

Testing English in a bilingual programme

Comunidad de Madrid	Spain
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In an agreement with the Comunidad de Madrid, Spain, Cambridge English Qualifications are being used to assess student progress through the region's bilingual education programme.

In order to raise levels of English in state schools across the region, the Comunidad de Madrid implements a bilingual education programme based on a CLIL approach (Content and Language Integrated Learning), where up to 50% of the curriculum is taught in English. When first launched in 2004, 26 schools took part, but now 400 schools – 300 primary and 100 secondary – implement the programme. The Comunidad sets a standard target of Level B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for pupils leaving primary school, with those achieving this level going on to a 'bilingual section' at secondary school, where 50% of classroom teaching is in English. Students below B1 level continue to receive a bilingual education, but for around 30% of lessons.

To manage this process, the Comunidad required a test which could benchmark the English ability of students leaving primary school against the CEFR, and therefore signed an agreement with Cambridge Assessment

English to provide the exit tests required. As a result, in 2017, A2 Key for Schools was taken by over 10,000 pupils, in 380 schools, with B1 Preliminary for Schools taken by a further 9,000 pupils.

As the Comunidad also sets CEFR Level B2/C1 as the target for students leaving secondary school, B2 First for Schools is being used to assess pupils in the second and fourth years of secondary education, thereby measuring English fluency before students take the Bachillerato (the Spanish Baccalaureate).

The use of Cambridge English qualifications within the bilingual programme has prompted significant teacher training for the schools involved, and widespread changes to school curricula in order to absorb the new English content required. Such has been the success of the agreement, that the numbers of students tested continues to expand every year.

Around 19,000 candidates took A2 Key for Schools, B1 Preliminary, and B2 First for Schools in 2017.

The Comunidad de Madrid signed an agreement with Cambridge Assessment English to provide an exit test for primary school students, and to assess secondary school students before they take the Bachillerato.