the last exam series?
- ▶ How does the ability of the candidates compare to last year?

## ...discussion

*‘What evidence should be considered in grading?’*



# Determinants of grade thresholds

Cambridge's grading decisions are made using a combination of:

professional judgement  
and  
statistical and technical evidence

*Note: The professional judgement of the Principal Examiners  
is based on their marking of scripts*

# Sources of evidence

## Evidence about the difficulty of the assessment

- ▶ Some assessments don't change
- ▶ The Principal Examiner's judgement
- ▶ Item level data

## Evidence about the ability of the cohort

- ▶ Teachers' forecast grades
- ▶ Prior attainment
- ▶ Cohort mix
- ▶ Performance in other components
- ▶ 'Islands of stability'



## ...discussion

*‘What more could Cambridge do to support schools?’*

*‘What more could schools, in collaboration with Cambridge, do to help themselves improve?’*



# Why are our assessments worth doing?

*They provide qualifications which are internationally portable, recognised by universities and employers in many countries*

- ▶ Global standard for international education
- ▶ Confidence that results are valid, reliable and fairly awarded
- ▶ Recognised by world's best universities, and employers worldwide
- ▶ Give learners better options in their education and careers



# Getting it right matters



Thank you  
Any questions?

