

OIB History-Geography 2019-2020

Cambridge Inspector's Report

Introduction:

- 2019-2020 was an exceptional year. In the early part of the academic year, there was some disruption to students' education because of industrial action but in terms of the assessment this was a relatively minor issue. However, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic early in 2020 meant that the assessment could not proceed as usual and exceptional measures had to be adopted. The strategies used were based on discussions between Cambridge International, the French Inspectorate, ASIBA and the Cambridge Inspectors. The overriding aim was that the assessment should be consistent, valid and fair, and that the marks issued at the end of the process should reflect each student's ability as accurately as possible. However, the inspectors were well aware that as well as being fair to this year's students, we also had to be fair to the students who took the OIB exams in previous years and indeed to those who will take the equivalent qualification in future years.
- As always, I am indebted to all my colleagues in France who have provided me with invaluable help over the last year. I would like to give special thanks to Olivier Delmas (IPR), Alan Geary, and James Cathcart. The administrative staff at Saint-Germain deserve great praise for the way that they produced the necessary statistical information (at very short notice) and I am especially appreciative of Catherine Sagne's calm and efficient administrative skills and Sandrine Hurst's superb work in providing all the necessary spreadsheets. At Cambridge International, Sarah Lee was involved much more directly than usual, providing guidance to the Inspectors about moderation and validation of the estimated marks, while Sarah Dickins provided administrative support. My fellow inspector, Celia O'Donovan readily shared her experience and advice and helped to ensure consistency of approach across the two OIB subjects. I must also thank all the colleagues in schools who provided estimated marks and other information, without which the assessment could not have proceeded.

Subject Meetings and Training 2019-20:

- The annual subject meeting is invaluable for the professional development of the teachers in the OIB community, as well as giving an opportunity to form and renew friendships and reinforce the collegiate approach which is so special to the OIB. The teacher workshops were excellent and thanks are due to all those colleagues who give up their time to plan and deliver them. There was considerable discussion related to the ongoing curriculum reform and the input of teachers in the workshops was invaluable.
- I had hoped to attend both of the oral training meetings in January 2020 but due to potential travel disruption I was only able to attend the meeting in Lyon. My thanks go to David Jackson who deputised for me at Fontainebleau. I cannot over-emphasise the value of these meetings and all centres should try to be represented at one of them. Not only do they provide training for the oral examiners but they also provide useful advice regarding the preparation of candidates for the orals.

The Curriculum Reform:

- Throughout 2019-20, James Cathcart, Alan Geary, Richard Elwell, Matthew Tomlinson and several other colleagues, together with the French Inspectorate and myself, worked hard to finalise the new *Terminale* syllabuses and teachers' guides for OIB History/Geography. This was not a simple task but all involved were prepared to work hard, discuss and compromise in order to produce the final version which has now been published. Please make sure that in your teaching you follow the **Teacher's Guides** that were sent out before the summer holidays, both of which have been approved by the British and French authorities.

Setting the Written Papers for 2020:

- The process of setting the written papers went ahead as usual and a large number of questions were submitted by the OIB community by the agreed date. The French Inspector reviewed these questions and many of them were approved. Colleagues deserve praise for their hard work in setting a good range of acceptable questions. Eight papers were compiled in all and were finalised in March 2020 in a video conference between the French Inspector and myself.
- Once again, Barbara Hibbert helped me with the History questions and mark schemes. My thanks go to Barbara for this invaluable assistance.
- This year, due to the cancellation of the June exams and the fact that there were no candidates for the September session, none of the eight papers were used.

Compiling the Key content for the oral examinations:

- The four lists of Key issues for 2020 were published, as usual, in late 2019.
- Because of the suspension of the oral examinations due to Covid-19, no lists of Key terms were added to the Key content in Spring 2020.

Assessment 2020 – The rationale:

This year, the written and oral examinations were suspended in the Spring of 2020. It was decided that marks would still need to be issued in order for students to receive the qualification which would allow them to proceed to the next stage of their education. A range of options was considered in discussions between Cambridge and the French authorities. The OIB is a hybrid qualification and it was appropriate that a final decision was based on a combination of the strategy to be used for UK A-level and the strategy used for the French *bac*.

The key role of the Cambridge Inspectors in the assessment of the OIB is to ensure the validity and reliability of the marks. This is essential if universities are to have confidence in the marks as a basis for their offers of places. It is important, therefore that the same standard should apply to all students in any one year, **but equally important that the same standard applies year-on-year**. This is why the same generic mark schemes are used every year, one for the assessment of the written paper and one for the assessment of the orals.

In a normal year, the Cambridge Inspector moderates the marks provided by the written paper examiners and the oral examiners. Evidence for this moderation includes re-marking a sample of each marker's written paper scripts and observation of a sample of oral examinations. This evidence is augmented by the work of the two written paper team-leaders and the oral assistant moderators. The Cambridge Inspector is able to use evidence-based scaling to bring all marking into line with the agreed standard.

In 2020, this approach could not be used. Instead it was decided that the Cambridge Inspector would moderate the estimated marks submitted by each school. The estimated mark is the mark that, in the teacher's opinion, the candidate would have been likely to achieve if they had been able to take an exam in June 2020. Evidence for moderation would be historical statistical information, with additional evidence provided on a pro-forma which each school was invited to complete and submit, together with the estimated marks.

Assessment 2020 – The 'Cambridge Principles':

Moderation and validation of the marks proceeded according to the following basic principles;

- We assume that the teachers' estimated marks are correct. We only change the marks when there is compelling evidence for such a change.

- We never alter the school's rank order of candidates. (Teachers know their candidates' relative abilities better than anyone else. However, teachers do not always appreciate the overall, national standard and this is the justification used for any scaling that is applied).
- Other than historical statistical information, additional evidence provided on the school's pro-forma should be considered before a final decision is made.
- Overall, moderation should maintain year-on-year standards.
- Examples of students' work will not be requested. (So late in the academic year and with schools closed, such work would be difficult for teachers to gather and it would lack consistency between schools in its nature, the way it is marked, and the way it is compiled).

Assessment 2020 – The work of Cambridge and the Cambridge Inspectors:

- ASIBA provided Cambridge with statistical information which included; schools' predicted marks for 2020, schools predicted marks for 2019, and schools' actual marks for 2019.
- ASIBA also provided the pro-formas completed by schools. These included information on the evidence used by teachers to compile the predicted marks and any perceived changes in the ability of the school's students from previous years.
- Both of the Cambridge inspectors and Sarah Lee met by video conference to consider the nature of the evidence available to us and to agree, in detail, the procedures to be used.
- **We did not use the algorithm, based on historical data, that was used to moderate UK A-level results.** Moderation was based on the Inspector's judgement.
- Each school's marks were looked at in turn. Differences between historical predictions and historical outcomes were considered, along with differences between last year's outcomes and this year's predictions. Statistical information included the mean marks and the range of marks. Evidence from the pro-forma was also taken into consideration, e.g. a statement such as '*this is the most able cohort of students since 2012*' was very useful. A decision was then made to either approve or scale the predicted marks.
- The Cambridge inspector completed a feedback sheet for each school, outlining and justifying the decisions that were proposed. These were submitted to Sarah Lee, to check that the agreed procedures had been applied in a consistent way.
- Regular video-meetings were held between Sarah Lee and the two Cambridge Inspectors to compare progress and to consider the decisions that had been proposed.
- A final video-conference was held to consider and resolve any outstanding issues before the approved marks were submitted to ASIBA.
- ASIBA followed instructions from the *Mission du Pilotage des Examens* to apply the relevant coefficient to the Cambridge marks and produce one weighted mark. This single weighted mark (generated by applying the relevant series' coefficient to both marks and producing an average, rounded up if anything above the integer, according to standard French procedures) was then sent to the schools. Schools entered this weighted mark twice per candidate into the Lotanet system, for transmission to the local French jury who considered these marks alongside the rest of the *baccalauréat* marks, and issued the final *baccalauréat* result.
- Differences that teachers may have noticed between predicted marks and the final reported marks can arise either because of Cambridge scaling, or because of the application of the coefficient to generate the weighted mark, or a combination of both of these processes.

Assessment 2020 – New schools:

There were four new schools in 2020. Historical data were not available for these schools so an alternative method of moderation had to be used. Cambridge suggested that the method used for new schools entered for the Cambridge International A-Level exam should be adopted and the inspectors agreed.

Assessment 2020 – Outcomes:

How did this year's moderated results compare to the results of previous years? Written paper results for several years were available from *Viatique* but only the 2019 results were available for the orals. For consistency, therefore, only 2019 results and estimates were used for moderation in 2020 and some key statistics are included below for comparison.

Year/Source	2019 Teachers' mean estimated mark	2019 Mean Actual Mark	2020 Teachers' mean estimated mark	2020 Inspector's mean moderated mark
Written Paper	14.0	13.8	14.8	14.54
Oral Exam	14.7	14.1	15.3	14.92

This shows that teachers' estimated marks are usually higher than the marks that are awarded (especially so for the oral examination) and that the estimates for 2020 were higher than those for 2019. It is also clear that the teachers' estimated marks for 2020 were higher compared to the actual results for 2019. This was partly due to the fact that very few students were estimated to achieve a mark below 10/20 but in the actual assessments, a significant number of students fail to achieve a mark above 9/20 (11% on the written paper in 2019). The estimates also included a large number of students who were awarded full marks, while in the actual exams, very few students achieve full marks (only 18 on the written paper in 2019, out of an entry of well over 1000). **Moderation moved the mean marks closer to last year's figures but the final result was still higher than last year.**

Assessment 2020 – The aftermath:

OIB results were issued in early July, several weeks before the publication of results in the UK. Soon after the publication of the UK results, which had been determined by an algorithm, governments in all four of the UK nations decided to accept the unmoderated teachers' predictions and UK grades were changed accordingly. This political decision threw into question the comparability of the OIB marks and Cambridge International A-level marks with UK A-level grades. After discussions with our French partners, Cambridge issued a letter on 28th August, sent to all schools, which included the statement '*In order to ensure equal treatment for OIB candidates, Universities should consider the grades of the Livret scolaire of the candidates*'. It was hoped that this would re-instate the equivalence between the OIB and UK A-level.

Finally, I must say a big 'Thank You' to James Cathcart who had to deal with all the enquiries from schools, both after the initial results were issued and after the publication of the 28th August letter. This was a significant amount of work which James had to deal with at a time when the situation was far from clear.

The future:

- The new *Terminale* syllabus has now been published, together with the much more crucial teachers' guides. There is some content that is similar to the previous *Terminale* syllabus but much more that is new. Colleagues will now be developing teaching programmes to deliver the new syllabus and, hopefully, ideas can be shared at the 2020 Subject meeting. As Cambridge inspector for OIB History-Geography, I can confirm that the level and the range of the new syllabus is comparable with UK A-Level, even if the subject content is significantly different. This difference is not surprising for a syllabus that has to correspond in broad terms to the subject content of the comparable French *bac* syllabus.
- The *Note de Service* published in July 2020, suggests that the structure of the written paper exam and the format of the oral exam will be virtually identical to those used in previous years.
- To help teachers prepare for the assessment in 2021, we hope to publish a specimen written paper in time for it to be available at the subject meeting in October 2020. This specimen paper will be based on the subject content of the new syllabus and will indicate the style and format of the exam that will be used in 2021.
- Generic mark schemes for both the written paper and the oral exam will be revised for 2021. These revisions will be minimal but will incorporate suggestions that have been made to improve their clarity and their applicability. The crucial point is that standards need to be maintained from the past into the future, so major changes are not anticipated. The new generic mark schemes should be available at the subject meeting in October 2020.
- We are aware that the 2020/2021 academic year may also involve disruption to the students' education. ASIBA and Cambridge have already considered assessment strategies that may be adopted if this is the case. Which, if any, of these strategies will be adopted will depend on how the 2020/2021 academic year unfolds. As always, decisions will be made in consultation between ASIBA, Cambridge and the French partners and will be published to the community at the soonest possible opportunity.

John Nanson

September 2020

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