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Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
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Rewarding Learning

Controlled assessments

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Background

1. This report outlines the regulatory view on the new controlled assessments that are to be included in revised GCSE qualifications from September 2009. It includes an explanation of the process of developing controlled assessments and case study examples in different GCSE subjects. This report should be read in conjunction with the revised GCSE criteria. The development of controlled assessments and related issues are described in more detail in the independent report, *Improving GCSE: internal and controlled assessment (QCA/07/3207)*.
2. The use of controlled assessments is intended to address several issues that have been raised in recent reviews of coursework.¹ The issues relate to three linked processes: task setting, task taking and task marking.

Process	Key issues to address
Task setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making assessments more valid and reliable • avoiding assessments that are too formulaic and predictable • supporting good teaching and learning • making assessment more manageable for students and teachers
Task taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discouraging and detecting assessment malpractice • allowing teachers to confidently authenticate students' work • making assessment more manageable for students and teachers
Task marking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring assessment judgements are of highest quality

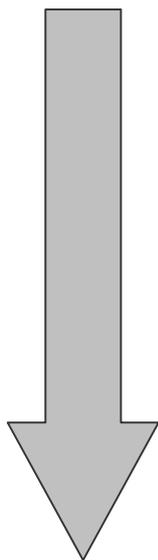
3. In controlled assessments, control levels are set for each process so that the overall level of control secures validity and reliability, provides good manageability for all involved and allows teachers to authenticate the work confidently.

¹ A review of GCE and GCSE coursework arrangements, QCA 2005; A review of GCSE coursework, QCA 2006.

Controls

4. For each of the three processes, there is a spectrum of possible approaches to levels of control. If the highest level of control is chosen in each case, the assessment would meet the requirements for an external assessment so would not be a controlled assessment.

Task setting



At the highest level of control the awarding body sets the tasks.

- Tasks are available from the awarding body, for example, through a website or from an online task bank.
- Teachers may choose from a list of possible tasks.

At the next level of control the awarding body requires that teachers secure approval for tasks that they have devised, in accordance with the guidance and criteria from the awarding body.

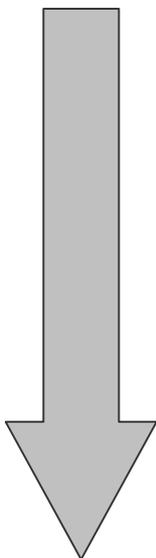
- Exemplar tasks are available from the awarding body to help teachers.
- Awarding body coursework advisers can be consulted.

One step down from this is that teachers set tasks following guidance and criteria from the awarding body, as well as consulting exemplar tasks or advisers, but do not need to get prior approval for their devised tasks.

The lowest level of control is where teachers set tasks with minimal awarding body guidance/criteria.

Task taking

In the process of task taking there is presently greatest variation. This is where enhanced controls create much better public confidence in the assessments and help teachers have greater confidence in authenticating work as the candidates' own.



At the highest level, task-taking parameters are externally defined for all five key controls:

- students complete all work under the direct supervision of a teacher (authenticity control)
- feedback to students operates within tight guidelines specified by the awarding body (feedback control)
- students have a limited amount of time in which to complete all work (time control)
- students complete all work individually (collaboration control)
- access to resources is limited to those specified by the awarding body (resource control).

At a medium level, task-taking parameters are externally defined for three or four key controls (the remainder are defined by individual schools or colleges). For example:

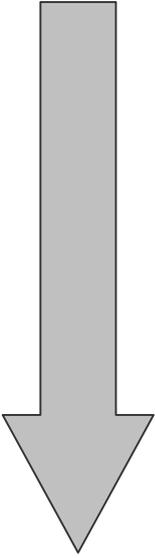
- students complete all work under the direct supervision of a teacher (authenticity control)
- feedback to students operates within tight guidelines specified by the regulator (feedback control)
- students have a limited amount of time in which to complete all work (time control).

At a low level one step down from this, task taking parameters are externally defined for one or two key controls (and the remainder are defined by individual schools or colleges). For example:

- feedback to students operates within tight guidelines specified by the regulator (feedback control).

At the lowest level, the definition of all task-taking parameters is left to individual schools and colleges.

Task marking



At the highest level, the awarding body marks the task.

The next step down is where teachers mark tasks and the awarding body moderates their marking. Teachers mark the work using mark schemes or marking criteria/guidelines provided by the awarding body. The awarding body then externally moderates the teacher marking. On the basis of this, scaled adjustments may be made to all candidates' work.

One step down from this is that teachers/centres are trained and accredited by the awarding body to mark the tasks and consequently the awarding body does not externally moderate the work. There may be light monitoring of the teachers' marking as part of the awarding body's general quality assurance procedures.

At the lowest level of control, teachers mark/make a judgement against guidelines/standards with no external moderation.

Developing assessment schemes

5. The subject criteria identify the weighting of controlled assessments needed in each subject. The next step is for specification developers to consider the levels of controls that would be appropriate. The exact combination of levels of controls varies from subject to subject and will be task dependent. However, determination of levels of controls for particular tasks should be made consciously and consistently.
6. Starting with the highest level for each control, a level should be chosen that:
 - ensures valid assessment and maximises reliability so that results are fair and robust
 - provides a manageable assessment for teachers, candidates and awarding bodies.
7. Expected to be a typical set of arrangements, the following will be supported by awarding body training and guidance:
 - **Task setting:** the task should be either set or approved by the awarding body. Ideally, awarding bodies provide a range of set tasks for teachers to choose from (as they already do in some subjects).
 - **Task taking:** the task-taking process normally divides into a several stages, for example, briefing, planning, research and report production. The task should be explicit about the levels of controls required at each stage. In the last stage, where the candidate will normally be producing the work that is to be assessed, most or all of the key controls should be defined by the awarding body, including authenticity and time controls.
 - **Task marking:** the tasks are marked by teachers using awarding body mark schemes. External moderation should be used. Alternatively, if the awarding body considers it feasible and appropriate, tasks can be marked externally.

Examples of controlled assessments

8. The five examples (p10 onwards) illustrate, across the three processes of task setting, taking and marking:
 - how there can be a combination of different levels of controls
 - how greater direction can be provided about task taking, particularly in the last stage of each assessment.
9. All of these tasks build on what is currently available and yet are controlled assessments broadly along the lines proposed
10. The tasks relate to current assessment objectives so do not necessarily match the new draft criteria.
11. The timings in task taking cover all the stages of completing the task, from the briefing, through research and preparation to the final production. The times for all except the final step are indicative, as teachers will need flexibility to accommodate timetabling constraints.
12. The sections on impact on teaching and learning and the commentary indicate how the various levels of controls address current concerns.
13. None of these examples has been trialled. Awarding bodies will be expected to trial their own controlled assessments before they are used in live examinations.

Consultation on the new arrangements

14. QCA has consulted a small number of students with a range of disabilities on the implications for replacing traditional coursework with controlled assessments. One major issue to be resolved concerns the timed nature of the assessments. Reasonable adjustments will need to be made for some students involving additional time. This raises questions about how that best fits into a normal school timetable and who might be able to carry out supervision. As part of the consultation on the draft GCSE criteria, the regulators are seeking advice on how these important practical issues can best be addressed and on the implications of the introduction of controlled assessments for distance learning students.

Appendix

Modern foreign languages: writing task 1	Commentary
<p>Task setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awarding body sets out guidelines and criteria for the task, indicating which learning outcome/assessment objective it will assess. For example research and produce, in the target language, a report, article, interview, text for an information leaflet, brochure or web pages relating to a local event, tourist attraction, celebrity or business. The target readers are speakers of the target language who may need the information or find the subject of interest. The task relates to current assessment objective 4: communicating in writing in the target language. • The teacher designs the task against awarding body criteria and guidelines, adapting to local circumstances and the interests of the students. Students have some choice in terms of the context. • The teacher is able to seek advice from the awarding body on the suitability of the task design but is not required to get approval. 	<p><i>The awarding body input into defining the areas of enquiry gives this a high level of reliability while providing a number of options and routes that teachers can pursue.</i></p> <p><i>The teacher's input enables the task to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>be tailored to the circumstances and experiences of the student</i> • <i>take advantage of local opportunities.</i> <p><i>This then avoids formulaic and predictable tasks and promotes good teaching and learning.</i></p> <p><i>Awarding body guidance to the teacher on task setting ensures that the teacher-set task is within the parameters set by the awarding body.</i></p>

<p>Task taking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher briefs the students on the task. (minimum level of controls, 30 mins) • The students carry out research, interviews and/or fieldwork. The research will depend on the tasks. (low level, 1–2 hours) • The students analyse data and information collected and plan the report. (medium level, 3–4 hours) • Students produce the report in class, working individually. (high level, up to 2 hours) <p>Task marking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awarding body provides marking guidelines. • The teacher marks using awarding body guidelines and so is able to take into account the specific contexts and circumstances. • The awarding body externally moderates the marking. 	<p><i>This uses a range of levels of controls appropriate to the different parts of the activity.</i></p> <p><i>The increase of supervision across the task enables the teacher to be confident that the work is authentic and that there has been no malpractice.</i></p> <p><i>The allocation of indicative timings for the parts of the task reduces the assessment burden on students by providing clear steps and deadlines. It also reduces the burden on teachers as they are clear about the amount of time to allocate for the task.</i></p> <p><i>Defining the levels of controls and providing indicative timings results in greater consistency across schools.</i></p> <p><i>The use of awarding body marking guidelines and the external moderation of teachers' marking acts as quality assurance.</i></p> <p><i>The teacher marking enables feedback to the students and so promotes learning.</i></p>
<p>Impact on teaching and learning:</p> <p>This promotes good teaching and learning by enabling students to relate languages to other areas of the curriculum and/or local contexts. The task allows for some choice by students, more independence and creativity, and enables students to use their language for real, meaningful purposes which are more adult than many of the current GCSE tasks. Students also need to consider their target audience, which encourages focus on readability, style and accuracy. The task can be approached at different levels.</p>	

Modern foreign languages: writing task 2	Commentary
<p>Task setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awarding body sets out guidelines and criteria for the task, indicating which learning outcome/assessment objective it will assess. For example produce writing in the target language in a particular format on a specific topic. The task relates to current assessment objective 4: communicating in writing in the target language. • The teacher sets the task against awarding body criteria and guidelines in the context of the students' programme. For example teachers may use a trip to the First World War battlefields in conjunction with the history department as a basis for students' writing in the target language. Students write about the daily routine, the life and friends of the soldiers in the form of a diary, imagining they are the soldiers. • The awarding body approves the task. 	<p><i>The awarding body input into defining the task gives this a high level of reliability.</i></p> <p><i>Awarding body approval for the task ensures that the teacher-set task is within the parameters set by the awarding body.</i></p> <p><i>The teacher input enables the task to be tailored to the circumstances and experiences of the students, so avoiding formulaic and predictable tasks and promoting good teaching and learning.</i></p>

<p>Task taking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher briefs the students on the task. (minimum level of controls, 30 mins) • After the school trip, the students carry out research on conditions in the trenches, including use of computers by individuals in the school IT suite. (low level, 1–2 hours) • The students analyse data and information collected and plan the diary. (medium level 3–4hours) • The students produce the diary in class, working individually. (high level, up to 2 hours) <p>Task marking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awarding body provides marking guidelines. • The teacher marks using awarding body guidelines and so is able to take into account the specific contexts and circumstances. • The awarding body externally moderates the marking. 	<p><i>This uses a range of levels of controls appropriate to the different parts of the activity. The increase of supervision across the task enables the teacher to be confident that the work is authentic and that there has been no malpractice.</i></p> <p><i>The allocation of indicative timings for parts of the task reduces the assessment burden on students by providing clear steps and deadlines. It also reduces the burden on teachers as they are clear about the amount of time to allocate for the task.</i></p> <p><i>Defining the levels of controls and providing indicative timings results in greater consistency across school.</i></p> <p><i>The use of awarding body marking guidelines and the external moderation of teachers' marking acts as quality assurance. The teacher marking enables feedback to the students and so promotes learning.</i></p>
<p>Impact on teaching and learning:</p> <p>Students are able to relate languages to other areas of the curriculum, contextualising their use of the target language. The task allows for some choice by students and encourages creativity. This is an imaginative response but based on factual material, rooted in a topic related to the target language context (historical in this instance).</p>	

Historical enquiry	Commentary
<p>Task setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awarding body sets out criteria, outlines a range of exemplar topics and provides marking guidelines. For example an historical enquiry into an aspect of history, such as the role of an individual, or an important event or development. Enquiries should be based on a collection of sources or interpretations and target students' ability to carry out an enquiry and communicate their findings. • The teacher selects a common enquiry topic for all students from a selection provided by the awarding body, possibly with individuals/groups investigating particular aspects. • The teacher discusses the proposed areas of enquiry with the awarding body coursework adviser. • The awarding body approves the proposed enquiry topic. 	<p><i>The awarding body input into defining the task gives this a high level of reliability.</i></p> <p><i>Awarding body approval for the task ensures that the proposed areas of enquiry are within the parameters set by the awarding body.</i></p> <p><i>The teacher input enables the task to be tailored to the circumstances and experiences of the students, so avoiding formulaic and predictable tasks and promoting good teaching and learning.</i></p> <p><i>Access to the coursework adviser enables the teacher to have confidence that the proposed lines of enquiry are appropriate.</i></p>

<p>Task taking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students undertake research work related to the topic, such as Internet research, use of ICT, visits to sites or museums and group discussion. Students keep a record of the sources they have consulted and the value of the sources to their enquiry. (low level of controls, 8–10 hours) • Initial preparation, planning and analysis is completed in class, with common access to ICT and resources. (medium level, 2–4 hours) • Final production of the product/report is done individually in a set time, during which students have access to their notes. (high level, up to 4 hours) <p>Task marking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awarding body provides marking guidelines. • The teacher marks using awarding body guidelines. • The awarding body externally moderates a sample of reports. 	<p><i>This uses a range of levels of controls appropriate to the different parts of the activity. The increase of supervision across the task enables the teacher to be confident that the work is authentic and that there has been no malpractice.</i></p> <p><i>The use of a process log enables the teacher to review the steps that the student took in carrying out the enquiry.</i></p> <p><i>The allocation of indicative timings for parts of the task reduces the assessment burden on students by providing clear steps and deadlines. It also reduces the burden on teachers as they are clear about the amount of time to allocate for the task.</i></p> <p><i>Defining the levels of controls and providing indicative timings results in greater consistency across schools.</i></p> <p><i>The use of awarding body marking guidelines and the external moderation of teachers' marking acts as quality assurance.</i></p> <p><i>The teacher marking enables feedback to the students and promotes learning.</i></p>
<p>Impact on teaching and learning:</p> <p>This enables the student to develop the skills of investigation and enquiry, in particular the process of historical enquiry and use a wide range of sources. Students have a limited choice of topics that are likely to motivate them. The enquiry provides an opportunity to engage with different interests and community groups such as archaeologists, museum staff or the heritage sector. Students can be given the opportunity to present their findings to their peers in a variety of ways.</p>	

History: analysis of current event or site investigation	Commentary
<p>Task setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awarding body sets out criteria, outlines a range of exemplar tasks and provides marking guidelines. For example analyse and understand a current event in its historical context, or investigate a local site and its historical significance. • The teacher sets the task, adapting materials provided by the awarding body to fit a specific current event or a local site. 	<p><i>The awarding body input into defining the areas of enquiry gives this a high level of reliability. There are tight guidelines surrounding the way in which the current event should be analysed in its historical context or how the site should be investigated.</i></p> <p><i>The teacher input enables the task to be tailored to the circumstances and experiences of the students, and take advantage of local sites so avoiding formulaic and predictable tasks.</i></p>

<p>Task taking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students undertake research work related to the topic, such as Internet research, use of ICT, visits to the site and group discussion. (medium level of controls, 8–10 hours) • Students produce their analysis/investigation individually with access to their notes. (high level, up to 4 hours) <p>Task marking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awarding body provides marking guidelines. • The teacher marks using awarding body guidelines in light of specialist/local knowledge of event/site. • The awarding body externally moderates the teacher's marking. • Alternatively: teachers are accredited to carry out and assess this activity. Marking is not moderated. 	<p><i>This uses levels of controls appropriate to the different parts of the activity. The level of supervision across the task enables the teacher to be confident that the work is authentic and that there has been no malpractice.</i></p> <p><i>The allocation of indicative timings to parts of the task reduces the assessment burden on students by providing clear steps and deadlines. It also reduces the burden on teachers as they are clear about the amount of time to allocate for the task.</i></p> <p><i>Defining the levels of controls and providing indicative timings results in greater consistency across schools.</i></p> <p><i>The use of awarding body marking guidelines and the external moderation of teachers' marking acts as quality assurance.</i></p> <p><i>The teacher marking enables feedback to the students.</i></p>
<p>Impact on teaching and learning:</p> <p>This task enables students to study current events in their historical context or learn about their locality. It develops skills of enquiry and provides opportunities to consider historical interpretations and make judgements about significance. The choice of site or event can help to motivate students by considering the relevance of events or sites.</p>	

Design and technology: designing and making task	Commentary
<p>Task setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The awarding body sets out criteria for an extended designing and making activity task using digital technology both to capture the student's work and for marking purposes. • This is based on the e-scape pilot design and technology (D&T) activity. The task is resourced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a booklet with associated images • a handling collection of idea objects • client or user cards profiling requirements • a central inspiration collection • a central modelling kit. 	<p><i>The awarding body sets task and provides materials, so ensuring reliability and validity.</i></p> <p><i>The tasks have the potential of being modified by the centre after approval by the awarding body.</i></p>

<p>Task taking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The activity is managed through an administrator 'script' and e-scape applications on PDAs supplied to each candidate. Students create their own prototype solutions to a design and make task using the PDA to record the various steps in the process by drawing, taking photos, recording voice memos and writing notes. The activity is broken down into a series of steps relating to 22 linked screens, each of which present: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the instructions for each sub task the time remaining direct links to the specific tools required such as text and audio recording. (medium levels of controls, 6 hours) <p>Task marking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data is uploaded from the local server and displayed in a secure web space. The digitally captured evidence constitutes a web-based portfolio, which is marked externally by the awarding body against agreed criteria. 	<p><i>PDAs have Bluetooth and Wi-Fi capability, enabling a class set to be linked into a local area network run from a laptop managed by the activity administrator.</i></p> <p><i>The controlled nature of the assessment activity enables teachers to confidently authenticate the work and ensure that there is no malpractice.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative timing reduces the assessment burden on students and teachers.</i></p> <p><i>External marking of the portfolio assures high quality. The electronic nature of the evidence makes this more manageable.</i></p>
<p>Impact on teaching and learning:</p> <p>This approach brings the technology directly into DT processes in a manageable way. It enables students to combine practical and technological skills with creative thinking as they design and make products and systems to meet human needs, and recording their thinking, while at the same time capturing evidence for assessment purposes.</p>	