IT

GCSE COMPUTING
J275
CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT
VERSION 1

OCR

Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   What is Controlled Assessment?

Controlled Assessment is a new form of internal assessment. Following a coursework review by QCA, Controlled Assessment has been introduced as part of nearly all new GCSEs, to replace coursework.

High, medium or low control levels are set for each of the Controlled Assessment processes: task setting, task taking and task marking. For each stage, the level of control will ensure reliability and authenticity, and make assessments more manageable for teachers and candidates.

Weighting of Controlled Assessments is defined by QCA subject criteria and, depending on the subject, will be 25% or 60% of the total assessment.

1.2   What does 'control' actually mean?

QCA has produced a *Glossary of terms for Controlled Assessment regulations.* The levels of controls are defined as follows:

- Formal supervision (High level of control) – the candidate must be in direct sight of the supervisor at all times. Use of resources and interaction with other candidates is tightly prescribed.

- Informal supervision (Medium level of control) – questions/tasks are outlined, the use of resources is not tightly prescribed and assessable outcomes may be informed by group work. Supervision is confined to (i) ensuring that the contributions of individual candidates are recorded accurately, and (ii) ensuring that plagiarism does not take place. The supervisor may provide limited guidance to candidates.

- Limited supervision (Low level of control) – requirements are clearly specified, but some work may be completed without direct supervision and will not contribute directly to assessable outcomes.

1.3   What is the purpose of this guide?

This Guide provides detailed information for teachers about how to manage Controlled Assessment: some of the information applies to all GCSE subjects and some information provides subject specific guidance. It is important to make the point that this Guide plays a secondary role to the Specification itself. The Specification is the document on which assessment is based and specifies what content and skills need to be covered in delivering the course. At all times,

therefore, this teacher support should be read in conjunction with the Specification. If clarification on a particular point is sought then that clarification should be found in the Specification itself.

Teaching of this qualification will vary greatly from school to school and from teacher to teacher. With that in mind, this Guide is offered as guidance but may be subject to modifications by the individual teacher.

2 Summary of Controlled Assessment Unit(s)

2.1 Unit A452: Practical investigation

Candidates carry out a practical investigation of a topic chosen from a set of options supplied by OCR.

Unit A452 ***Practical Investigation***	Controlled assessment An investigative task Approx 20 hours - 45 marks 30% of the qualification

2.2 Unit A453: Programming project

OCR will issue a range of assessment tasks each consisting of up to three sub tasks. The set of tasks within the controlled assessment will provide opportunities for the candidate to demonstrate their practical abilities to use the skills outlined in the specification.

Unit A453 ***Programming project***	Controlled assessment Approx 20 hours - 45 marks 30% of the qualification

2.3 Levels of control for controlled assessments

Internally assessed units apply the principles of controlled assessment. Controls are set within the assessment and in each of the stages of the assessment process:

Task setting: high level of control in relation to the setting of tasks. The controlled assessment tasks are set by OCR.

Task taking: this stage is divided into two different stages, each with a different level of control:
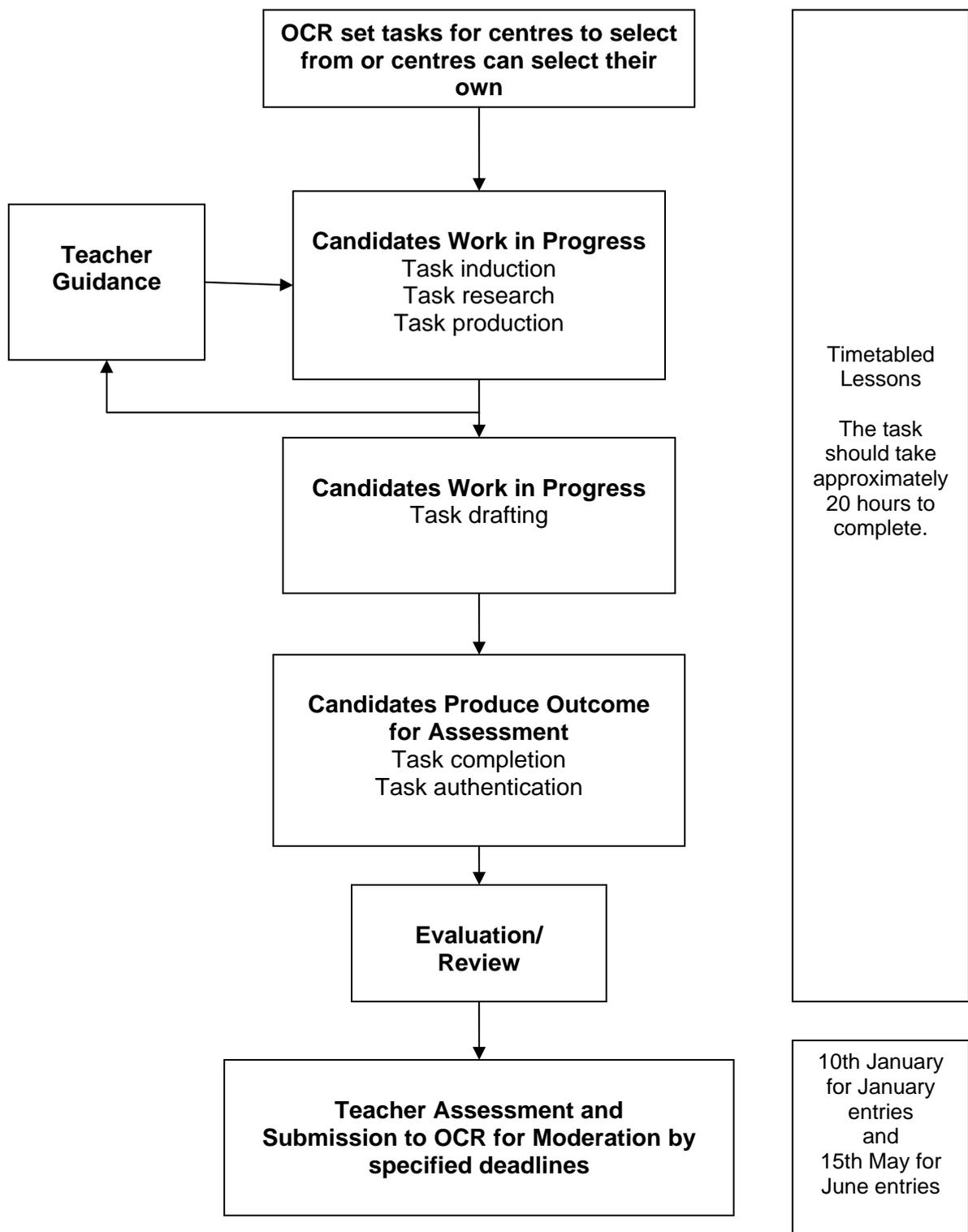- Research/data collection: low level of control
- Create a solution: medium level of control.

Task marking: medium level of control.
More information about each stage of the process is provided in the following sections of this guide.

3 Teacher guidance on how to plan Controlled Assessment

3.1   Controlled Assessment Delivery Flow Chart

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│  OCR set tasks for centres to   │
│  select from or centres can     │
│  select their own               │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
              │
              ▼
┌──────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Teacher    │─────▶│  Candidates Work in Progress │
│   Guidance   │      │       Task induction         │
│              │◀─────│       Task research          │
└──────────────┘      │       Task production        │
                      └─────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
                                    ▼
                      ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                      │  Candidates Work in Progress │
                      │        Task drafting         │
                      └─────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
                                    ▼
                      ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                      │   Candidates Produce Outcome │
                      │       for Assessment         │
                      │       Task completion        │
                      │       Task authentication    │
                      └─────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
                                    ▼
                          ┌──────────────────┐
                          │   Evaluation/    │
                          │     Review       │
                          └──────────────────┘
                                    │
                                    ▼
                      ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                      │    Teacher Assessment and    │
                      │  Submission to OCR for       │
                      │  Moderation by specified     │
                      │  deadlines                   │
                      └─────────────────────────────┘
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Timetabled Lessons

The task should take approximately 20 hours to complete.

10th January for January entries
and
15th May for June entries

3.2.1 Choice of Controlled Assessment task

All controlled assessment tasks are set by OCR.

Controlled assessment tasks will be available from Interchange from 1 June and will be reviewed every two years. Guidance on how to access controlled assessment tasks from Interchange is available on the OCR website: link to be given here.

Centres must ensure that candidates undertake a task applicable to the correct year of the examination by checking carefully the examination dates of the tasks on Interchange.

The candidate can complete the research phase in a group with limited supervision. The carrying out of the task must be completed individually and under direct supervision. The teacher must be able to authenticate the work.

Feedback to the candidate will be permissible but tightly defined. Within this specification, OCR expects teachers to equip the candidate with the knowledge, understanding and skills before they begin the Controlled Assessment task. It should be remembered that candidates are required to reach their own judgements and conclusions without any guidance or assistance. When supervising the Controlled Assessment task, teachers are expected to:

- Offer candidates advice on how best to prepare for the research/data collection elements of this unit

- Exercise continuing supervision of work in order to monitor progress and to prevent plagiarism

- Exercise continuing supervision of practical work to ensure essential compliance with Health and Safety requirements

- Ensure that the work is completed in accordance with the specification requirements and can be assessed in accordance with the specified marking criteria and procedures.

It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre to ensure that the controls set out in the specification and the individual units are imposed.

3.2.2 When and how to give Controlled Assessment tasks to students

Controlled Assessment tasks will be available from Interchange from 1 June to 15 May of the year prior to an assessment series, i.e. 1 June 2010 for assessment in June 2011 series.

For the first year, A452 and A453 will **not** be available for entry in January 2011. However, **all** units are available from January 2012 onwards.

3.3   Guidance on research/data collection

The Controlled Assessment task should be completed within the suggested time limit and supervised and marked by the teacher.

- Introduction to the task (teacher led)

Includes choice of tasks, possible approaches and sources of evidence, time allocations, programmes of work and deadlines, methods of working, control requirements.

- Research/collection of evidence

In the research stage, a low level of control is required, which means that candidates can undertake this part of the process without direct teacher supervision and outside the centre as required. Candidates are also able to work in collaboration during this stage. However, when producing their final piece of work, candidates must complete and/or evidence all work individually. With all internally assessed work, the teacher must be satisfied that the work submitted for assessment is the candidate's own work and be able to authenticate it using the specified procedure.

During the research phase candidates can be given support and guidance. Teachers can explain the task, advise on how the task could be approached, advise on resources and alert the candidate to key things that must be included in their final piece of work.

Access to resources will be limited to those appropriate to the Controlled Assessment task. Candidates will need to be provided with the most appropriate materials and equipment to allow them full access to the marking criteria, but this must be closely monitored and supervised.

Research material can include fieldwork, internet- or paper-based research, questionnaires, audio and video files etc. Candidates must be guided on the use of information from other sources to ensure that confidentiality and intellectual property rights are maintained at all times. It is essential that any material directly used from a source is appropriately and rigorously referenced.

3.4   Guidance on the production of the outcome

3.4.1 Controls for the production of the outcome

Teachers must keep live Controlled Assessment tasks secure and confidential at all times whilst in their possession. For example, candidates may collect the results of any research or investigations undertaken in a research folder which must be handed in to the teacher before the writing up sessions begin. In such circumstances, it is the responsibility of the teacher to keep the research folders secure between the writing up sessions and that candidates do not have access to these folders outside of the allotted sessions.

The controlled assessment units are set to be taken under Medium Control meaning students must complete all work, with the exception of research, under informal supervision. Informal supervision means that the teacher must be able to authenticate the work as the students' own unaided work. While the students do not <u>have</u> to be directly supervised at all times, there must be sufficient

supervision to ensure work can be authenticated. This does not rule out students having access to resources, working together for part of the assessment or limited teacher guidance.

Students should spend approximately 20 hours on the controlled assessment units. The time spent on the assessment does not need to be monitored or recorded by teachers but students should be encouraged not to exceed this approximate time allocation. Teachers may review work and offer generic advice and students are free to redraft work before submitting the final version, however, teachers must not give specific advice on improvements to meet the marking criteria or detailed feedback on errors or omissions. Any advice given to individuals should be recorded.

Students need to be prepared before starting their controlled assessment and the teacher should make sure the appropriate skills have been introduced before commencing the assessment.

For the practical investigation unit, A452, students will need to deal with new concepts and these may well be introduced as a class activity before starting the controlled assessment task. Following this preparation, students should be introduced to the task through teacher led activity, then group activity and finally into individual work on the task.

The tasks set will reflect a specific part of the specification and teachers may well choose to follow up that section of the specification with the controlled assessment rather than leave those to be completed as isolated tasks.

Since units A451 and A453 contain significant overlap one proposed method of delivery is to run two parallel strands, one for the theory and one for the programming element. Unit A453 is made up from three tasks and teachers may choose to get students to complete each of these three tasks separately as the skills are delivered throughout the course.

There is no reason why students should be limited to completing just one of the controlled assessment sets for either of these units and if time is available, teachers may choose to complete more than one set of tasks and submit the best one for the final assessment or simply use the A452 tasks to support teaching of a specific element of the specification.

For example over 5 terms in two years the pattern may be something like this:

A451 theory strand									
Programming Skills									
				A452 tasks					A452 tasks
			A453 task 1			A453 task 2		A453 task 3	

But there are considerable advantages in keeping the A453 tasks as a single entity.

3.4.2 Controlled Assessment task security

It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that downloaded Controlled Assessment Tasks and candidates' scripts are stored securely. Any breach in security must be reported to OCR as soon a possible by submitting a written report (a blank report form is available on Interchange) from Head

of Centre to OCR Quality and Standards Division detailing the circumstances, the candidates concerned and any action taken.

Candidates' scripts for all completed Controlled Assessment tasks must be stored securely and they should be available for moderation. It is suggested that they are destroyed after the last date for Enquiries about Results following the examination series in which entries for the units concerned are made.

Candidate absence at the time of assessment

If a candidate is absent from a centre when an assessment is carried out, the Controlled Assessment task may be set at an alternative time provided that the centre is satisfied that security has been maintained by keeping all materials secure.

Unexpected circumstances

If an unexpected problem (such as a fire alarm or other circumstances beyond the teachers' control) occurs while a Controlled Assessment task is taking place, the task may be resumed subsequently provided the teacher ensures that no candidate is likely to have been advantaged or disadvantaged by doing so.

3.4.3 Presentation of work

Candidates must observe certain procedures in the production of controlled assessment tasks.

- Tables, graphs and spreadsheets may be produced using appropriate ICT. These should be inserted into the report at the appropriate place.

- Any copied material must be suitably acknowledged.

- Quotations must be clearly marked and a reference provided wherever possible.

- Work submitted for moderation or marking must be marked with the:

  – centre number;
  – centre name;
  – candidate number;
  – candidate name;
  – unit code and title;
  – assignment title.

Work submitted on paper for moderation or marking must be secured by treasury tags. Work submitted in digital format (CD or online) must be in a suitable file structure as detailed in Appendix A at the end of this specification.

4 Teacher guidance on task marking

4.1 Generic guidance on how to mark Controlled Assessment tasks

The starting point for marking the tasks is the marking criteria (see section *4.2.3 Marking Criteria for controlled assessments* below). These contain levels of criteria for the skills, knowledge and understanding that the candidate is required to demonstrate. Before the start of the course, and for use at INSET training events, OCR will provide exemplification through real or simulated candidate work which will help to clarify the level of achievement the assessors should be looking for when awarding marks.

The assessment task(s) for each unit should be marked by teachers according to the given marking criteria within the relevant unit using a 'best fit' approach. For each of the assessment objectives/criteria, teachers select one of the five band descriptors provided in the marking grid that most closely describes the quality of the work being marked.

Marking should be positive, rewarding achievement rather than penalising failure or omissions. The award of marks **must be** directly related to the marking criteria.

Teachers use their professional judgement in selecting the band descriptor that best describes the work of the candidate.

To select the most appropriate mark within the band descriptor, teachers should use the following guidance:

- where the candidate's work *convincingly* meets the statement, the highest mark should be awarded;

- where the candidate's work *adequately* meets the statement, the most appropriate mark in the middle range should be awarded;

- where the candidate's work *just* meets the statement, the lowest mark should be awarded.

Teachers should use the full range of marks available to them and award *full* marks in any band for work which fully meets that descriptor. This is work which is 'the best one could expect from candidates working at that level'. Where there are only two marks within a band the choice will be between work which, in most respects, meets the statement and work which just meets the statement. For wider mark bands the marks on either side of the middle mark(s) for 'adequately met' should be used where the standard is lower or higher than 'adequate' but **not** the highest or lowest mark in the band.

Only one mark per assessment objective/criteria will be entered. The final mark for the candidate for the controlled assessment unit is out of a total of *45* and is found by totalling the marks for each of the marking objective/criteria strands.

A452

The material covered in the investigations is intended to extend that which is itemised in the rest of the specification, so that the study of the subject remains interesting and challenging. This unit is intended to be largely practical based but the candidates' work will need to be presented in a clear and logical manner so that assessment is possible. Background research and preparation are required for the successful completion of this assessment. Some preparatory investigations may be teacher guided although the candidate is expected to show as much independence and initiative as possible. Once the assignment itself is under way, the amount of teacher guidance should be limited. For example, if coding is required, the student may be taught relevant techniques in advance, but should carry out the actual assessed tasks unaided.

The candidate will produce a report which should be structured according to the headings given in the particular assignment that has been chosen. The report will be assessed as a whole under the criteria headings given.

Practical activity

The student should approach the tasks in a methodical way, so some evidence of planning is expected. For example, the hardware and software that are required should be stated with reasons given. Thought should be given to the order in which sub tasks are to be carried out so that important stages are not omitted. The assessment will normally involve the acquisition of new skills and these should be identified in advance as far as possible. Background research may be necessary and if this is relevant, this should be planned and documented. Websites and other sources consulted should be cited.

In order to score marks in the higher bands, the work needs to be clearly presented and showing evidence of independent work.

Effectiveness and efficiency

How this is shown will depend greatly upon the nature of the task chosen. For example, if there is an element of coding, then the algorithms used should ideally be the minimal required in order to achieve the objectives. If data files are involved, these should be organised in a logical and clear manner such that any future maintenance would be assisted. This criterion also allows a judgement to be made as to whether the solution to each task is completely successful or only partially so.

A report that scores highly in this section will demonstrate a complete solution to all the tasks and will show conciseness both in its execution and the presentation of evidence of success.

Technical understanding

This criterion focuses on whether the candidate clearly understands the details and processes involved in the tasks. A good candidate will be confident and fluent in the use of technical terminology and show in depth understanding of the central and peripheral issues involved. The best reports will contain significant detail so that the reader is in no doubt of the candidate's competence.

Testing, evaluation and conclusions

The nature of the testing will vary considerably according to the tasks chosen. The best reports will show that testing has been as complete as is appropriate to the situation. They will be logically set out and show that the testing has been planned. They will communicate the purpose and results of the testing with clarity and economy of language.

As with the programming unit, A453, detailed means sufficiently detailed to clearly explain, identify or describe that component and not that the section is complete in every respect with no omissions. The middle mark bands where detail is not required imply that there are obvious omissions and the description does not cover all the necessary aspects. In the lower mark bands there will be significant lack of detail obscuring the descriptions.

Most A452 activities ask for specific comments about how the scenario connects with real-world computing. Evaluations should include detailed comments about the questions posed in this section and these will require some background research. Evaluation should also include comments on the effectiveness of any solutions produced by the candidate.

A453

Programming techniques

This section lists the standard programming techniques students will need to draw upon when completing the controlled assessment unit A453.
The standard techniques listed are:
Program control; sequence, conditionals (for example IF THEN or CASE) and iteration
Loops; count and condition controlled (for example repeat and while constructs)
Data types; string, integer, real and Boolean including string manipulation functions
File handling; serial files only using open, read, write and close.
Arrays; limited to single dimensional arrays

The inclusion of the technique here does not mean that it will have to be used in the solution to the controlled assessment, merely that the assessments will not require other techniques. Candidates are assessed on their use of appropriate techniques in the solutions to the tasks. Candidates are also free to use any technique they regard as appropriate even if it is not listed in this section, for example a candidate may feel use of a multi-dimensional array provides a better solution to a task, this is perfectly acceptable.
There are 18 marks for the use of programming techniques, 9 for using a suitable range of techniques that solve all parts of the controlled assessment and 9 for using the most appropriate techniques effectively. This means a fully working solution to all parts of the assessment may score 9/9 for use of techniques but less than this if the use of those techniques is inefficient and / or inappropriate.

Design

This is a standard starting point to dealing with the set tasks:
Identify what the problem is and any requirements
Design suitable algorithms that define a solution to the problem. These algorithms should show the logical processes behind the proposed solutions.
Depending upon the task suitable input and output formats or navigation methods may need to be identified. We are not asking for complete sets of hand drawn screen layouts or extensive test plans merely an indication that they have considered what the final solution should look like and how it will be navigated.

The tasks will certainly require the candidate to use variables and the variable name, type and any necessary validation should be identified. The use of correct variable types and meaningful variable names will be assessed within the development section but the basis for this lies within this element of the process.

Since we expect the system to be tested during development the candidates need to identify suitable test procedures they will use as they develop their solutions and for use on the completed solution. These test procedures should closely match the requirements for a successful solution to the problem they identified in the analysis section.

Development

This section is concerned with showing how the candidate progressed from the design to the solution. Evidence of coding, testing and refinement towards a working solution is what will be assessed. The solutions should be clearly structured with suitable annotation to explain the processes and with meaningful variable names within the usual accepted conventions (for example the use of i, j and k as index variables). A logical approach to development showing each stage and explaining how it works and how it was tested and refined will often provide sufficient annotation to explain the process.

Testing and evaluation

The test plan should cover all aspects of the design success criteria and will test the function of the system. If testing identifies an issue the candidate should attempt to solve this and re test or should explain why the system has failed to meet their success criteria. The traditional test plan will be appropriate here with test, reason for test, test data use, expected results, actual results and comments. A significant element of testing will also be evident within the development and this need not be repeated, the development testing will usually cover most of the basic functionality of the system. This section is the appropriate place to comment on the development testing process and how successful this was (or was not).

Throughout the marking guidance detailed means sufficiently detailed to clearly explain, identify or describe that component and not that the section is complete in every respect with no omissions. The middle mark bands where detail is not required imply that there are obvious omissions and the description does not cover all the necessary aspects. In the lower mark bands there will be significant lack of detail obscuring the descriptions.

4.3   Authentication of Controlled Assessment outcomes

Teachers must be confident that the work they mark is the candidate's own. This does not mean that a candidate must be supervised throughout the completion of all work but the teacher must exercise sufficient supervision, or introduce sufficient checks, to be in a position to judge the authenticity of the candidate's work.

Wherever possible, the teacher should discuss work-in-progress with candidates. This will not only ensure that work is underway in a planned and timely manner but will also provide opportunities for assessors to check authenticity of the work and provide general feedback.

Candidates must not plagiarise. Plagiarism is the submission of another's work as one's own and/or failure to acknowledge the source correctly. Plagiarism is considered to be malpractice and could lead to the candidate being disqualified. Plagiarism sometimes occurs innocently when candidates are unaware of the need to reference or acknowledge their sources. It is therefore important that centres ensure that candidates understand that the work they submit must be their own and that they understand the meaning of plagiarism and what penalties may be applied. Candidates may refer to research, quotations or evidence but they must list their sources. The rewards from acknowledging sources, and the credit they will gain from doing so, should be

emphasised to candidates as well as the potential risks of failing to acknowledge such material. Candidates may be asked to sign a declaration to this effect. Centres should reinforce this message to ensure candidates understand what is expected of them.

Please note: Centres must confirm to OCR that the evidence produced by candidates is authentic. The Centre Authentication Form includes a declaration for assessors to sign and is available from the OCR website and Interchange.

4.4 Internal Standardisation of Controlled Assessment

It is important that all internal assessors, working in the same subject area, work to common standards. Centres must ensure that the internal standardisation of marks across assessors and teaching groups takes place using an appropriate procedure.

This can be done in a number of ways. In the first year, reference material and OCR training meetings will provide a basis for centres' own standardisation. In subsequent years, this, or centres' own archive material, may be used. Centres are advised to hold preliminary meetings of staff involved to compare standards through cross-marking a small sample of work. After most marking has been completed, a further meeting at which work is exchanged and discussed will enable final adjustments to be made.

4.5 Moderation of Controlled Assessment

All work for controlled assessment is marked by the teacher and internally standardised by the centre. Marks are then submitted to OCR, after which moderation takes place in accordance with OCR procedures: refer to the OCR website for submission dates of the marks to OCR. The purpose of moderation is to ensure that the standard of the award of marks for work is the same for each centre and that each teacher has applied the standards appropriately across the range of candidates within the centre.

The sample of work which is presented to the Moderator for moderation must show how the marks have been awarded in relation to the marking criteria.

Each candidate's work should have a cover sheet attached to it with a summary of the marks awarded for the task. If the work is to be submitted in digital format, this cover sheet should also be submitted electronically within each candidate's files.

4.6 Minimum requirements for Controlled Assessment

There should be clear evidence that work has been attempted and some work produced. If a candidate submits no work for an internally assessed component, then the candidate should be indicated as being absent from that component on the mark sheets submitted to OCR. If a candidate completes any work at all for an internally assessed component, then the work should be assessed according to the internal assessment objectives and marking instructions and the appropriate mark awarded, which may be zero.

4.7   Submission date for Controlled Assessment

Candidates' marks must be despatched to the Moderator and to OCR. Please refer to the OCR website for details of submission dates relevant to the current series of examinations.

5   FAQs

What are the dates in which the controlled assessments can be taken?

Controlled Assessment is a form of internal assessment and as such there isn't a specified date in which controlled assessment has to be taken.

It is up to the centre to decide when controlled assessment will be taken: guidance on this can be found in Section 5: Controlled Assessment of all revised GCSE Specifications (first teaching in September 2010).

When can teachers and candidates access the material?

Controlled Assessment tasks will be available from Interchange on 1 June of the year prior to an assessment series, i.e. 1 June 2010 for assessment in June 2011 series.

Tasks will be reviewed every two years and it is the responsibility of centres to make sure that candidates are submitting the correct task. Tasks will be taken off Interchange on 15 May if they are no longer valid

Can any preparation work be done out of the classroom?

Yes. Controls are set at the level of tasks setting, task taking and task marking. Preparation work comes into the task taking level, under Research and Data Collection, which have a limited level of control i.e. work can be carried out without direct supervision. More guidance on this can be found can be found in Section 5: Controlled Assessment of all revised GCSE Specifications (first teaching in September 2010).

Is there a minimum or maximum time that can be spent on the assessments?

Suggested time limits vary per subject: there are suggested time limits given in Section 5: Controlled Assessment of all revised GCSE Specifications (first teaching in September 2010).

Where can the Controlled materials be accessed and by whom?

Controlled Assessment tasks and other documents are accessed via Interchange.

Centre access to the Interchange controlled assessment area will be available to the registered Centre User (normally the Examinations Officer). However, the Centre User can set access permissions to others within their centre, eg HODs, subject leaders or subject teachers.

How long is each assessment valid for i.e can they use last year's one this year?

Tasks will be reviewed every two years and it is the responsibility of centres to make sure that candidates are submitting are still valid.

Where can the Mark Schemes be accessed?

Mark Schemes are included in the specifications and can also be accessed from the OCR website. Mark Schemes are attached at the end of each Sample Assessment Material.

Do we have to take the controlled assessment under exam conditions/teacher supervision?

Yes, but only for task taking, i.e. the last part of controlled assessment when candidates are producing their final piece of work – note that this can be over more than one supervised session. More guidance on this can be found can be found in Section 5: Controlled Assessment of all revised GCSE Specifications (first teaching in September 2010).

Are the controlled assessments the same as written examinations, can we resit?

Yes, candidates can resit controlled assessed units but as with any other unit, candidates can only resit once. Also, the 40% terminal rule means that 40% of the assessment has to be taken in the examination series in which the qualification has to be awarded.

Note, however, that the original controlled assessment submission may not be returned to the candidate and they MUST start again and MUST NOT be allowed to modify their original submission.

Centres have the responsibility to ensure that the correct tasks are used for a controlled assessment resit.

Are materials sent based on estimated entries or can we download them from Interchange ?

Tasks will only be available as downloads from Interchange: they will not be sent to centres.

Do we mark them or do OCR ?

Controlled assessment tasks for ALL subjects are internally marked by centres and externally moderated by OCR.

When do we start and finish the controlled assessment?

Controlled Assessment is a form of internal assessment and as such there isn't a specified date in which controlled assessment has to be taken. Tasks are available from Interchange from 1 June of the year prior to an assessment series.

It is up to the centre to decide when controlled assessment will be taken: guidance on this can be found in Section 5: Controlled Assessment of all revised GCSE Specifications (first teaching in September 2010).

Are new tasks set every year with a new mark scheme?

Yes and No, tasks will be set and be available for a number of examination sessions. New tasks will be produced over time and we may retire older tasks during the life of the specification.

Can I just choose electronic or postal submission once I have the work from the candidate and use the most appropriate method?

No, you must decide when entering the candidates which method you will use and you must send work by that method to the moderators.

Do all of my candidates have to do the same set of tasks?

No, you can choose from the available tasks to suit the needs and interests of individual candidates.

Do the candidates have to demonstrate every attribute in a mark band in order to achieve the relevant mark?

No, it is a best fit approach.

Do we have to do specific topic each year from the pre-release materials?

No, OCR will be issuing two topics initially with more to follow later; you are free to choose from any of the currently available topics.

What formats can we use? Can we assume the moderators have access to any necessary programs?

OCR publishes a list of acceptable formats and moderators will have access to these but you cannot assume the moderators will be have access to any specific software and you must ensure common formats are used.

Will tasks be retired while my candidates are working on them and I will have to start again?

No, we will give plenty of notice if we decide to withdraw a task and this will be well before any candidates have started to work on them.

A452

Can candidates work together on the assignments?

Yes, they are expected to, but the reports must be their own and the part that each candidate plays must be clearly documented. Cooperation will probably be limited because each candidate is expected to demonstrate personal ability to perform the practical tasks.

Can the candidates simply research these topics on the internet and produce a report?

No, they should supplement the findings from their practical investigation with research from the internet, but they are meant to spend a significant proportion of their time in practical activity for this unit.

Can the work be submitted electronically or must it be a typed report?

The work can be submitted electronically or via the postal system. The work may take the form of a typed report but there must be evidence of practical activity and this may be more easily presented in other ways than a typed report. If submitted electronically, then any of the approved formats will be acceptable. If submitted by post, then these are still acceptable if sent on a virus checked medium.

Is it permissible for the research aspect of the assignment to be all secondary?

No, they must acquire some information from their own practical activities and ideally from contact with IT professionals as well.

Must the candidates carry out the practical investigations personally or can they research the answers from other sources such as the internet?

Candidates must carry out practical work and demonstrate that they have done so.

The specimen scenario contains terms that are not in the specification. To what extent are the candidates expected to use of terms beyond the material given in the specification?

They should look up all the terms that are in the scenario. This will lead to other terms that will probably be relevant in their responses. The candidates should display a secure understanding of the scenario by the correct use of technical terms obtained from their researches so it is expected that there will be terms and concepts that are not specified in the specification.

What sort of tasks do you envisage we will see over the next few years?

We plan to develop a set of tasks that extends elements of each major part of the specification and hope these will be used to extend candidates' knowledge of a wide range of topics.

Will candidates be penalised if their secondary sources are all web based?

No, most information is available online these days and to insist on paper resources is unrealistic.

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Can candidates use additional modules to produce solutions, for example those available within VB.net?

Yes, using additional modules is acceptable, though in many cases not necessary but the use of such modules may make for more attractive and functional results. This extra functionality will not necessarily attract extra marks.

Can I select the most suitable subtasks for my candidates from the options available?

No. The sets of tasks must be seen as a single item and you may not pick and choose from within these. The sets of tasks have been designed to cover as many aspects of the specification as feasible and form a single assessment.

Can the candidates use any method to solve the problems for example a spreadsheet or a database?

No, this is a coding exercise and tasks are set in order to test computer programming skills. If the question involves storing and retrieving data for example candidates are expected to produce a coded solution.

Do the candidates have to utilise all of the programming techniques to score full marks?

No, the techniques may not all be appropriate and different tasks, different approaches, different programming languages will make some techniques unsuitable. The effective and efficient use of a range of appropriate techniques from the specification is what we are looking for.

What programming language must we use?

You may use any suitable programming language to solve the problems. In some cases a recommendation will be made to ensure the tasks are not overly difficult but in general any language will be fine.

6   Guidance on downloading Controlled Assessment tasks from Interchange

Before you start

Controlled Assessment materials will be available to download from OCR Interchange from June 2010.

In order to use Interchange for the first time, you just need to register your centre by returning the Interchange Agreement. This can be downloaded from the OCR website at http://www.ocr.org.uk/interchange

If your centre already has an Interchange user account, you will need to be assigned the 'Tutor / teacher' Interchange role to access Controlled Assessment materials. Your Interchange Centre Administrator can assign this for you.

Step 1 – Log into Interchange

Click on the following link https://interchange.ocr.org.uk

Enter your log in details

Step 2 – Navigate to Controlled Assessment materials area

Click on 'Coursework and tests'

Click on 'Controlled Assessment materials'

** If you are unable to see either of these menu items then it is likely that you do not have the 'Tutor / teacher' role assigned to you.

Step 3 – Search for materials

You can search for materials by unit code. Enter the unit code and click on the 'search' button.

Or, you can search for materials by subject information by selecting from the 'drop down' options.

All available documents will be displayed below the search.

Click on the document link, the document will open in your browser

Click on 'Save As' to save to a location of your choice.

Step 5 – Troubleshooting

If you search for an invalid unit code, the following error message will be displayed.

If you search for a valid unit code but there is no document currently available, the following message will be displayed.

If you search via the 'drop down' menus but there is no document currently available, the following message will be displayed.

7   Guidance for the Production of Electronic Controlled Assessment

Structure for evidence

A controlled assessment portfolio is a collection of folders and files containing the candidate's evidence. Folders should be organised in a structured way so that the evidence can be accessed easily by a teacher or moderator. This structure is commonly known as a folder tree. It would be helpful if the location of particular evidence is made clear by naming each file and folder appropriately and by use of an index called 'Home Page'.

There should be a top level folder detailing the candidate's centre number, candidate number, surname and forename, together with the unit code B033, so that the portfolio is clearly identified as the work of one candidate.

Each candidate produces an assignment for controlled assessment. The evidence should be contained within a separate folder within the portfolio. This folder may contain separate files.

Each candidate's controlled assessment portfolio should be stored in a secure area on the Centre's network. Prior to submitting the controlled assessment portfolio to OCR, the centre should add a folder to the folder tree containing controlled assessment and summary forms.

Data formats for evidence

In order to minimise software and hardware compatibility issues it will be necessary to save candidates' work using an appropriate file format.

Candidates must use formats appropriate to the evidence that they are providing and appropriate to viewing for assessment and moderation. Open file formats or proprietary formats for which a downloadable reader or player is available are acceptable. Where this is not available, the file format is not acceptable.

Electronic controlled assessment is designed to give candidates an opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do using current technology. Candidates do not gain marks for using more sophisticated formats or for using a range of formats. A candidate who chooses to use only word documents will not be disadvantaged by that choice.

Evidence submitted is likely to be in the form of word processed documents, PowerPoint presentations, digital photos and digital video.

To ensure compatibility, all files submitted must be in the formats listed below. Where new formats become available that might be acceptable, OCR will provide further guidance. OCR advises against changing the file format that the document was originally created in. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the electronic portfolios submitted for moderation are accessible to the moderator and fully represent the evidence available for each candidate.

Accepted File Formats
Movie formats for digital video evidence
MPEG (*.mpg)
QuickTime movie (*.mov)
Macromedia Shockwave (*.aam)
Macromedia Shockwave (*.dcr)
Flash (*.swf)
Windows Media File (*.wmf)
MPEG Video Layer 4 (*.mp4)
Audio or sound formats
MPEG Audio Layer 3 (*.mp3)
Graphics formats including photographic evidence
JPEG (*.jpg)
Graphics file (*.pcx)
MS bitmap (*.bmp)
GIF images (*.gif)
Animation formats
Macromedia Flash (*.fla)
Structured markup formats
XML (*xml)
Text formats
Comma Separated Values (.csv)
PDF (.pdf)
Rich text format (.rtf)
Text document (.txt)
Microsoft Office suite
PowerPoint (.ppt)
Word (.doc)
Excel (.xls)
Visio (.vsd)
Project (.mpp)

8 Controlled Assessment student guidelines

8.1 Task setting

For this subject OCR will provide a list of tasks for you to select from. The task will be set, however you may be able to adapt the task or select your own. This should be done in consultation with your teacher.

8.2 Task taking

8.2.1 What can I do in relation to research, drafting and re-drafting?

Your teacher will discuss the briefs/tasks on offer and the proposed areas of enquiry and the resources available. An induction period into the research methods, sourcing and the use of equipment may also take place. Time constraints and a programme should be adopted and this will be explained by your teacher.

Your research and planning may involve interviews, fieldwork, visits, library research, internet research or questionnaires. You should keep a record of the sources you have consulted at this stage and this will form part of your portfolio. You should provide a plan of action to the teacher which can be discussed. You teacher will inform you what materials are appropriate and inappropriate.

Your draft piece will be discussed with your teacher and they may offer advice, answer any questions and give feedback. Throughout this process your teacher will supervise to ensure there is no plagiarism and will ensure all your work is within the Health and Safety requirements and that all students work is in accordance with the Controlled Assessment regulations. At no stage will model answers be provided. You should reach your own conclusions and make your own judgements and any teacher support will be recorded.

You may be given opportunity to edit, check redraft and reorganise your work. During this period your teacher may make general observations but will not give any specific advice.

8.2.2 How much teacher support can I expect?

During your work for Controlled Assessment you must produce work/evidence independently but your teacher will be able to give you some advice, support, guidance and feedback but the amount will vary depending upon the type of task you are doing.

You must make your own judgements and draw your own conclusions but your teacher will:

- offer advice about how best to approach a task

- offer guidance on the way you work in groups so that you all have an opportunity to tackle your tasks

- offer guidance about the availability and choice of materials and resources, although how these are eventually used must be your responsibility

- offer advice to help your research, possibly arranging visits to place of interest, if this is appropriate

- monitor your progress to make sure your work gets underway in a planned and timely manner

- ensure that your work meets the Specification requirements

- keep a log of the feedback they give you

- supervise any practical work you do to ensure you receive advice about health and safety.

The support given by your teacher will be to make sure you understand what it is you have to do. Your teacher will not be allowed to provide model responses for you or work through your responses or outcomes in detail.

8.2.3 What can I expect in the supervised sessions?

This period should include some form of evaluation either in the written form, in a teacher interview or a presentation to the group. For the last two your teacher may record these sessions. This is particularly essential in group work where the teacher will be attempting to ascertain your individual contribution within the group.

You should reference all sources used and any materials you have used in the whole piece whether in supervised or unsupervised sessions. Quotations should be clearly marked and referenced to ensure all intellectual property rights are maintained. It is unlikely that complete downloaded documents from the internet are suitable. Your teacher will sign an authentication form to complete the process. You may also be asked to sign the form.

Contact us

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