

Taking a global perspective - the new qualification that links students from around the world.

A new qualification for 14 – 16 year olds looks set to take the world by storm this year - Cambridge IGCSE Global Perspectives.

Twenty-five schools in 17 countries, including Macleans College in New Zealand, are piloting the new IGCSE qualification (usually studied at year 11), developed by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). The course looks at global themes and issues, and promotes an international outlook and cross-cultural awareness. Teachers can choose the themes they wish to focus on from a list of 16, including Climate Change; Belief Systems; Disease and Health; Trade and Aid; Humans and other Species; and Tradition, Culture and Language. Students can also explore their own areas of study.

Simon Peek, Assistant Principal at Macleans College in Auckland, reports that both teachers and students are enjoying the course.

'We have the scope to cover climate change, water, belief systems and political/government/wars as the taught elements of the course. As part of the course students can identify a local river clean-up project, meet government ministers, and can write to the UN with some awkward questions on climate change. The breadth and depth of learning is unparalleled and has caused excitement amongst the students at Macleans. I hope the enthusiastic start continues!'

All scenarios and discussions are considered in an international setting and students must consider topics from local, national and global angles, while developing their own personal perspective. They research issues and evaluate possible courses of action. The syllabus is designed to encourage students to form their own opinions, rather than to think the same way as everyone else. Through this approach, it is hoped that young people will develop independent thinking skills, at the same time as developing their sense of community, both from a local and global standpoint.

The course is seminar-based, and requires students to build a portfolio to show the work they have completed.

Dr Kevin Stannard, CIE's Director of International Curriculum Development, said: 'The Cambridge IGCSE Global Perspectives is about preparing students to become global citizens. Not only does it raise awareness of global themes and issues but it encourages skills such as independent thought and reasoning that are invaluable in further study and employment.'

Cambridge Global Perspectives responds to a need from students for a course that helps them deal with a complex world and to develop their own different perspectives. The topics, for example Education for all, or Technology and the economic divide, are thought-provoking and raise challenging issues for students to research, consider and debate.

It will be available for teaching in all CIE registered New Zealand schools from February 2009.