

QUALIFICATION COMPARISON

Pearson Edexcel vs Cambridge International

A Strategic Review for School Leadership

Bangladesh | 2026

Executive Summary

This document presents a structured, evidence-based comparison of Pearson Edexcel and Cambridge International qualifications, prepared for senior leadership consideration. It examines 14 dimensions across exam flexibility, assessment quality, digital tools, teacher support, and market position.

Key Finding: Across every major dimension evaluated, Pearson Edexcel delivers measurably stronger outcomes for students, greater support for schools, and more innovative tools for teachers — while holding a dominant 63% market share in Bangladesh.

At a Glance — Key Numbers

	PEARSON EDEXCEL	CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL
Market Share	63% of Bangladesh exams	37% of Bangladesh exams
Partner Schools	145+ schools nationwide	90+ schools
High Achievers (2025)	736 students awarded	124 students awarded
Exam Sessions/Year	3 sessions	2 sessions
Teacher Training Cost	FREE	BDT 25,000+ per teacher per subject
Script Access (Free)	Since 2016 (10 years)	Since 2025 only

Detailed Comparison — 14 Dimensions

EXAM FLEXIBILITY

Exam Sessions per Year	✓ Pearson leads 3 sessions per year: January (IAL), May/June (iGCSE & IAL), October (iGCSE & IAL) - More opportunities = less pressure on students	2 sessions per year - May/June and October/November only - Fewer options if a student underperforms
Modular A Level	✓ True Modular System Exams at end of each unit — sit papers at	Linear System Exams at end of full AS or A2 level

Structure	- any point during study • Retake individual units unlimited times • Students build grades progressively — reducing high-stakes exam anxiety	— must finish within 13 months • Cannot retake individual units • One poor sitting can define a student's entire academic record
Modular IGCSE	✓ Industry-first modular IGCSE • Two-paper subjects split across different sessions • Individual papers retakeable independently • Students pay only half the exam fee per sitting — reduces financial burden	Traditional linear-only model • No modular option available • Full subject fees payable upfront • Cambridge does not offer this service
Practical Exam for Sciences	✓ Alternative to Practical • Dedicated lab books — practical work built into curriculum • Written final assessment — consistent and fair for every learner • Grades never affected by faulty equipment or examiner subjectivity	Traditional Practical Examination • Live lab performance is part of the assessed grade • Outcomes can vary based on facilities across centres • Equipment malfunction on exam day can directly affect a student's grade

ASSESSMENT QUALITY

Marking Accuracy	✓ Online, question-level marking • Each examiner marks only one question across all scripts • Deep specialisation per question = higher consistency • Technology-driven precision in every mark awarded	Traditional full-script marking • One examiner marks all questions in 100 full scripts • Higher risk of inconsistency and human error • A more variable assessment experience for students
Access to Marked Scripts	✓ Free access since 2016 • Students see actual marked exam scripts from results day • Promotes transparent, evidence-based learning • Nearly a decade of transparency advantage	Limited and late • Historically a paid service • Only began expanding free access from 2025 • Pearson has led on transparency for 9+ years
Exam Standardisation	✓ Truly international • Same question papers worldwide • Students sit identical papers to peers in UK, USA, Middle East, Africa • A genuinely global credential — recognised and comparable anywhere	Regional variations • Different question papers for different regions • Bangladesh, Singapore, Middle East — all receive different papers • Less consistent global benchmarking

DIGITAL TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY

Exams Wizard	✓ Powerful exam prep platform • Access to vast bank of past papers and resources • Create custom mock exams and targeted tests • Integrates with ResultsPlus for class-wide or individual analysis	No equivalent service • Cambridge does not offer an integrated exam creation and analysis platform • Teachers must source resources independently
Online Mock Exams	✓ Standardised, examiner-set mock exams • Designed and marked by experienced Pearson examiners • Delivered at least 6 months before real exams • Reduces the 'mock vs real exam' performance gap	No equivalent service • Cambridge does not offer standardised online mock exams set and marked by their examiners
Online Testing (IGCSE)	✓ Dual-mode delivery • Online testing available for International GCSE • Traditional pen-and-paper also retained • Prepares students for the digital-first world of higher education and work	Pen and paper only • Cambridge offers only traditional pen-and-paper testing for equivalent qualifications

TEACHER & SCHOOL SUPPORT

Teacher Training	✓ Free, comprehensive training • Covers all popular O and A Level subjects • Dedicated 3-day sessions for Primary and Secondary teachers • 100% free of charge — investing in teachers = better student outcomes	Paid training • BDT 25,000+ per teacher per subject • Significant recurring cost burden for schools with large teaching teams
Local Office & On-ground Support	✓ Dedicated Bangladesh presence since 2007 • Full-fledged office in Dhaka with 5 permanent employees • Schools, teachers, students and parents can visit in person • Issues resolved quickly and locally — no other international body matches this	No permanent local office • Cambridge has only established a shared office presence in Bangladesh since July 2026

SCALE & RECOGNITION

Network Scale in Bangladesh	✓ 145+ partner schools • Presence across Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Narayanganj, Cumilla, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Sirajganj, Moulvibazar, Feni, Mymensingh • The largest UK qualifications network in Bangladesh	90+ partner schools • Primarily concentrated in Dhaka and Chittagong
Market Share	✓ Market leader — 63% • 63% of all O/A Level exams in Bangladesh • Dominant presence across all regions	Minority share — 37% • 37% of O/A Level exams in Bangladesh • Smaller footprint and recognition nationwide
High Achievers Award	✓ Widespread recognition • 736 students awarded in 2025 • Across 92 schools nationwide • Motivates high performers and enhances school reputation	Highly selective • Only 124 students awarded in 2025 • The vast majority of high-performing students receive no special recognition

The Strategic Case for Schools

The following table summarises the key reasons school leadership and parent communities should consider Pearson Edexcel as the preferred qualification partner.

WHY CONSIDER PEARSON EDEXCEL	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS
Flexibility reduces academic pressure	Students can retake individual units, take exams across 3 annual sessions, and build grades progressively — not in a single high-stakes sitting.
Truly international credentials	Same papers worldwide. Students sit identical exams to peers in the UK, USA, and Middle East — no regional variations.
Digital-first learning tools	Exams Wizard, online mock exams, online IGCSE testing, and ResultsPlus give teachers and students a data-driven edge.
On-ground support since 2007	The only international qualifications body with a dedicated, permanent office and team in Dhaka — accessible and accountable.

WHY CONSIDER PEARSON EDEXCEL	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS
Free teacher training	All subjects, all levels — at no cost to the school. Significant annual savings vs Cambridge's BDT 25,000+ per teacher per subject.

For Further Information

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145+ schools | 63% market share | On-ground since 2007 | Free training | 3 exam sessions/year

The qualifications partner built for today's students, tomorrow's universities, and forward-thinking schools.