

GCSE Religious Studies

Assessment Adaptations for 2021–2022 only

Frequently Asked Questions



GCSE Religious Studies

Assessment Adaptations for 2021–2022 only

Frequently Asked Questions

TEACHER GUIDANCE

GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES SUMMER 2022

Frequently Asked Questions

Why has controlled assessment been introduced to GCSE Religious Studies for Summer 2022?

On 9 October 2020 the Education Minister informed schools that adjustments to GCSEs could not exceed 40% of the overall assessment. However, it was agreed that this would unfairly disadvantage GCSE RS candidates, and on 6 November 2020 the Minister agreed that RS candidates could complete a controlled assessment task as an alternative to an examination in a second unit.

This new controlled assessment task is equivalent to 10% of the original specification. Therefore, by completing this task (10%) and an exam unit (50%), candidates will have completed assessment equivalent to 60% of the original specification and meet the minimum criteria outlined by the Department of Education.

Is the controlled assessment task optional for students?

Yes. There are two options for RS students who are currently in Year 12 and wish to be awarded a Full Course GCSE in Summer 2022. Either:

1. Students can complete the controlled assessment in one unit of study and one exam paper from a different unit of study; or
2. Students can complete two exam units in Summer 2022.

For the full GCSE award, can my students complete the controlled assessment task and both exam units, with the best outcome being awarded?

No. Candidates will not have the option of completing both exam units and the assessment task as it would increase the assessment burden on candidates. This decision was communicated to schools by the Education Minister on 6 November 2020.

What percentage of the overall GCSE RS awarded in Summer 2022 is the controlled assessment task worth?

The assessment task is worth one-sixth of the uniform marks of the overall qualification in Summer 2022. Therefore, the weighting of this qualification will be five-sixths exam and one-sixth controlled assessment.

What format will the controlled assessment task take?

The controlled assessment task will follow the same structure as a Section B question from a typical GCSE RS examination paper. There will be two five-mark questions followed by a ten-mark critical evaluation task.

Will the controlled assessment task cover each of the three skills assessed throughout a typical GCSE RS exam paper – knowledge, understanding and critical evaluation?

Yes. Parts (a) and (b) are Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) questions and will assess the candidate's knowledge and understanding. Part (b) is an AO2 question and will assess the candidate's ability to critically evaluate a statement.

What part of the specification will the controlled assessment task be taken from?

Will the task straddle more than one theme?

The theme for each of the controlled assessment tasks will be taken from early in the specification, either from theme one or theme two in each unit. The questions will be taken from one theme on the specification and will therefore not straddle more than one theme.

What is meant by the 'theme' for the controlled assessment task?

Each exam unit is split into five themes or content areas. For example, the first theme in the Ethics unit is 'Personal and Family Issues' and the first theme in the Philosophy unit is 'Arguments for the Existence of God'. Controlled assessment questions will be taken from either the first or the second theme in each unit.

Will there be a choice of task from different themes within each exam unit?

Only one task will be provided for each exam unit. In January 2022, CCEA will provide centres with the set questions for the theme, one three-part question for each unit. CCEA will provide a question booklet for each candidate in the same format as Section B of the examination paper.

Do candidates have to complete the Controlled Assessment task in a particular unit?

No. Centres can decide which unit to complete the exam paper in and which unit to complete the controlled assessment task in. Centres must ensure the external exam and the CAT are from two different units of study and are not drawn from prohibited combinations.

Centres will have to make the decision about the combination of controlled assessment task and Unit paper before exam entries are made in early 2022.

My cohort studied Ethics in Year 11 and Mark's Gospel in Year 12. Can my students now complete the controlled assessment in Mark's Gospel and sit the Ethics exam?

Yes. Centres can decide which unit to complete the exam in and which unit to complete the controlled assessment task in.

My students usually sit both exam units at the end of Year 12. If they are entered for one exam unit and the controlled assessment, do I still have to teach both units in their entirety?

Content should be covered to ensure that candidates are prepared to sit an examination in one unit in Summer 2022. Candidates should also have covered enough content to complete the controlled assessment task in the other unit. Due to missed teaching time, it may not have been possible to have taught both units in their entirety.

Can my current Year 11 students complete the controlled assessment task as an alternative to an exam unit in Summer 2022?

No. Current Year 11 students are excluded from these arrangements. If centres want their Year 11 students to complete a unit of study in Summer 2022, the students must sit an exam paper in that unit.

I normally enter my Year 12 students for the Short Course in GCSE RS. Can I continue to prepare them for their exam unit but also get them to complete the controlled assessment task from a different unit so that they can be awarded a full GCSE?

Yes. If any candidate in Year 12 completes the requirements necessary for a full GCSE (exam unit and controlled assessment), then they can be awarded the full course GCSE in Religious Studies.

Last year, my Year 11s cashed in their short course RS and now want to do the full course. What do they have to do to get the full course GCSE?

Candidates will not be able to use the unit from their short course cash-in as there are no marks associated with it. To achieve a full course grade, candidates will have to sit an examination unit in Summer 2022 and complete the controlled assessment task in a second unit. Centres must ensure the external exam and the CAT are from two different units of study and are not drawn from prohibited combinations.

When will schools have access to the questions? Is this date set in stone, or can schools have access to these as a matter of urgency?

The live tasks will be available on 31 January 2022. Unfortunately, the tasks cannot be made available to schools before this date.

Will students know the questions before they begin the one-hour assessment task?

Yes, candidates should be informed of the questions and can be given direction from teachers about how best to answer the questions before the one-hour controlled assessment actually begins.

Can RS students within the one centre complete different controlled assessment tasks, or do all students within a centre have to complete the same controlled assessment task?

In the same way that individual RS teachers within centres can enter their candidates for different exam units, candidates within the one centre can also be entered for different controlled assessment units.

Will this controlled assessment be subject to high controls, similar to exam conditions?

The control for this assessment is medium. Candidates are subject to 'informal supervision' and do not need to be directly supervised at all times. The use of resources is not tightly prescribed. The purpose of this controlled assessment is to reduce the exam burden for students.

The level of control is medium. Can students use resources when completing the controlled assessment task? Does this include copies of the Gospels for the scripture units?

Students can have access to resources when they are completing the controlled assessment task, and this includes any text that is relevant to their unit.

Do candidates have to complete the controlled assessment in one sitting?

No, the assessment doesn't have to be completed in one sitting. Teachers can be flexible in their approach to how this task is completed. For example, teachers may wish to complete this in one sitting to reduce the amount of lessons devoted to the task. Alternatively, teachers can set aside several lessons during which components of the task are completed,

providing the overall time students spend on this does not exceed the one-hour time allocation.

In what format should the student's work be presented to be marked by his/her teacher?

CCEA will provide all candidates with an exam booklet and answers should be recorded on this. The questions in the booklet will be presented similar to questions in Section B of full examination papers.

Do candidates get the opportunity to redraft responses?

No. The work that candidates complete during the one-hour assessment in the exam question booklet must be the candidates' final piece of work.

Due to circumstances this year, I don't have time to finish teaching the exam unit and to set aside time in class for students to complete the controlled assessment task. Can I set this task for them to complete as a homework?

Under the circumstances this year, students are permitted to complete the controlled assessment at home provided the teacher can authenticate the work.

What arrangements are in place for students who are absent from school isolating?

Students are permitted to complete the controlled assessment at home provided the teacher can authenticate the work. The teacher may wish to contact the candidate online if they are not completing the work in class.

Is the controlled assessment to be strictly timed like an exam?

To be fair to all candidates across all schools in Northern Ireland, we are asking centres to adhere to the one-hour time limit.

If a student is entitled to extra time in an exam unit, does this also apply to the controlled assessment?

If a candidate has an access arrangement as part of his/her normal way of working within a centre, a similar arrangement will normally be permitted for controlled assessment.

What support will be available for teachers who are now responsible for the delivery and marking of this controlled assessment?

Centres are provided with Specimen Assessment Materials for each of the units. In January 2022, detailed mark schemes will be provided for each of the new live tasks. There will also be online support for teachers in the form of a webinar which will explain the application of the assessment criteria, for example what merits a Level 3 in an AO1 task and what merits a Level 5 in an AO2 task

What are the dates for submission of the controlled assessment to CCEA?

- 6th April 2022-CCEA will request samples of work from each Centre for moderation
- 3rd May 2022 – eCrs marks submission and collection of controlled assessment marks