

Benchmarking Selected Subjects of the Certificate of Nile International Secondary Education (CNISE)



UK NARIC has found the CNISE Level 2 Mathematics and Biology comparable to GCE AS Level standard, and CNISE Level 3 Mathematics and Biology comparable to GCE A Level standard

Context and scope

The Certificate of Nile International Secondary Education (CNISE) is a three-year bilingual English-Arabic upper secondary school qualification currently taught in five purpose-built schools across Egypt.

Developed by Cambridge International Examinations in collaboration with the Education Development Fund in Egypt, and recognised by the national Ministry of Education¹ the qualification aims to combine Egyptian and international curriculum standards and international educational practice. In doing so, the qualification has been designed to prepare students for undergraduate study or employment both nationally and globally.

In July 2016, UK NARIC completed a study reviewing two subjects of the CNISE, Biology and Mathematics, at Levels 2 and 3 in order to determine their comparability in the context of the UK education system.

Overview of the CNISE

Entry, duration and structure

The CNISE comprises study and assessment at three levels, Levels 1, 2 and 3 (referred to as L1, L2 and L3 respectively). The first cohort of the CNISE sat the L1 examinations on completion of Grade 10 in 2015.

The first L2 examinations took place in 2016, with L3 examinations scheduled for 2017.

¹ Ministry of Education, Egypt (2016) *Ministerial Decision No. 121 dated 2nd April 2016 regarding Nile Egyptian Schools.*

Content and teaching

As detailed in the Egyptian Minister of Education and Technical Education's Ministerial Decree of April 2016 the CNISE comprises the following core and optional subjects with additional subjects at all three levels currently under development:

Compulsory	Optional
Internally assessed subjects	CNISE Options
Arts	Biology (L1, L2, L3)
Music	Business Studies (L1)
PE	Chemistry (L1, L2, L3)
CNISE L1	Economics (L2)
Mathematics	Global Perspectives (L1)
Arabic	History and Geography (L1)
English	ICT (L1)
	Mathematics (L2, L3)
	Physics (L1, L2)
	English (L2)

Assessment and Grading

The CNISE programmes in Biology and Mathematics are assessed through written examination, with two written exams taken at L2, and a further two exams taken on completion of L3. All exam papers are two hours long.

Individual subjects will be awarded a letter grade, A*-E where E represents the lowest passing grade.

Key findings

The CNISE L2 and L3 Biology and Mathematics combine strong subject content, broadly comparable in breadth and depth to counterpart programmes offered at GCE AS and A Level respectively; with the development of higher order thinking and academic study skills requisite for higher education study internationally.

The supporting CNISE Teacher Guides promote content mastery, cross-curricular linkages and real-world application of the curriculum through student-centred teaching strategies and activities designed to develop students' communicative and collaborative skills through group work, along with their ability to think, reason and problem-solve independently.

Assessment objectives for the selected CNISE programmes demonstrate clear similarity with those prescribed for the GCE AS and A Level, seeking to assess a comparable range and level of knowledge, skills and competencies.

The CNISE assessment for both L2 and L3 Biology and Mathematics is well designed to ensure a sound evaluation of the programme content, testing across the core subject curriculum; and of students' achievement against the assessment objectives. All papers are similarly designed to allow reliable differentiation between students at higher, middle and lower levels of achievement.

Comparative review of the examination papers revealed that the CNISE L2/L3 and GCE AS/A Level assess students' knowledge and skills in mathematics to a comparable breadth, depth and level.

As the overall CNISE qualification aims to develop bilingual English-Arabic students, it is important to highlight that a particular strength of the CNISE L2/L3 Biology and Mathematics programmes is that the examination papers include not only a similar number and level of questions to be answered within a similar timeframe as the GCE AS and A Level papers, but employ comparable wording in the questions as well, with no linguistic resources provided to CNISE students within the examinations. The assessments therefore provide an assessment not only of the students' subject-specific knowledge and skills, but also of their English language comprehension skills.

Methodology

Based on UK NARIC's well-established methodology for credential evaluation, this independent evaluation and benchmarking study comprised a detailed review of the CNISE subjects in terms of:

- Entry requirements
- Duration, including recommended guided learning hours
- Content and structure
- Modes of learning and assessment
- Learning outcomes and assessment objectives
- Associated outcomes.

This involved a desk-based comparative review of the Curriculum Framework, teaching guides, test specifications and specimen exam papers for both subjects with specifications and assessment materials for GCE AS/A Level Biology and Mathematics from a UK exam board.