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Computer Science 2013 GCSE – Controlled Assessment Frequently Asked Questions

Can students access their own user drives in which they have stored their files of previous learning?

Students should have a controlled assessment (CA) profile. This profile can allow access to read-only shared areas, where resources can be provided in electronic form by the school. The CA profile should disable Internet access and resources made available by staff should NOT be solutions to the tasks presented in the CA task.

Can students access shared teaching and learning areas in which there are generic Python files?

Access to read only areas is allowed - this includes digital user manuals and worksheets (not solutions to the tasks in the CA Task)

Can students access printed resources, e.g. books, Python user manuals?

Printed resources can be provided, so long as these do not include solutions to the CA Tasks. If these printed materials are taken out of the CA room then new clean copies should be provided each time. If possible, the printed material could be kept securely in the room.

What can I do with the Task Document once it is posted on the website?

You can provide the task document to the students. It can be printed and handed to the students; it can be posted on your intranet. Students can take the task document away with them but should be warned that posting the document on any social media site would not be allowed. The document can be discussed, researched and even modelled and practised. However, it would not be appropriate to run actual solution lessons where the task was solved by students with the help of the teacher. Furthermore, any version of the task documentation taken out of the classroom should not be allowed into the controlled conditions when the student is embarking upon the 15 hours of task taking.

What can be given to the student when in controlled conditions?

The teacher can provide any form of written or intranet system based (not Internet) documentation that covers syntax and the normal help material for program development. Help in IDE is not a problem and user guides and programming guides that are generic are allowed. The student should not (nor should the teacher) work up resources outside of controlled conditions that model the solutions needed for the task and then make these available in the controlled conditions.



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What should not go into the Controlled conditions classroom?

Students should not take notes or reference material or previous copies of the Task Document into the controlled conditions sessions. It would be sensible that the teacher has clean copies for each session of the task document.

What is the idea behind controlled assessment task?

The Controlled assessment task is an opportunity for the student to demonstrate the application of skills and knowledge acquired during the learning of the course. Our GCSE really promotes the development of the computational skills. The controlled assessment is a chance for the student to demonstrate these skills. There are marks for demonstrating the ability to decompose a problem and there are marks for the choosing of appropriate approaches to solving the problems. It is imperative that the student does the solving of the problem in controlled conditions and that the work done is demonstrably the work of the student and nobody else.

What is the idea behind the No Internet rule?

The Controlled assessment task has been compromised in the past by use of websites like SourceForge where whole solutions could be lifted and copied and pasted – this not only compromises the credibility of the exercise but it also diminishes the ability of the student to ‘solve’ the problem. It need not be a memory of syntax challenge and reference material of a generic nature can be used to ensure that the student is not guided to a solution.

How rigid is the 15 hours?

All students taking the qualification should be fairly treated. This can cause issues when a student is ill, or a computer crashes. There is a reasonable argument that individual students who have missed sessions, for whatever reason, can be facilitated to make up that time during sessions at different times. However, all students must be fairly treated and all students should have at least the same opportunities to provide their evidence. Excessive over provision of time will be considered to be malpractice. You should discuss with your Exams Officer, in your centre, to ensure that you have systems and processes in place to control the integrity of the controlled assessment session(s).

Can I share the assessment criteria with my students?

Absolutely, this would be considered good practise and copies of the assessment criteria could be made available along with the task document for each session.



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What feedback can be given to students during controlled assessments?

When in controlled conditions, only generic class-wide feedback or instruction can be given. This should be of a general nature and be concerned with over-riding guidance like 'remember that spelling and grammar will be considered in assessment.' It is not reasonable to demonstrate an example of a solution to the actual problem, or a closely related problem, during controlled conditions.

Can I mark/assess Task 1, 2, 3 and give feedback so it can be improved within the 15 hours controlled assessment?

The intention is that the tasks are all terminally assessed. This does not mean that you need to wait until all work is done before you, as the teacher, begin assessment work. However, it does mean that you cannot mark task 1, tell students what marks they got and give them an opportunity to improve task 1 work.

What feedback can be given during practise sessions?

Practise sessions outside of Controlled Assessment conditions are open to your standard teaching practise. It should not include work that is done on the CA tasks, but similar and related challenges can be worked on and approaches to solutions can be discussed and trialled. Avoid using the actual task because students may be tempted to try to 'remember' the solution and duplicate it by rote during CA, this is not the intention.

Task 2 states that students are not required to carry out any validation on user inputs. Students do then have to go on and test their solution. Obviously without validation many of the tests will fail for example when invalid data is used. As validation is not required, I am assuming a lack of it will not affect their marks – if the program runs correctly with the expected inputs, then full marks should be available? Is it OK for tests to fail in the test plan and sufficient for students to identify what the problem is? The test plan does not include an Actions column, so I assume that it is not necessary for students to fix the problems?

If the program runs without errors when using valid input, then full marks can be accessed. Tests that fail because validation was not implemented will not cause the student to lose marks. The idea behind not requiring validation is that it saves the student time in terms of developing a solution to the programming challenge that has been given.



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Do students need to include the lines in outputs when suggested output looks like:

• Here is a suggested format for displaying the data.

Estimate Number	Customer ID	Final Total	Amount Paid	Amount Outstanding
<i>Estimate Number</i>	<i>Customer ID</i>	<i>Final Total</i>	<i>Amount Paid</i>	<i>Amount Outstanding</i>
<i>Estimate Number</i>	<i>Customer ID</i>	<i>Final Total</i>	<i>Amount Paid</i>	<i>Amount Outstanding</i>
Total Outstanding:				<i>Total Outstanding</i>

No. The idea is that students arrange the screen display so that the information is nicely presented in columns separated by tabs or spaces but easily readable and clearly displayed in columns.

Are students allowed to print off their code for the controlled assessment and take this home to look over?

No. Nothing should leave the controlled assessment room; nothing should be brought into the controlled assessment room.

How frequent do comments need to be? For each line or for each important section?

Not for every line. The comments should be 'helpful' in communicating the technique used, the construct chosen and the way that the student is trying to tackle the challenge.

What is meant by 'selecting appropriate programming constructs'?

This refers to whether the student has used a 'for' loop when perhaps a 'while' loop might have been more efficient, the constructs are the coding structures that have been chosen and used. It can also be exemplified by for example use of a function that does or does not return a value, or could return multiple values etc.

How would I look for the use of computational thinking?

The evaluation should cover 'how the student approached the solving of the challenge' what was the thinking, how did they decide upon the structure and approach that they used. The decomposition and application of programming constructs are the basic skills of computational thinking - how did the student approach the solving of the problem.