

Quick guide for teachers



An introduction to CEM's baseline tests





CEM tests are for understanding student potential

All teachers want their students to do as well as they can educationally. Students should get the best possible grades that they are capable of. They should leave school having fulfilled their potential.

Teachers around the world use CEM tests to understand what that potential is. The results from CEM tests tell teachers:

- what each student could achieve
- what each class or year group could achieve.

The test results are objective. They are not influenced by teachers' personal perceptions of their students.

Once teachers understand their students' potential, they can clarify their students' educational needs. All students need to be both supported and challenged, and very able students have different needs to those of less able students. Teachers can make sure they meet these differing needs by giving students the right kinds of teaching, at the right level. This is what the most successful schools do in many different countries.

Adaptive baseline assessments

CEM tests are baseline assessments. This means they provide a profile of useful information about students when they enter a new school, and at other key points in their educational journeys. This could be:

- when they enter a new year group
- where there's been a gap in learning
- where school records are patchy.

CEM tests are therefore very different to attainment tests, which students take at the end of a topic or course to show what they have learnt.

CEM tests are adaptive. Students will see different sets of questions which are adjusted to match their performances. If they answer questions correctly, then they see harder questions next. If they answer incorrectly, then they see easier questions next. Adaptive tests are both quick and effective, so students are unlikely to lose concentration while being assessed.

Assessing cognitive and cross-curricular skills

CEM tests assess cognitive skills and capabilities, plus understanding and skills which are important for success in many different school subjects. The tests are 'curriculum free' and students do not need to study or revise for them.

There are test sections on vocabulary, maths, and non-verbal reasoning, plus skills such as proofreading, and perceptual speed and accuracy.

Gaps in these core areas can have a hidden impact on students' learning. These gaps aren't always easy for teachers to see in the classroom.



Four ways to use CEM tests

1. Planning and focusing teaching

In some countries CEM tests are known as 'formative' tests. This is because the information from them is helpful for planning and targeting teaching. CEM tests give teachers a picture of every student's educational abilities and potential. This means teachers get an idea of:

- the overall level at which to pitch their classroom teaching
 - Is the class relatively able compared to last year's class?
 - What are their broad strengths and weaknesses?
- Individual students' strengths and weaknesses
 - Which students will probably need lots of help and support? (Some may have a specific learning need which may require further intervention or assessment)
 - Which are the most able students, who will need extension work and harder challenges?

Knowing this information, teachers can design or adapt their curriculum, lesson plans, and teaching to meet their students' needs. They can decide where limited resources need to be focused. CEM test results may also help teachers with grouping and streaming students, so that those of similar ability are taught together.

In these ways, CEM tests help schools to improve the education they offer.

2. Predictions and target setting

Motivating students

Teachers use CEM test results in motivational learning conversations with students. They use them to set targets for attainment tests, and to discuss what is needed to achieve those targets.

CEM tests predict grades in qualifications such as GCSE, IGCSE, A level and International Baccalaureate. The predictions are not just single grades, but show the likelihood of a student achieving a range of grades. This means teachers can tell students what grades they could achieve if they work their hardest, as well as what they could achieve if they don't work so hard or if they have a bad day when taking their exams.

Talking to parents

CEM test results are very helpful in managing parents' expectations around how well their children are likely to do. Not every student will achieve top grades, and CEM tests help to set realistic targets.

3. Identifying under-performing and over-performing students

Teachers can compare CEM test results with the results of any class assessments and other attainment tests. In this way, they can check that their students are on track to meet their targets.

Teachers can:

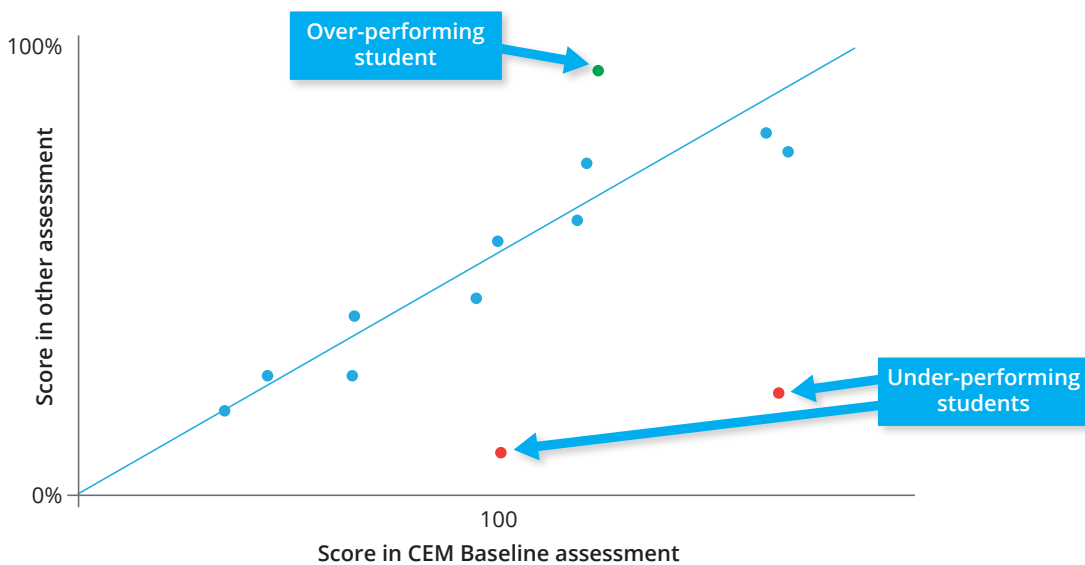
- spot students who are under-performing and not yet meeting their potential. These students may need further support and encouragement
- recognise when students are on track
- identify and praise students who are over-performing. These students set a good example to others.

4. Evaluating teaching strategies

Comparing CEM test results with the grades that students eventually leave school with can also help teachers to understand what has worked well in the classroom:

- Which teaching strategies led students to over-perform and exceed expectations?
- Which strategies were less successful?

Teachers that ask these questions often have a growth mindset. They are looking to continually improve what they do. This mindset is prevalent in the best schools around the world.



Golden rules

Finally, when it comes to using CEM tests, there are some 'golden rules' to remember.

- CEM test results are a tool to inform teachers' professional judgements. They are not a replacement. The results should be used together with other information that teachers have about their students.
- CEM tests give a 'snapshot' of a student's ability, and not a label for life.
- Teachers should question if a student's score seems too low. Anyone can have a bad day occasionally, and teachers often know their students well.
- Believe the high scores. It is difficult for students to get a high score without having the ability to do so.
- Do not coach students for CEM tests. They are not attainment tests or examinations.