

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia

Changes to technical module assessment - FAQs

Changes to technical module assessment

Overview

From Term 3 2009, changes will be made to the assessment in the technical modules of the Chartered Accountants Program aimed at reducing complexity in the assessment mix; reducing candidate workload with a re-designed Extension Project; and strengthening the focus on exam preparation. These changes will also improve the security and integrity of the results.

The changes will allow candidates to concentrate their time and energy on the core assessments and, with their employers, have more control in planning for the demands of post graduate study.

Background

To ensure the ongoing rigour and relevance of the Chartered Accountants Program, the Institute's Education Board commissioned a review of the Program's assessment strategy in December 2008. This review, supported by the Institute's Board, was conducted by an external educational expert and based on three overarching principles:

1. To meet the standards and expectations of members and the profession, and to serve the public interest, by ensuring all assessment is secure, rigorous and equitable
2. To meet best practice testing methods for objective, valid and reliable assessments.
3. To further strengthen the Institute's equivalence with international benchmarks.

At the completion of the review, the Educational Board considered a range of recommendations relating to the assessment framework and determined the following changes.

New assessment framework – technical modules

The new assessment framework has three requirements for each module: a Project (marked out of 20); a final examination (marked out of 80); and attendance at four focus sessions (no marks).

To pass the module, candidates must meet these three requirements as follows:

1. Pass the exam by achieving a minimum of 40 marks out of 80
2. Pass the module by achieving 50 marks overall (the combined Project and exam mark) and;
3. Attend four focus sessions.

The changes will improve security and remove complexity thereby streamlining the assessment process. The changes will not make it more difficult for candidates to pass the exam or the module.

They will benefit candidates who will be able to direct their resources and time to the core requirements and, with their employers, have more control in planning for the demands of post graduate study.

For more information on the changes to the technical module assessment, please read the [FAQ document](#).

FAQs for Stakeholders

Assessment

1. **What has not changed?**

Candidates will still have to pass a final examination. Attendance at the four focus sessions remains a requirement.

2. **What has changed?**

There are four changes:

- > The Unit Knowledge Quizzes have been removed.
- > Marks for focus session attendance have been removed.
- > The requirement to pass the “non exam component” has been removed and replaced by the requirement to pass the module overall.
- > The format for the Extension Project has changed. It will now be a Project marked out of 20 (was 25 marks for the Extension Project).

3. **What is new?**

The weighting of assessment will be 80% for the exam and 20% for the project.

4. **Does this mean the exam will be harder?**

No. There will be four questions in the exam as before and each question will be marked out of 20. This provides candidates with the opportunity to gain more marks for each question as the exam structure and level will remain unchanged.

5. **What does it mean to pass the module over all?**

To pass the module overall, candidates need to:

- > Achieve a minimum mark of 40 for the exam; and
- > Achieve a minimum combined mark of 50 overall (i.e. a combination of the exam mark out of 80 and the Project mark out of 20).

6. **What if I do not pass the Project (i.e. get less than 10 marks) will I still be eligible to sit the exam?**

Yes. It is not a requirement to pass the Project. Candidates will have the opportunity in the exam to make up the extra marks needed to get the minimum of 50 marks needed to pass the module overall.

For example, if candidates receive 8 marks out of 20 for the Project, they will need to achieve a minimum of 42 marks out of 80 in the final exam to reach the overall module pass mark of 50.

7. **What is the new technical module assessment structure?**

A summary is provided in the table below.

Assessment	Weighting
Focus sessions	No marks – attendance at focus sessions is a requirement
Project	20% (Marked out of 20)
Exam	80% (Marked out of 80)

8. When is this new assessment structure being introduced?

The new assessment structure will be effective from Term 3 technical modules (FIN309 & MAA309).

9. Why is the change being made?

The Institute has changed the assessment structure to:

- > ensure security and integrity of assessment expected by members, and better serve the public interest.
- > remove complexity and streamline assessment giving candidates and employers more control in planning for the demands of post graduate study.

10. Will the duration of the exam change?

No. The exam will continue to be 3 hours plus 15 minutes reading time.

11. Will the structure of the technical module examination change?

No. The technical module exam structure will continue to be an open-book exam with 4 multi-part questions.

12. Are there any changes to the supplementary exam?

No. The supplementary exam remains unchanged in structure. The eligibility criteria for supplementary exams also remain unchanged.

Timetable and Fees

13. When will the technical modules assessment change be introduced?

The change will come into effect for Term 3 modules. (MAA309 commences 21 September 2009 and FIN309 commences 28 September 2009). Enrolments for Term 3 open 13 July 2009.

14. Will there be any other changes to the 2009-10 timetable dates for technical modules?

No. There are no changes to any current dates for technical modules.

Candidate learning pack (CLP)

15. Will the CLP structure be different from previous technical modules?

No. The CLP structure will remain unchanged however with the removal of the UKQs, the CLP will provide more Knowledge Checkpoints within each unit to support candidates' learning and provide feedback.

Focus session format

To make focus sessions more relevant, candidates have asked for the format to be better aligned to the formal assessment component with exam practice questions and solutions. In addition to these changes, candidates will also be provided all CLP activity solutions including the comprehensive activity solution at module commencement.

16. Will there still be four focus sessions for the technical modules?

Yes. There will be four focus sessions for all technical modules.

17. What will be covered in the focus sessions?

Refer to Attachment A for the focus session format.

18. What is the assessment structure for technical module focus sessions?

Marks are no longer awarded for focus session participation. However, attendance at all four focus sessions is a module requirement.

19. Why has the assessment component been removed from the technical module focus sessions?

This is to give the focus sessions greater emphasis on teaching and learning and move them away from assessment. Candidate feedback showed that assessment in focus sessions created unnecessary pressure on them to perform and limited open discussion in a constructive learning environment.

20. Can I still pass a technical module if I do not attend the focus sessions?

No. You must attend all four focus sessions to meet the course requirements.

Focus sessions are an important component and attendance is required by the Institute to ensure you are constructively engaged in the learning environment, can share ideas with peers and Focus Session Leaders and prepare effectively for the final examination through exam practice activities.

21. What should I do if I am unable to attend any of my assigned focus sessions?

As soon as you are aware of circumstances which may (or have) prevented you from attending any of your assigned focus sessions, please contact your local Institute office to organise a transfer to another session. If a focus session transfer is not available, or you are unable to attend, you should lodge a special consideration application within 14 days of the examination date. Further details on the Special Consideration process and application forms are available at www.charteredaccountants.com.au/caprogram

22. What documentation do I need to provide my local Institute office to organise a focus session transfer?

Before contacting your local Institute office to organise a focus session transfer, you should have access to your Candidate ID number, the focus session group number you are unable to attend and some transfer day/date options.

Focus session transfers can only be organised in unforeseen circumstances so any supporting documentation such as medical certificates or statement from your mentor should be provided when you apply.

23. If I apply for a focus session transfer, will I be allocated to the alternative day of my choice?

Given that the focus groups are established by the second week of a module, transferring candidates will be allocated to the next available group with capacity for additional attendees – this may mean that you will need to be flexible about attending week night or weekend sessions.

24. If I apply for special consideration for not being able to attend a focus session, when will I know if it has been granted or not?

The special consideration application will be processed when the module results are being finalised. Only those candidates who have had their application approved will be eligible to have their exam mark counted towards a pass in the module.

25. Why can't you tell me the outcome of the special consideration application prior to the exam?

Due to the short time between the last focus session and the exam, it is not possible to process the special consideration applications before the exam sitting date.

26. What happens if I forget to lodge a special consideration application?

Candidates who have not attended all four focus sessions and have not lodged a special consideration application for any focus sessions they have missed will be given an 'incomplete' mark. Appeals against this mark can be made to the next quarterly meeting of the Education Board for a decision by the Appeals Committee. Further details on the Appeals process and application forms are available at www.charteredaccountants.com.au/caprogram

27. Will the Institute allow me to sit the final exam if I do not attend the four focus sessions?

All candidates can sit the exam. However, only those who have attended the four focus sessions, or had their special consideration application granted, are eligible to have their exam mark counted toward a pass in the module.

Extension Project

28. Will there be any changes to the Extension Project (EP) for technical modules?

Yes, the EP will be replaced with a Project. The Project will incorporate the following:

- > Content from CLP units 1 & 2
- > Duration 12.5 hours
- > Maximum 20 marks

29. If I do not pass the Project (i.e. get less than 10 marks) will I still be eligible to sit the exam?

Yes. It is not a requirement to pass the Project. Refer to question 6 for more information.

Unit Knowledge Quiz

30. Will there be any changes to the Unit Knowledge Quizzes (UKQs) for the technical modules?

Yes. UKQs will be removed. UKQs will be replaced with more Knowledge Checkpoints provided throughout each unit of the CLP. Knowledge Checkpoints are not assessable and designed to support candidates in managing their learning and getting immediate feedback.

Attachment A – Focus Session Format

<p>Welcome and introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Provide an overview of the focus session > Outline the structure and objectives of the focus session 	15 mins
Block 1	
<p>Unit review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > FSL to review sections of the unit > FSL to provide information and clarity to candidates 	50 mins
Block 2	
<p>Comprehensive activity review</p> <p>Facilitate discussion and review of the comprehensive activity from the CLP. (The comprehensive activity and solution is provided to candidates prior to the focus session.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Candidates to provide feedback on the comprehensive activity. > FSL reviews comprehensive activity to identify what was being asked > FSL reviews solution provided and identifies steps in achieving the solution and reference to CLP unit <p>Note: candidates at module commencement are provided all activity solutions including the comprehensive activity solution. All solutions are provided on myCA.</p>	35 mins
Coffee break	10 mins
Block 3	
<p>Exam Practice Question (EPQ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Candidates to form teams to work through the EPQ > FSL to handout EPQ and provide direction to candidates > Candidates in their team to work through the EPQ forming their answer > FSL to support each team and provide direction/feedback 	40 mins
<p>EPQ review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > FSL to identify what was being asked and the issues > Identify appropriate exam technique and tips eg time spent on question > FSL to link use of the critical file 	10 mins
<p>EPQ solution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > FSL reviews solution provided and identifies steps in achieving the solution with reference to CLP unit > Candidates to provide feedback and discuss any issues 	30 mins
Conclusion	
<p>Recap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Summarise the focus session and confirm with candidates that all issues have been addressed 	5 mins