

G12++

The G12++: purpose,
nature and standards
(as of May 2026)

Alsama 

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Purpose of this document

This document sets out the design and expected standards for the G12++, a credible, valid and reliable qualification at upper secondary level awarded on the basis of an examination with five components:

- English as a second language
- Applicable Mathematics
- Scientific Thinking
- Life Success Skills
- Arabic as a first language

This document informs users of the G12++ about the content and standards of the G12++.

It also forms a significant part of the body of evidence relevant to external benchmarking and accreditation the G12++.

This body of evidence also includes:

- definitions of the constructs for each component
- item and test specifications for each component
- scoring and grading procedures
- quality assurance policies, procedures and processes supporting the integrity, credibility, reliability and comparability over time of results in the components and the award of the G12++

Audience for this document

The main audiences for this document are:

1. Equivalency agencies, so they can map the G12++ against internationally recognised levels of demand upon which the G12++ is designed
2. Universities so they can confirm whether the G12++ meets their requirements for entry into Foundation Years and/or direct access, as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions (TVET) and employers.

The G12++: its purpose, nature and value

The purpose of the G12++

The purpose of the G12++ is to provide formal recognition of the learning achievement of people with a refugee or otherwise displaced background.

The G12++ is designed to fill a significant gap in the practical availability of widely recognised, valued and credible qualifications at upper secondary level for people with a displaced background.

In today's world, there are very many people with a displaced background who have considerable potential.¹

Such people

- have had major disruptions in their learning programs
- often do not have the financial resources required to take existing examinations or tests available to learners outside the upper secondary programmes provided in each country²
- often do not have access to the upper secondary programmes and associated qualifications in the country of their current domicile
- often do not have the 'taken-for-granted' social capital that can be key to success in external examinations
- find that the informal learning programmes to which they have access are usually not recognised outside their immediate location, if at all.

To aid recognition, acceptance and use by wide range of institutions providing post-school tertiary education or employment, the description of the design of the G12++ and its standards set out in this document has been positioned within global, rather than local definitions.

Key features of the G12++

The G12++ has the following key features:

¹ Half a million learners or more, as of 2024, based on estimates by Alsama using UNHCR data.

² Examination fees vary widely. A GED (USA) typically involves fee of about US\$140 for the test alone. Cambridge Examinations in an overseas context can involve fees of around US\$200 (varies by subject). SAT (USA) charges about US\$100 to overseas learners. The ACB charges international learners about US\$130 per subject for the AP examination.

- it is a qualification marking success at the level of completion of upper secondary education
- it is an assessment (an examination) that leads to an upper secondary qualification; it is not a particular programme requiring delivery by an educational institution
- it does not specify a curriculum that must be followed - candidates may prepare for the examination in many ways
- it will be available at a modest cost of 20\$ per exam
- Ecctis has equivalised the following G12++ exams: Applicable Math, Scientific Thinking and English as a Second Language. Ecctis equivalency means that the G12++ can be reliably compared with other exams in the UK education system.³
- Alsama aims to prove the G12++, launched in 2026, to be widely recognised and accepted for validity, reliability, and integrity for an upper secondary qualification

The importance and value of the G12++ to its target audiences

With the key features, set out above, the G12++ is of major value to youth with a displaced background. The G12++

- responds to the circumstances of their disrupted learning without lowering standards
- provides them with official recognition and certification of achievement at the level of completion of upper secondary education
- provides them with portable and verifiable certification accepted by a range of users

The G12++ is of significant value to higher education institutions by

- reducing the cost to them of a fair and valid response to applications from refugee or displaced people through a qualification that allows admissions officers to make accurate comparisons with the achievements of other applicants
- providing a certificate with credibility and integrity
- using benchmarked standards.

The G12++ is of significant value to society more generally by

- providing an efficient mechanism for supporting displaced persons to enter further and tertiary education and to seek recognition by employers
- improving equity
- recognising increases in human capacities in disrupted situations

³ <https://www.ecctis.com/Awarding%20Bodies/Benchmarked/Default.aspx>

- supporting development and stabilisation.

Eligibility for the G12++

Eligibility requirements for G12++ candidates:

1. Partner Centre Affiliation

- All candidates must be associated with an Alsama-approved organisation, which will nominate the candidate, confirm identity, and provide the necessary testing facility and infrastructure

2. Demographic requirements:

- Age: 17–25 years old
- Must be displaced, including refugees, internally displaced persons, or other similar situations
- May or may not have access to formal national certifications or qualifications
- Must provide a valid identification document, such as a birth certificate, passport, or government registration

3. Necessary prior skills / learning:

- No formal, continuous education is required
- English language proficiency: Estimated at CEFR B2 level
- Basic digital literacy skills: Able to navigate and type on a laptop

4: Exam attempts

- Candidates may take the G12++ examination up to a maximum of two times.
- There must be a minimum gap of 8 weeks between attempts.
- If a candidate sits the G12++ examination twice, the higher of the two scores per subject will be taken as the result
- Candidates need to register for the February exam at least 10 weeks prior to the exam, and for the make-up exam, at least 6 weeks before.

Where the G12++ sits within the global standards for educational qualifications

To describe the G12++ in the global context, we have used the descriptors defined in the UNESCO International Standard Classification for Education: ISCED⁴.

The rationale for using ISCED is that the descriptors are well-defined and are widely used globally. Annex 1 provides a summary of relevant aspects of ISCED.

Using UNESCO ISCED to describe the G12++

1. The G12++ is a qualification awarded as a result of demonstrating achievement of standards through performance in an examination.
2. The G12++ is a formal qualification designed, as envisaged by ISCED 2011, to allow learners to demonstrate the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies comparable to successful completion of a formal education programme.
3. The G12++ certifies achievement at ISCED level 3.4: completion of upper secondary education⁵.
4. The G12++ covers both achievement at ISCED level 3.4.3 and ISCED level 3.4.4.
 - ISCED level 3.4.3 reflects achievement at the ISCED 3.4 level, without direct access to tertiary education (but may give direct access to post-secondary non-tertiary education like foundation or enabling courses at a university) and is aligned basic “award” and “highly commended” achievement in the G12++.
 - ISCED level 3.4.4 reflects achievement at the ISCED 3.4 level that is sufficient for level completion, with direct access to tertiary education and is aligned with “distinction” achievement in the G12++.

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2011 International Standard Classification for Education. and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015), *ISCED 2011 Operational Manual: Guidelines for Classifying National Education Programmes and Related Qualifications*, OECD Publishing, Paris. Annex 1 provides further details about ISCED.

⁵ The technical manual for ISCED identifies that “for international comparability purposes, the term ‘upper secondary education’ is used to label ISCED level 3”.

5. The G12++ is one of a wide range of qualifications at ISCED 3.4. It is designed to meet the needs of refugee or otherwise displaced learners seeking formal recognition of their achievements for entry to post-secondary education.

6. The G12++ shows achievement, in ISCED terms, in "general education" ⁶ at upper secondary level of education.
 - The G12++ does not report in terms of the skills and competencies required for a particular occupation (vocational education). Like other ISCED level 3 qualifications in general education, it is relevant to employment as well as further education and training.

7. People preparing for the G12++ are not required to follow any particular program of formal learning ^{7 8}.
 - They may prepare for the G12++ examination individually or through an agency supporting them to develop the required skills and knowledge⁹.
 - In ISCED terms, those preparing for the G12++ with the aid of an agency are involved in non-formal education¹⁰. Non-formal education is, in ISCED, terms, distinct from informal learning.

⁶ ISCED paragraph 55: General education is defined as education programmes that are designed to develop learners' general knowledge, skills and competencies, as well as literacy and numeracy skills, often to prepare participants for more advanced education programmes at the same or a higher ISCED level and to lay the foundation for lifelong learning. These programmes are typically school- or college-based. General education includes education programmes that are designed to prepare participants for entry into vocational education but do not prepare for employment in a particular occupation, trade or class of occupations or trades, nor lead directly to a labour market-relevant qualification.

⁷ ISCED, paragraph 35: "Formal education is education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organizations and recognised private bodies, and – in their totality – constitute the formal education system of a country."

⁸ In this sense, the G12++ is 'curriculum agnostic'. Under ISCED, 'Formal education is "education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organizations and recognised private bodies".'

⁹ Such programmes are, in ISCED terms, "second-chance or re-integration programmes". Alsama has developed the G12++ for young people whose pathway through formal education has been disrupted or destroyed through external events.

¹⁰ ISCED, paragraph 39: "...The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or complement to formal education within the process of lifelong learning of individual."

G12++: standards for the five components

This section describes the standards set for each component of the G12++ (minimum and range).

Rationales for choosing these standards for each component appear in Annex 2.

Note that the relationships in standards between G12++ and other qualifications are based on directional aspirations of the G12++, rather than on evidence of any in-depth comparison studies.

Table 1 Minimum and “range up to” standard for each component of the G12++

Component	Minimum standard	Range up to
1. English (as a second language)	CEFR: level B2	CEFR: level C1
2. Applicable Mathematics	PIAAC (numeracy): level 3	PIAAC (numeracy): level 5
3. Scientific Thinking	PISA science: level 3	PISA science: level 6
4. Life Success Skills	Skillsbuilder framework: level Intermediate	Skillsbuilder framework: level Mastery
5. Arabic (as a first language)	NAEP Grade 12 reading and writing (equivalent in Arabic): level Basic	NAEP Grade 12 reading and writing (equivalent in Arabic): level Advanced

Reporting performance levels in the five components of the G12++

This section describes how levels of achievement in the G12++ are reported.

The G12++ examination has five components.

Each component is reported as a (scaled¹¹) score and as one of four performance levels:

Table 2 G12++ Reporting performance levels in each component

Label	Description
***	Outstanding performance
**	Exceeds (performance) expectations
*	Meets (performance) expectations
(no star)	Does not yet meet (performance) expectations

¹¹ Scores are scaled so that they are reported on the same scale from one year to the next. The scaling procedure takes into account changes in the specific items from one year to the next.

Modes of assessment used in the G12++

The modes of assessment used for the G12++ are:

- multiple choice items (in all five components)
- extended writing (in the Arabic and English components).

English and Arabic components will require writing tasks that combine to at least 500 words.

The G12++ will be delivered to candidates using advanced locked-down browser technology, ensuring the exam is taken in a safe environment.

Reporting the G12++

Test-takers

Test-takers receive an official G12++ Exam Performance Report indicating the performance level that the test-taker achieved in each subject: Outstanding Performance, Exceeds (performance) Expectations, Meets (performance) Expectations, Does Not Yet Meet Expectations. Test-takers also receive a formal certificate of the level at which the G12++ has been awarded: Secondary Achievement, Advanced Achievement, or Distinction. If candidates receive “does not yet meet expectations” on two or more subjects, they will receive no award of secondary achievement, but only a Record of Learning.

All test-takers also receive a detailed report of their strengths and weaknesses for each subject based on their performance during the exam, so they know what they need to work on to improve their performance.

Both the G12++ Exam Performance Report and the official certificate of the award of the qualification provide a means for the user of a certificate (university, further education, or employer) to verify that the results are authentic, reliable, and aligned with international standards of examination.

Partner Centres

Partner centres and educators receive (subject to privacy protection) students' aggregate results showing performance levels and scores in each component as well as award levels.

Alsama intends to provide educators with a range of insights, including:

- Aggregate results for all test takers by partner centre, broken down by subject, major element, and performance level (%)
- Aggregate distribution of award levels for all test takers by partner centre (%)
- Comparison of aggregate test taker results from a specific partner centre against the overall cohort results for each exam
- Individual test taker performance results by subject and overall award level
- Individual candidate scores (by subject and major element) for candidates assigned to or affiliated with a specific educator

The G12++ and access to post-secondary education

The following table outlines how the G12++ award levels match requirements for access to post-secondary education.

Table 3 Reporting achievement in the G12++

Award level	Interpretation against international standards	Suitable for entry to
G12++ Distinction	Distinctive mastery of academic and/or life skills that far exceed the average formally educated secondary school graduate with uninterrupted learning	Programmes at ISCED level 6 (bachelor's level university) ¹²
G12++ Advanced Achievement	Mastery of academics and/or life skills that advance beyond the average formally educated secondary school graduate with uninterrupted learning	Programmes at ISCED 5 level (foundation or enabling courses at a university) ¹³
G12++ Secondary Achievement	Academics and/or life skills that rival the average formally educated have secondary school graduate with uninterrupted learning	Programmes at ISCED 5 level (foundation or enabling courses at a university) ¹⁴
(no award) Record of Learning	May have strengths in academics and/or life skills, but not yet rivalling 'the average formally educated secondary school graduate with uninterrupted learning'	Potential to succeed in pathways of semi-skilled employment and / or TVET

¹² ISCED level 6 is Bachelor's or equivalent level. See <https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

¹³ ISCED level 5 is short-cycle tertiary education or equivalent level. See <https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

¹⁴ As above.