

Improving opportunities for employability and further study

Center for Advancement of Postgraduate Studies

Egypt



A programme of English courses and assessments is helping to improve access to postgraduate study and career opportunities for marginalised Egyptian university students.

Working in collaboration with the British Council, Cairo, the Cambridge Assessment English programme was launched in 2010 by the Center for Advancement of Postgraduate Studies (CAPSCU), at Cairo University. The programme is part of the Pathways to Higher Education project, an initiative which offers training scholarships to socio-economically disadvantaged university students, with the aim of increasing access to postgraduate studies and enhancing career chances.

Students entering the programme first take the Cambridge English Placement Test, and are then placed on a blended learning course comprising 50 hours of online self-study with 50 hours of face-to-face tuition. Students are finally assessed using BULATS (Business Language Testing Service), which also gives students an internationally recognised certificate of attainment.

The entire programme aims to train around 1,000 students and teachers. In order to deliver the blended learning course effectively, training was provided to more than 100 trainers in the skills and knowledge required to deliver a communicative blended learning English language skills programme, with teachers assessed using the Cambridge English Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT).

As well as providing the expertise required to deliver such an extensive and long-term programme, the Cambridge team also undertook a wide-ranging evaluation study to assess the programme's impact. Initiated in 2012, the three-phase study analysed feedback from key stakeholders in Egyptian higher education, and from over 1,000 candidates and teachers. The results showed the effect the CAPSCU programme had on English learning and teaching in the wider context of English language instruction reform and local employment opportunities.

The programme's completion report confirmed the positive outcomes discovered within the initial findings. The report illustrated ways in which a blended approach to language learning as well as international assessment can be successfully used in local contexts to match the workplace language needs of today's local citizens.

As well as providing the expertise required to deliver such an extensive and long-term programme, the Cambridge team is also now undertaking a wide-ranging evaluation study.