

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



International Benchmarking and Subject Analysis of the International Secondary Certificate (ISC) of the Independent Examinations Board (IEB)

Submitted to the IEB by Ecctis

Comparability Against the Australian, UK, and Kenyan Education Systems

Ecctis has developed three comparability statements which compare the ISC to the education systems of Australia, the UK, and Kenya respectively. These demonstrate Ecctis' holistic judgement of the level of the ISC, which takes into account all core elements of programme design, along with the detailed subject-level analysis.

Australia

Like the New South Wales HSC, the ISC is a school-leaving qualification with expectations that students have achieved certain prior qualifications or successfully completed lower-secondary education. Both qualifications aim to develop higher order thinking skills, there are many similarities in the assessment methods used, and a similar number of subjects are studied by students, suggesting the awards are of comparable breadth. Whilst the weightings of individual assessment components and question types may vary from subject-to-subject, the ISC tests a comparable range of competences and knowledge. Differences were noted at subject-level, but as with the findings for other countries, these generally reflect different aims and cultural contexts for which the HSC and ISC have been designed. The ISC was found comparable to the HSC in New South Wales, and the Australian Senior Secondary Certificate of Education standard.

Qualification title	International Secondary Certificate (ISC)
Awarded by:	The Independent Examinations Board (IEB)
Comparison	Is considered comparable to the Australian Senior Secondary Certificate of Education standard. In New South Wales, this level is represented by the Higher School Certificate.

England, Wales, and Northern Ireland

Like the GCE AS/A Level, the ISC is a school-leaving qualification with expectations that students have achieved certain prior qualifications or successfully completed lower-secondary education. Both qualifications aim to develop higher order thinking skills and there are many similarities in the assessment methods used. Whilst the weightings of individual assessment components and question types may vary from subject-to-subject, the ISC tests a comparable range of competences and knowledge. Differences were noted at subject-level, but these generally reflect different aims and cultural contexts. The second year of A Level subjects

were generally found to contain further depth of content than ISC 20-credit subjects, though the ISC Further Studies curricula were found comparable to A Level standard. The complexity of content in 20-credit ISC subjects was generally found comparable to the UK AS Level standard.

Comparison	Is considered comparable to GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level standard. Each 20-credit subject passed is at least comparable to GCSE grades A*-C, provided a mark of 50%/D has been obtained. Further Studies (30- or 36-credit) subjects are considered comparable to the overall GCE Advanced (A) level standard. In relation to study of foreign or second languages, stakeholders should consider the target CEFR-level proficiency of the ISC subject in question (Elementary Level Language = A1/A2; Language in Practice = A2/B1; Additional Language = B1/B2).
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Kenya

Like the KCSE, the ISC is a school-leaving qualification involving a similar number of subjects studied. Both qualifications aim to develop higher order thinking skills and there are many similarities in the assessment methods used. Differences were noted at subject-level, but these generally reflect different aims and cultural contexts. ISC subjects demonstrated greater depth than KCSE comparison points in some areas. ISC Further Studies curricula were particularly notable for the higher levels of complexity and depth in subject content compared to KCSE curricula. As a result, Ecctis recommends that Kenyan HEIs may consider ISC students for advanced entrance to Bachelor degree programmes in relevant subjects, taking into account subjects studied and grades achieved.

Comparison	Is considered comparable to Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) standard. Kenyan HEIs may, at institutional discretion, consider ISC students for advanced standing to Bachelor degree programmes in relevant subjects, taking into account subjects studied and grades achieved.
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