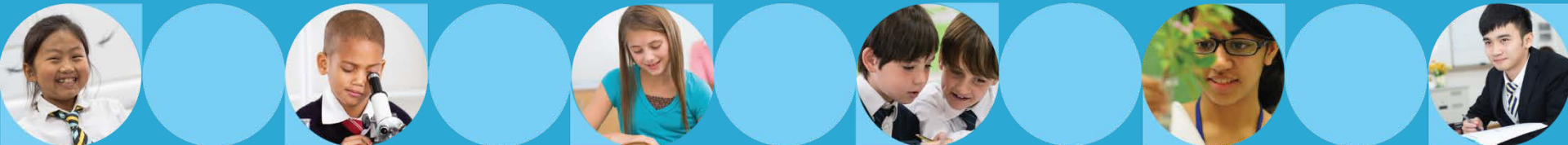


# Higher Education Admission Officers study

2018 vs 2016 findings

Eve Risius-Andrews  
Market Research Manager

July 2018



# Background and objectives

In 2016, we commissioned FreshMinds to find out how Higher Education admissions staff regard our qualifications.

This was based on our understanding that one of our core success factors is to ensure that, at a global level, employers and universities recognise our qualifications as providing evidence of academic ability and a good foundation for future progression.

We believe that our qualifications are widely recognised by global HEIs and that this, in turn, offers fantastic progression opportunities for students with Cambridge qualifications. With this in mind, we FreshMinds conducted research with admissions staff in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across a range of global target markets.

We repeated this survey in-house with like-for-like questions, in order to understand trends and gather additional quotations for marketing purposes. The following pages show the 2018 findings, where appropriate compared to those from 2016.

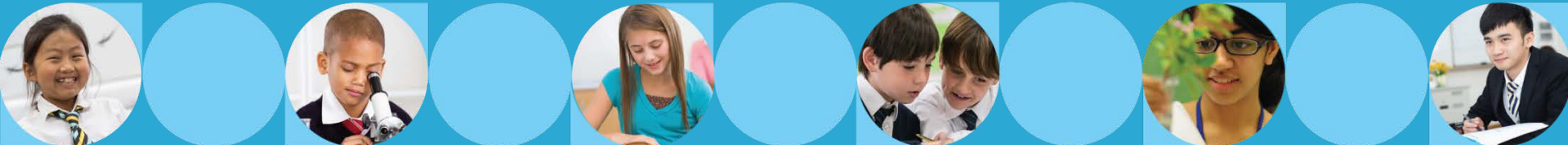
# Methodology and sample

The research consisted of a short online survey scripted in Snap, which replicated the 2016 survey administered by FreshMinds. Colleagues in the Recognition team provided HE contacted details, and a total of 970 emails were sent, with a reminder following a couple of weeks later. The fieldwork took place in May and June 2018.

68 staff completed the survey, just over half of the size of the 2016 sample. Most are based in the US and the UK, as previously, with fewer other countries represented:

Country	2016	2018
United States of America	73	47
United Kingdom	25	15
Australia	10	4
Canada	8	
Malaysia	4	
New Zealand	3	1
Singapore	3	
Germany	2	
India	1	
The Netherlands	1	1
<b>TOTAL base sizes</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>68</b>

# Key findings



# Admissions staff remain positive about Cambridge students

Admissions staff remain positive about Cambridge students, with every statement tested receiving over 92% agreement. **The smaller sample has to be taken into account when interpreting this information, as a small number of negative responses has a stronger impact on the overall percentage.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Cambridge students...	2016	2018
Have in-depth knowledge of their subject	100%	98%
Think independently	95%	96%
Apply their knowledge and understanding to new and familiar situations	98%	96%
Can handle and evaluate different types of information	99%	92%
Think logically and present ordered and coherent arguments	100%	98%
Make good judgements, recommendations and decisions	99%	100%
Present reasoned explanations, understand implications and communicate them logically and clearly	99%	100%
Have strong essay writing skills	97%	98%
Are able to think critically	96%	96%
To what extent do you agree that...	2016	2018
Cambridge qualifications give students an excellent preparation for university	98%	100%
Cambridge qualifications help students succeed at university	98%	98%

Q9 & Q10. Below are some statements about Cambridge students. Please state whether you agree or disagree with them. See following section for base sizes. **NB 'Not sure' answers have been removed from the results**

Q11. And to what extent do you agree or disagree that...? **NB 'Not sure' answers have been removed from the results**

# Admissions staff also compare Cambridge students favourably against others

Admissions staff also continue to feel that Cambridge students compare very well against other students; for every statement at least 87% of admissions staff agreeing that Cambridge students stand out against their contemporaries. In 2016, the lowest percentage was 80%.

Compared to those with other qualifications, Cambridge students stand out at...	2016	2018
Having in-depth knowledge of their subject	90%	98%
Thinking independently	80%	87%
Applying their knowledge and understanding to new and familiar situations	85%	94%
Handling and evaluating different types of information	90%	89%
Thinking logically and present ordered and coherent arguments	92%	97%
Making good judgements, recommendations and decisions	92%	94%
Presenting reasoned explanations, understanding implications and communicating them logically and clearly	92%	97%
Having strong essay writing skills	92%	97%
Thinking critically	84%	93%
Compared to those with other qualifications, Cambridge students stand out at...	2016	2018
In comparison with other students, Cambridge students stand out in terms of being very well prepared for university	84%	95%
In comparison with other students, Cambridge students stand out as being very likely to succeed at university	88%	96%

Q16 & Q17. Below are the same statements. For each one, to what extent do you agree that Cambridge students particularly stand out compared to students with other qualifications? **NB 'Not sure' answers have been removed from the results**

Q18. And to what extent do you agree or disagree that, in comparison with other students... **NB 'Not sure' answers have been removed from the results**

# Quotes for external publicity

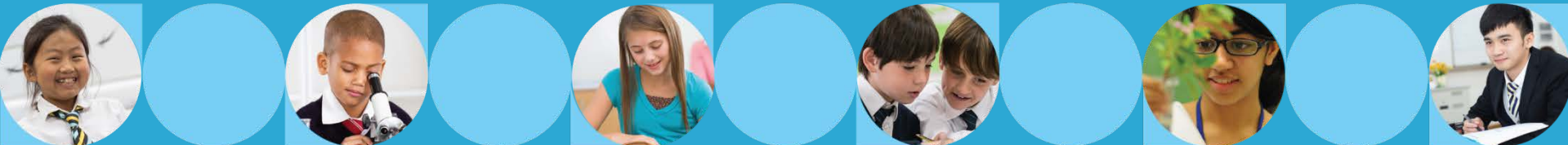
- ▶ 98% of admissions staff agree that Cambridge qualifications give students an excellent preparation for university
  - ▶ “The rigor of the program helps to prepare them for the rigor of college.” (Creighton University, United States)
  - ▶ “Cambridge A-Level courses require mastery of the skills we seek in applicants.” (Bennington College, United States)
  - ▶ “Generally speaking, these students perform well in their first year of university, based on our own internal assessments of first year performance.” (Syracuse University, United States)
  - ▶ “They are good at studying, engaging in class, etc.” (United States)
  - ▶ “Students are typically more prepared than the average U.S. high school student.” (United States)
  - ▶ “The academic background of an applicant who has studied Cambridge qualifications is ideal in preparing students for the transition to higher education and students with these qualifications perform well.” (United Kingdom)
  - ▶ “Cambridge qualifications prepare home and international students to achieve the required academic knowledge and personal skills in order to succeed at HE and obtain a good honours degree.” (United Kingdom)
  - ▶ “The rigour is good preparation for what lies ahead.” (United Kingdom)

# Quotes for external publicity

- ▶ 98% of admissions staff agree Cambridge qualifications help students succeed at university
  - ▶ “The focus on independent study skills, critical thinking, and writing give students strong skills to succeed.” (Syracuse University, United States)
  - ▶ “(A typical Cambridge student is) hard-working, analytical, driven.” (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, United States)
  - ▶ “Cambridge A-Level courses require a level of organization and discipline that's necessary to be successful.” (Bennington College, United States)
  - ▶ “Our Cambridge students perform very well, which I attribute, in part to their secondary preparation.” (United States)
  - ▶ “(Students) studying A level qualifications seem in general very well prepared academically.” (United States)
  - ▶ “The students enrolled at the university were able to maintain superior grade point averages.” (United States)
  - ▶ “The academic background of an applicant who has studied Cambridge qualifications is ideal in preparing students for the transition to higher education and students with these qualifications perform well.” (United States)
  - ▶ “The testing conditions are also good preparation for university-level assessment” (United Kingdom)
  - ▶ “Students with Cambridge qualification usually achieve a 2.1 or above honours degree. (United Kingdom)”



# Detailed findings



# How to read this section

The survey asked HEI admissions staff the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about Cambridge students, for example whether they have good essay writing skills or are able to think critically (see slides 5 and 6 for the full list of statements).

Respondents were then asked whether they agreed that Cambridge students stand out at these attributes, compared to students with other qualifications.

The following slides break down their responses to these questions in more detail, and include relevant quotations from open ended questions.

Quotations and data from respondents who only partially completed the survey have been included, and the results of those who were unable to answer for an attribute (and so selected 'not sure') have been excluded. Across the survey, around a quarter of respondents answered 'not sure' to individual questions about Cambridge students. Around two fifth answered 'not sure' to questions comparing Cambridge students to those of other qualifications, reflecting the fact not all respondents would have been in a position to make these comparisons. **This results in small sample sizes (31+) for the comparative statements.**

## In their own words

Quotations from the 2018 survey are provided throughout this section to illustrate findings.

Respondents were asked if Cambridge qualifications give students an excellent preparation for university, and if they helped them succeed at university.

Those respondents who agreed were then asked to give more detail as to why they thought this. The quotes throughout this section are taken from these answers, with those relevant to specific statements included alongside that data.

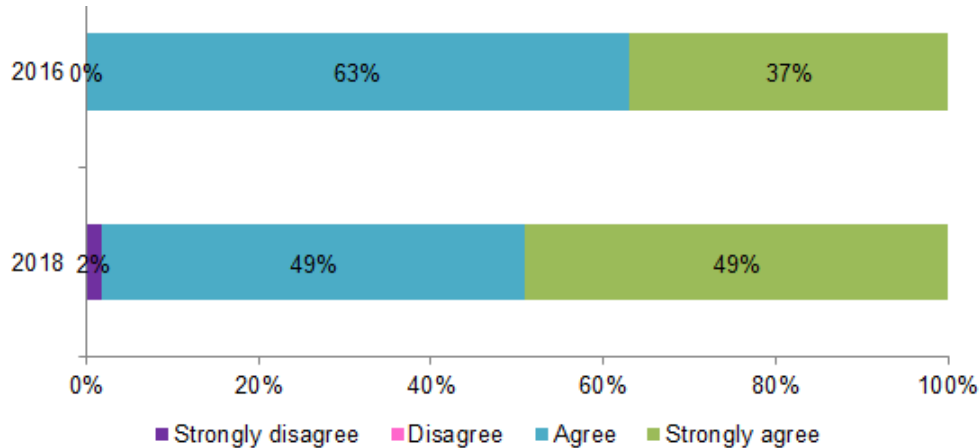
As such these quotes are to a degree unprompted: respondents were not specifically asked to provide further details for each of the nine attributes (such as critical thinking or essay writing skills).

A quote bank, which contains all of the answers to open ended questions, has been provided separately.

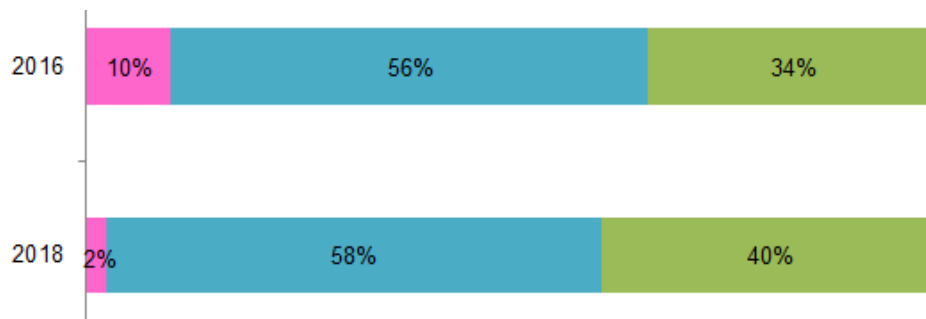
\* Quotations with an asterisk are from respondents who said that they would be happy for their comments to be attributed to their institution for use in our publicity material.

# Having in-depth subject knowledge

- ▶ Cambridge students have in-depth knowledge of their subject (with a greater proportion “strongly agreeing”)



- ▶ ... and stand out at having in-depth knowledge of their subject, compared to students with other qualifications



## In their own words

“They enter university with advanced knowledge in certain subject areas to succeed in that area”

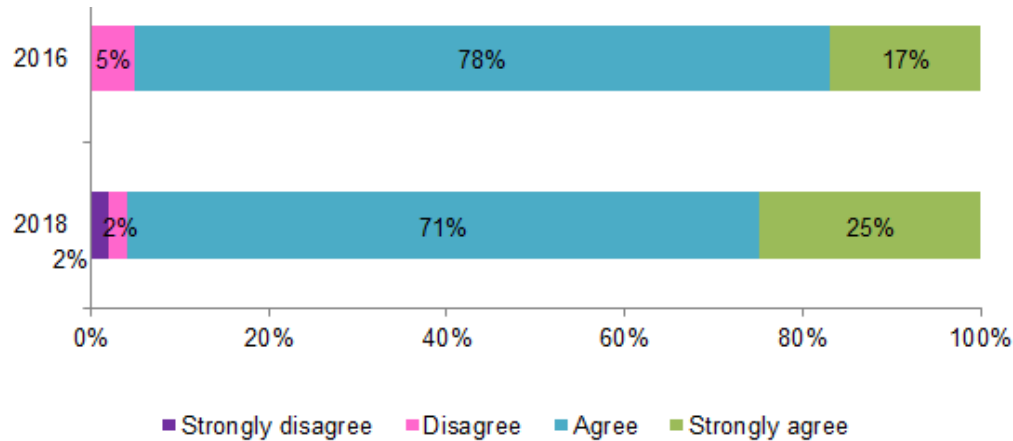
*United States*

“We acknowledge the rigor of preparation by awarding some university credit for exams in certain subjects and with certain grades.”

*United States*

# Thinking independently

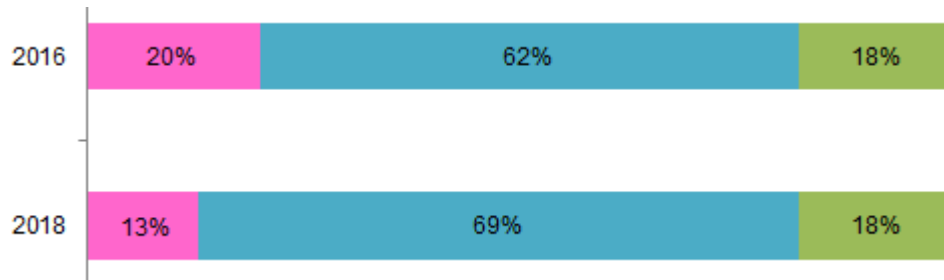
## ▶ Cambridge students think independently



### In their own words

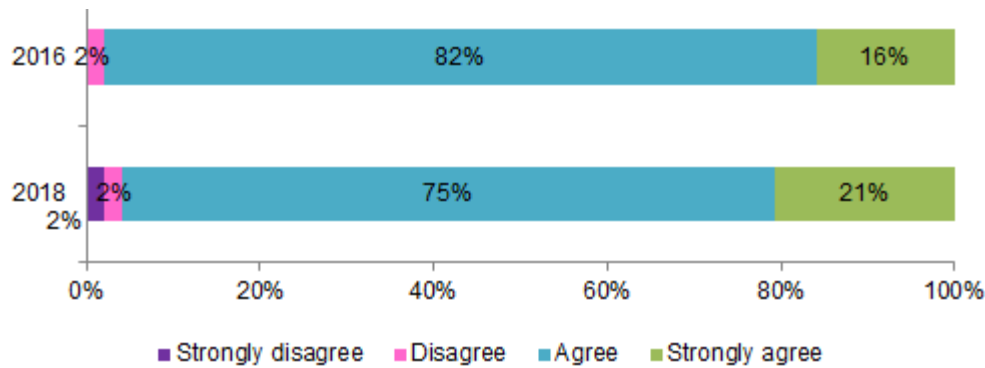
“The focus on independent study skills, critical thinking, and writing give students strong skills to succeed.”  
*United States*

## ▶ ... and stand out at thinking independently, compared to students with other qualifications

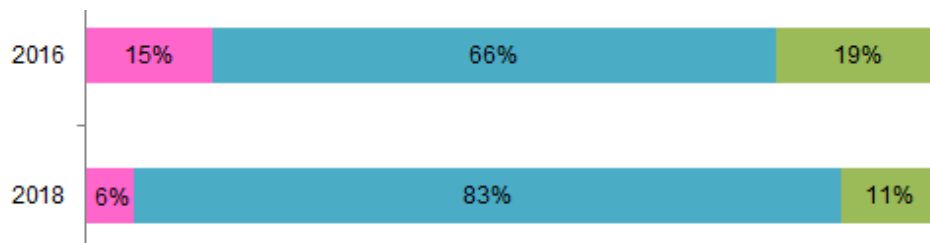


# Applying knowledge to new and familiar situations

- ▶ Cambridge students apply their knowledge and understanding to new and familiar situations

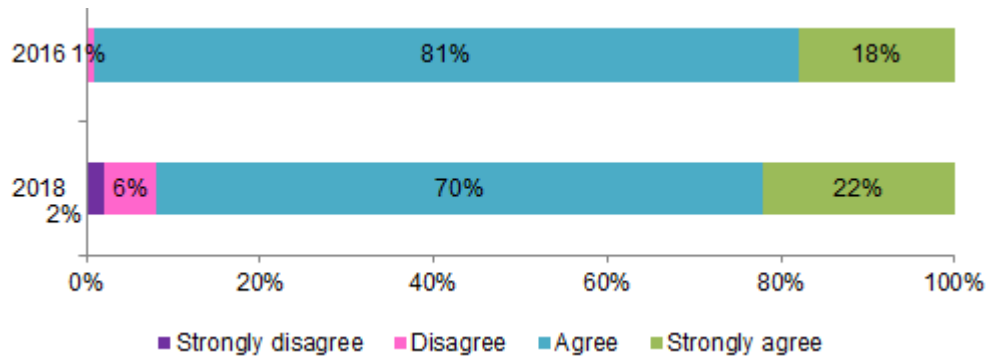


- ▶ ... and stand out at applying their knowledge and understanding to new and familiar situations, compared to students with other qualifications

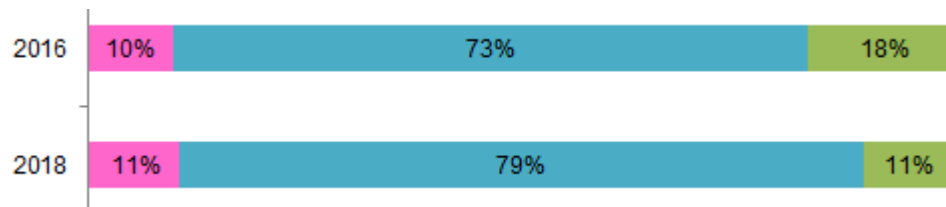


# Evaluating different types of information

- ▶ Cambridge students can handle and evaluate different types of information

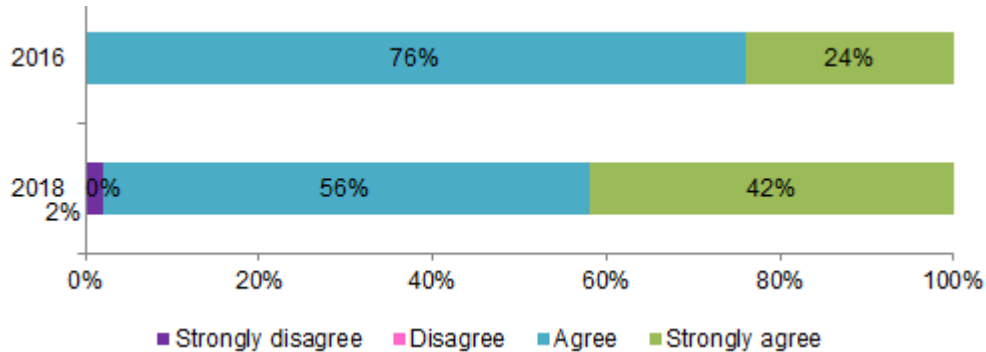


- ▶ ... and stand out at handling and evaluating different types of information thinking independently, compared to students with other qualifications

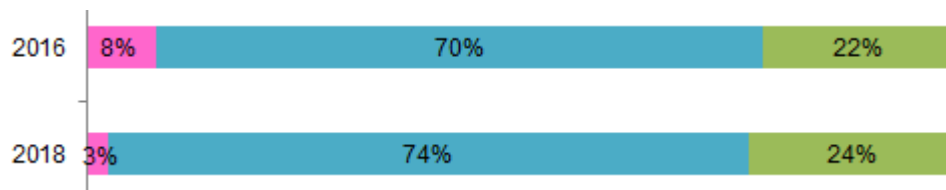


# Thinking logically and presenting coherent arguments

- ▶ Cambridge students think logically and present ordered and coherent arguments

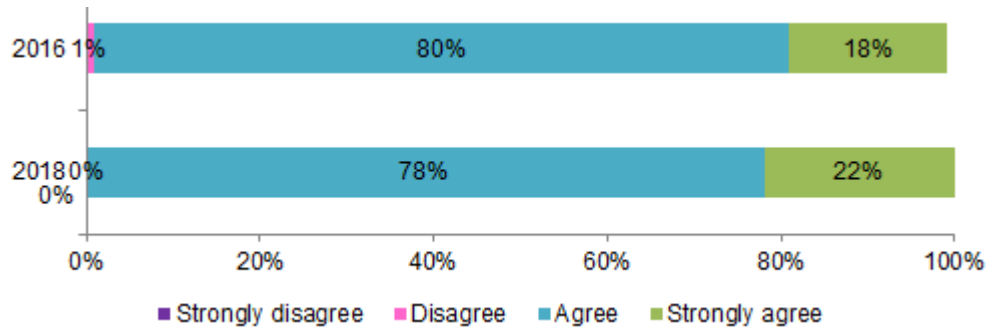


- ▶ ... and stand out at thinking logically and presenting ordered and coherent arguments, compared to students with other qualifications

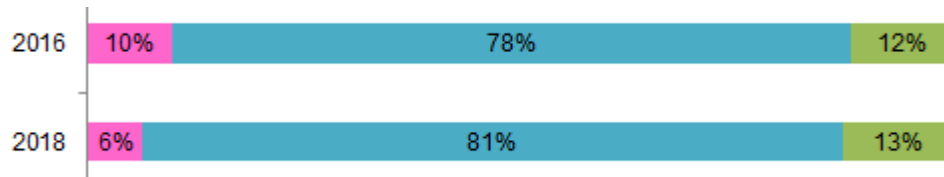


# Making good judgements and decisions

- ▶ Cambridge students make good judgements, recommendations and decisions



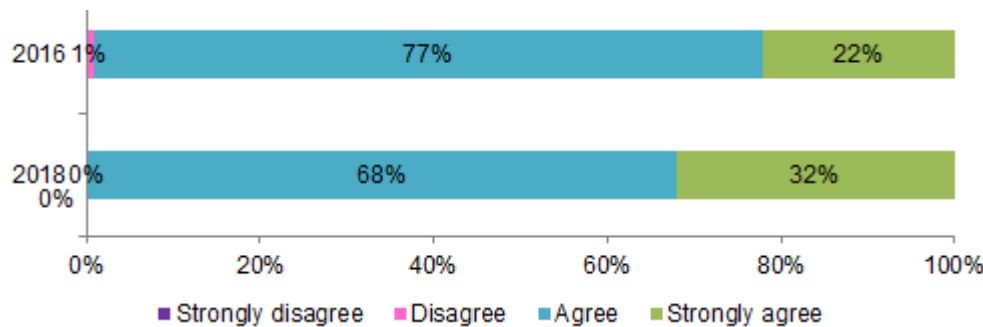
- ▶ ... and stand out at making good judgements, recommendations and decisions, compared to students with other qualifications



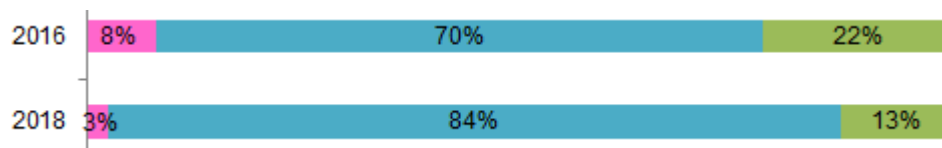


# Presenting explanations and communicating them clearly

- ▶ Cambridge students present reasoned explanations, understand implications and communicate them logically and clearly

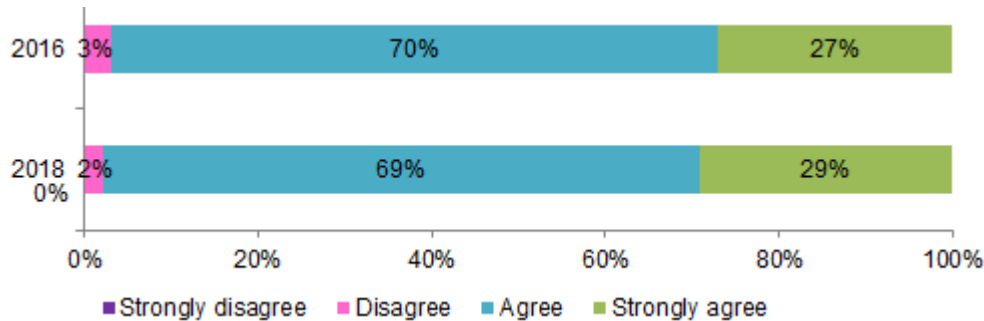


- ▶ ... and stand out at presenting reasoned explanations, understand implications and communicate them logically and clearly, compared to students with other qualifications

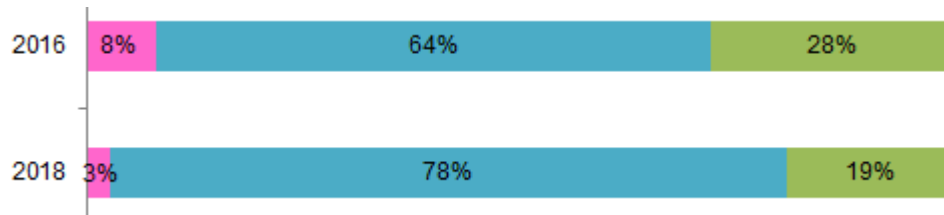


# Having strong essay writing ability

- ▶ Cambridge students have strong essay writing skills



- ▶ ... and stand out at having strong essay writing skills, compared to students with other qualifications



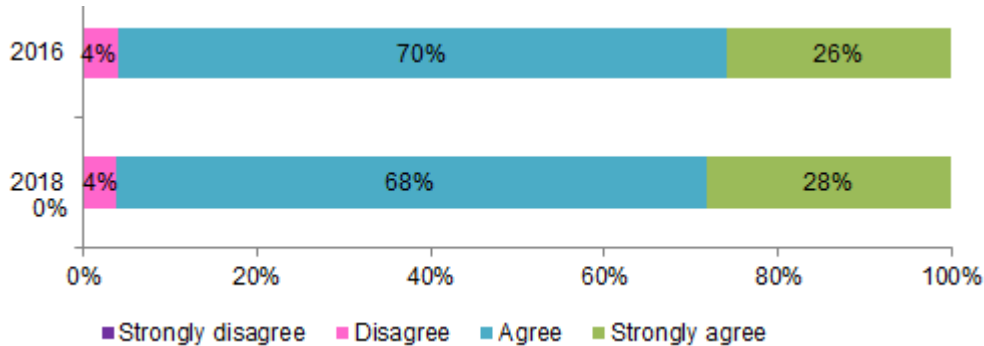
## In their own words

“Students who have excellent Cambridge qualifications typically do strong academic work here”  
*United States*

“The focus on independent study skills, critical thinking, and writing give students strong skills to succeed.”  
*United States*

# Being able to think critically

- ▶ Cambridge students are able to think critically

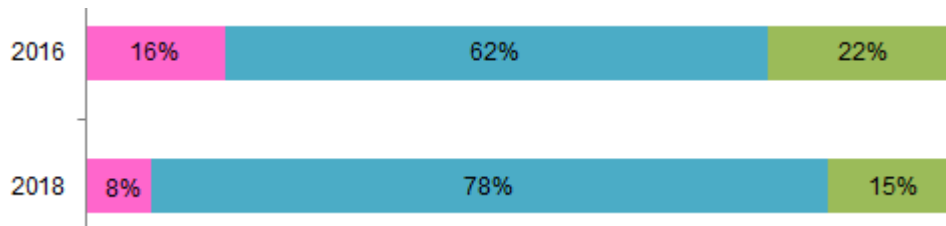


## In their own words

“The focus on independent study skills, critical thinking, and writing give students strong skills to succeed.”

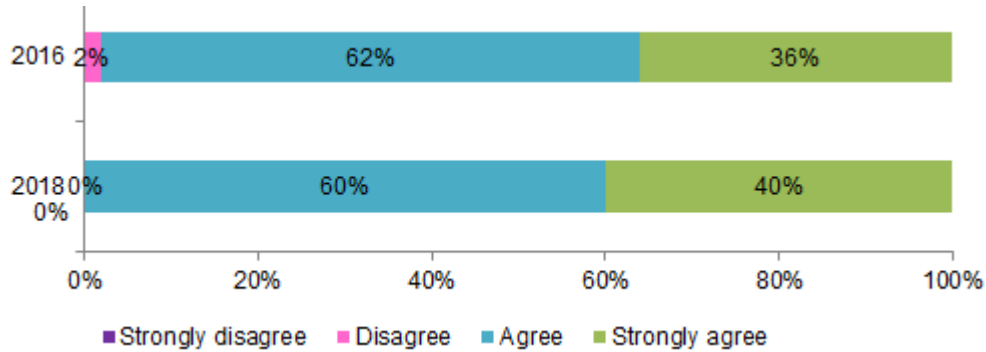
*United States*

- ▶ ... and stand out at thinking critically, compared to students with other qualifications

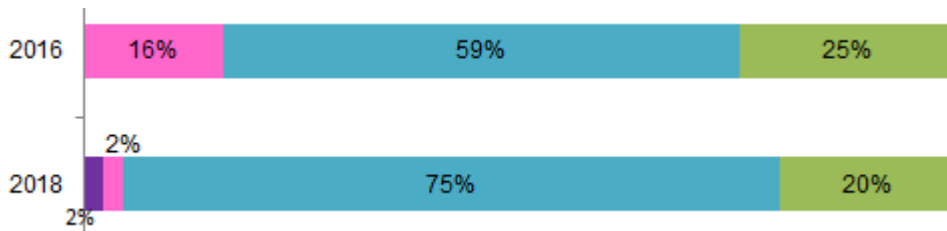


# Having an excellent preparation for university

- ▶ Cambridge qualifications give students an excellent preparation for university



- ▶ ... and in comparison with other students, Cambridge students stand out in terms of being very well prepared for university (with a greater share of respondents than in 2016 agreeing)



## In their own words

“The rigor of the program helps to prepare them for the rigor of college.”

*Creighton University, United States\**

“Cambridge A-Level courses require mastery of the skills we seek in applicants.”

*Bennington College, United States\**

“Students are typically more prepared than the average U.S. high school student.”

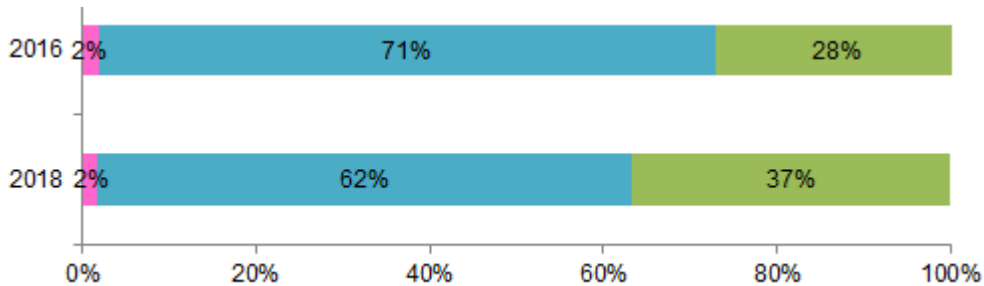
*United States*

“The academic background of an applicant who has studied Cambridge qualifications is ideal in preparing students for the transition to higher education and students with these qualifications perform well.”

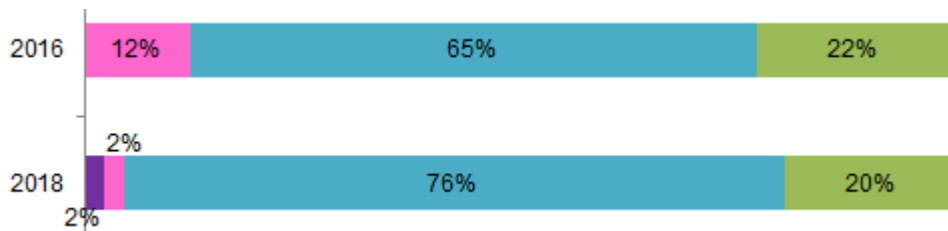
*United Kingdom*

# Succeeding at university

- ▶ Cambridge qualifications help students succeed at university



- ▶ ... and in comparison with other students, Cambridge students stand out as being very likely to succeed at university



## In their own words

“The focus on independent study skills, critical thinking, and writing give students strong skills to succeed.”

*United States*

“The students enrolled at the university were able to maintain superior grade point averages.”

*United States*

“Cambridge A-Level courses require a level of organization and discipline that's necessary to be successful.”

*Bennington College, United States\**

“Generally speaking, these students perform well in their first year of university, based on our own internal assessments of first year performance.”

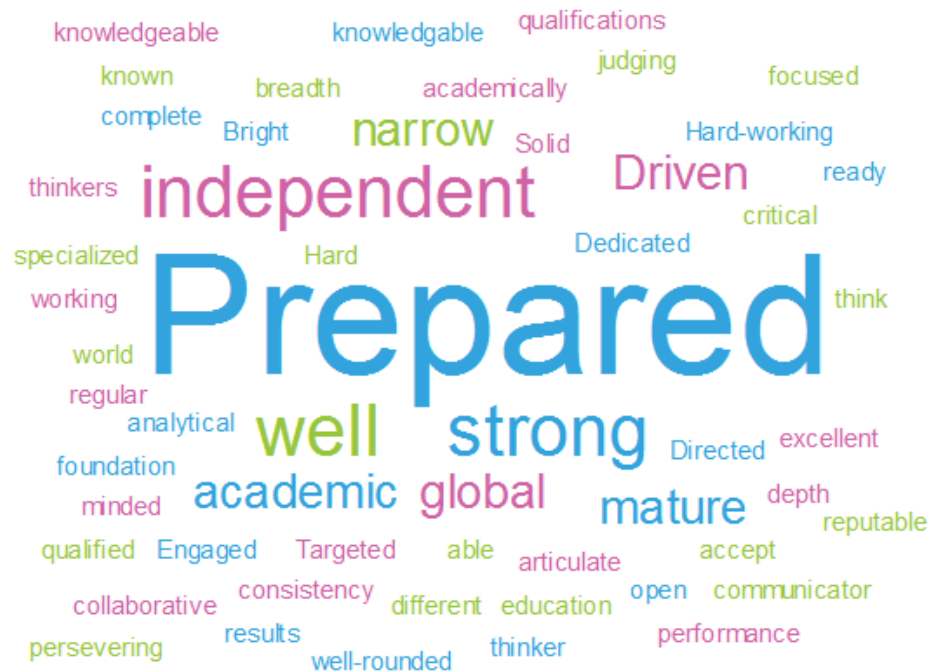
*Syracuse University, United States\**

“Students with Cambridge qualification usually achieve a 2.1 or above honours degree.”

*United Kingdom*

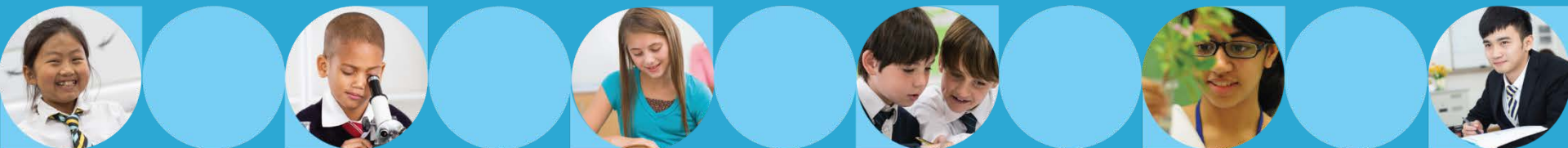
# The typical Cambridge student is prepared

“If you had to sum up a typical Cambridge student in three words, which words would you choose?”



- ▶ “Prepared, mature, strong student” (Creighton University, United States)
- ▶ “Bright, persevering” (Bennington College, United States)
- ▶ “Well-rounded, strong communicator” (Syracuse University, United States)
- ▶ “Hard-working, analytical, driven” (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, United States)

# Additional classification



# Which qualifications and exam boards are accepted

## Other qualifications accepted

	2016	2018
A level / International A Level	98%	61%
AS level / International AS level	72%	100%
GCSE / IGCSEs	70%	82%
Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE)	32%	85%
Cambridge O Level	58%	54%
Cambridge Pre-U	45%	75%
International Baccalaureate	98%	62%
European Baccalaureate	62%	100%
High School Diploma	88%	79%
Scottish Higher	1%	90%
STPM	3%	75%
STAM	0%	49%
MUET	2%	17%
Malaysian Matriculation Programme	2%	13%
NCEA	2%	34%
SSCE	2%	34%
Indian School Certificate (ISC)	0%	45%
Abitur	2%	79%
Fachabitur	2%	84%
HAVO	0%	35%
VWO	1%	34%
Other	25%	44%
None of the above	0%	0%

## International providers accepted for international A/AS levels or GCSEs (IGCSEs)

	2016	2018
Cambridge International (then Cambridge International Examinations)	98%	97%
Pearson Edexcel	72%	78%
Oxford AQA	(n/a)	65%





Cambridge Assessment  
International Education

# Learn more!

## Getting in touch with Cambridge is easy

Email [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org)  
or telephone +44 1223 553554

