



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

## **The effects of the change from coursework to controlled assessment in GCSEs**

**Victoria Crisp & Sylvia Green**

*Email: [crisp.v@cambridgeassessment.org.uk](mailto:crisp.v@cambridgeassessment.org.uk)*

A paper presented at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, University of Manchester, 4-6 September 2012.

### **Abstract**

Coursework was part of most GCSEs from their introduction in the late 1980s. A key reason for its inclusion was its potential to help best represent students' attainments (e.g. by assessing important skills that are difficult to assess via written exams). However, concerns about the workload involved, and around being able to ensure that the work is the students' own, led to a review and ultimately to their replacement with 'controlled assessments'.

This research investigated the effects of the change from traditional coursework to controlled assessment in GCSE. It explored issues such as how the 'controls' are understood and implemented, how learning experiences have been affected and practical challenges in the implementation of controlled assessments. A questionnaire was completed by 346 teachers across six subjects. A parallel questionnaire was completed by 162 examinations officers.

At the time of writing the analysis is ongoing but a number of provisional findings are given here. Most teachers feel the risks of plagiarism have either remained unchanged or have been reduced by the move to controlled assessment. Two-thirds of teachers feel that the introduction of controlled assessment has affected the way they teach and around 60% feel it has affected the nature of the knowledge and skills learnt by students. There have been a number of non-trivial practical challenges such as around timetabling, student absences and increased administration for teachers. However, over 70% of teachers consider it important or very important to have some form of internal assessment (views varied by subject).



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE  
Local Examinations Syndicate