

FAQs:

(J09) Paraplanning

coursework assessment

This document answers our frequently asked questions on unit (J09) Paraplanning

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CII

1. What does coursework assessment involve?

Available for unit J09 Paraplanning, coursework assessment is an alternative approach to assessing competence.

Rather than sit a traditional examination, candidates must complete and pass three written assignments within a 12 month enrolment period to achieve a pass in the unit. Assignments are typically 2,000 to 3,000 words in length and candidates must score a minimum of 65% in each to achieve a pass. Exact word count requirements are provided with each assignment.

Upon successful completion a record of achievement is issued and a 'pass' in the unit is added to the candidate's CII examination record, together with 30 CII Diploma level credits.

Coursework assessment involves the application of work-related knowledge. It requires candidates to explore workplace issues relevant to the role of Paraplanning, which thereafter better equips a Paraplanner to apply their learning more readily at work.

2. Why is the CII offering coursework assessment for unit (J09) Paraplanning?

The CII is committed to ensuring that its qualifications are at the forefront of best practice. We strive to help candidates get the maximum out of their studies, ensuring that the process is as relevant as possible and supports retention and subsequent application of knowledge. This includes all aspects of our qualifications, from subject choice to learning support to assessment.

Use of coursework assessment has become an increasingly popular option with both higher education institutions and professional bodies. They value the flexibility it offers as a means of assessing candidates studying subjects which involve the application of advanced technical knowledge and skills in complex scenarios, and which typically require candidates to develop a broader understanding and appreciation of a subject (and, crucially, to draw upon their work experience).

Unit (J09) Paraplanning helps develop practical paraplanning skills and involves testing candidates using real-life, work-based scenarios.

Given this context, the CII decided to offer coursework assessment instead of a written or online examination for unit (J09) Paraplanning.

3. I am not a paraplanner, can I still enrol for (J09) Paraplanning?

Unless J09 is relevant to a candidate's current job role or a role they aspire to move into, we would recommend they do not select this unit.

4. I hold CII unit (R06) Financial planning practice, can I still enrol for (J09) Paraplanning?

Whilst both units can be used toward completing the Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Financial Planning, we recommended candidates do not complete both if their job role or career aspirations only relate to one of these units. This is because units J09 and R06 both test practical application but for two separate job roles: investment advice and paraplanning. Candidates who do complete both units will, however, still be awarded CII credits for both.

5. By passing unit (J09) Paraplanning, will I complete the CII Level 4 Certificate in Paraplanning qualification?

No. The Certificate in Paraplanning comprises four compulsory units, all of which need to be passed in order to complete the qualification:

- (J09) Paraplanning
- (R01) Financial services, regulation and ethics
- (R02) Investment principles and risk
- (R03) Personal taxation

Unit J09 tests the application of paraplanning skills and expertise, while units R01–R03 impart advanced technical knowledge in a number of key advisory areas.

6. How does coursework work in practice?

All three assignments must be successfully completed within the 12 month enrolment in order to achieve a pass in unit J09. This means that all assignments, plus any re-submissions, must be submitted to the CII during the 12 month enrolment period.

Coursework assignments vary in their requirements. Candidates may have to apply knowledge, research areas or write a paper depending upon the question and the topics being assessed.

A minimum of 65% (65 marks out of 100) must be obtained for each assignment. Results will take the form of either 'Pass' or 'Fail'.

Result notification for each assignment will take up to eight weeks from the date of submission. Two options exist if a candidate fails an assignment:

1. Submit a reworked assignment. An additional fee of £120/£164 member/non-member is payable. An eight week marking period will apply to re-submissions. Two re-submissions per assignment may be made. All re-submissions must be completed and submitted within the 12 month enrolment period.
2. Request a review of the marking of the assignment. Each assignment is restricted to one review. An additional fee of £83 and a 7 week review period applies. Details will be provided with assignment results.

Candidates can access their assignments together with additional study support services at www.revisionmate.com Full login details are sent to candidates after enrolment.

7. How is the CII ensuring that the coursework assessment methodology is as robust as examinations?

Use of coursework assessment has become an increasingly popular option with both higher education institutions and professional bodies.

Whilst the conditions under which the assessment is taken are different from those of a timed examination, coursework assessment brings its own distinct challenges, requiring candidates to explore scenario-based questions in a detailed and analytical manner. The process requires candidates to conduct extensive reading and research that must be correctly referenced at all times.

In addition, to eliminate plagiarism and collaborative working, all submissions will be run through plagiarism software. Transgression of the rules will result in penalties being applied. These can range from being excluded from the unit in question to being excluded from all CII assessments. The exact penalty will depend upon the precise nature of the transgression. Details of the CII's standard policy on these matters can be found at www.cii.co.uk/courseworkpolicies

Candidates are also required to achieve a minimum of 65% in each of the three assignments (as opposed to achieving an overall pass-mark in the exam). This will allow for the differences between an exam (closed-book, time-bound and in controlled conditions) as opposed to coursework assessment (open-book, non time-bound and not conducted in controlled conditions) and will ensure that standards are maintained regardless of the method of assessment.

8. What study support is available for unit (J09) Paraplanning?

As part of a J09 study enrolment candidates gain access to the following study support:

- **Syllabus** – this sets out the learning outcomes that will be assessed in the coursework and lists other published material in the form of additional reading, reference works and periodicals.
- **Choose either hardcopy or email study text** – this breaks down the exam syllabus into concise sections, with each chapter containing clearly defined learning outcomes and a series of self-test questions.
- **Electronic study text** – an online version of the study text.
- **Study text updates** – updates for 12 months from the date of purchase.
- **Coursework guide** – providing practical guidance on how to tackle assignments, the guide contains:
 - 3 sample questions with direction on key syllabus areas to include in answers; and
 - a sample question and full assignment answer which does not meet the minimum pass standard, with comments on how this could be improved.
- **Course chat and discussion forums** – discuss issues relating to the unit content with other students using the online chat and discussion forums.

With the exception of the study text, all of the above are accessible online at www.revisionmate.com - the CII's online qualification study tool.

9. Are entrants able to work collaboratively on their answers?

We acknowledge that candidates may undertake joint study with colleagues or as part of a formal training programme. However, working with another person to write assignments is not permitted.

While candidates may study with others, answers must be their own work. As candidates prepare their answers, they can draw upon available learning and use reference material. However, the work submitted must be their own. Work may not be copied from other sources and, where candidates draw on other work, it must be fully referenced.

Failure to comply with these requirements will result in penalties being applied. These can range from being excluded from unit J09, through to being excluded from all CII assessments.

The exact penalty to be applied will depend upon the precise nature of the transgression. Details of the CII's standard policy on these matters can be found at www.cii.co.uk/courseworkpolicies

All assignments will be run through plagiarism software.

10. Do I need to wait for the result of an assignment before submitting the next?

Candidates are free to submit assignments in any order at any time during the 12 month enrolment period, however we strongly recommend that candidates submit assignments in the correct order and that they wait to receive their results for one assignment before submitting the next. This enables candidates, where necessary, to amend their approach and potentially avoid additional work and the cost of a re-submission.

11. How long should each assignment be?

The specified word count for each assignment is provided on the assignment questions. Typically it will be 2,000 to 3,000 words. Candidates are expected not to exceed the word count by more than 10%. If assignments exceed the word count by more than 10%, they may be returned to the student for revising.

If an assignment is made up a number of questions/sections, a suggested word count will be provided for each element.

The word count does not include diagrams, which you are free to use in your answer. However, it does include text contained within any tables that you use.

There is no minimum word count. However, to answer the assignment in full and secure a pass, answers typically need to be close to the specified word count.

12. How are marks allocated?

Marks are allocated for each assignment based on the following four components:

- **30% of the mark is allocated for knowledge and understanding.** This component forms the factual foundation of the assignment. The essential facts should be accurate and broad enough in their scope to allow further application.
- **45% of the mark is allocated for application and analysis.** This is the largest component of the mark which is awarded for the way in which you analyse/examine the factual information and how you interpret this information to add value to your answer (this could be in the form of conclusions, solutions, recommendations, etc). It is also important to remember that the assessor must logically be able to follow the information in assignment submissions.
- **20% of the mark is allocated for coherent structure.** Submissions should have a clear start and a clear end. Information within submissions should also be logical and well grouped.
- **5% of the mark is allocated for evidence of further reading and the use of relevant workplace examples.** Suggestions for further reading are contained within the study text and shown on the unit syllabus. These reading lists are not exhaustive and candidates are encouraged to read further.

Note: Feedback on the basis of the marking grid will be given to all candidates.

13. When should I submit a completed assignment?

Candidates should submit an assignment as soon as they feel that they have carried out the tasks sufficiently and ensured they are within the required word count. It is also important that not to delay the submission of the assignments; delaying the submission of assignments may result in insufficient time to complete re-submissions, if required.

14. How many times can an assignment be re-submitted?

Assignments can only be re-submitted twice within the 12 month enrolment. Therefore, candidates who find they are unsuccessful for a third time for any given assignment, will fail the whole course and will need to completely re-enrol (the standard enrolment fee applies).

15. What happens if I do not successfully complete all three assignments by the end my 12 month enrolment?

All assignments, including any re-submissions, must be completed and submitted during the 12 month enrolment period.

Candidates failing to complete the course within this time must re-enrol (the standard enrolment fee applies) and complete a new course of assignments.

16. How long will I have to wait to be notified of the results of my submission?

Assignments will be marked by an assessor and the CII will return results within eight weeks from submission.

17. How do changes in taxation, regulation and legislation affect my assignments?

Candidates completing an assignment are often required to refer to taxation rates and to relevant regulation and legislation.

For the sake of clarity and certainty, it is essential that each candidate plainly states the period in which their assignment has been completed. Our strong recommendation is that assignments are completed with reference to the taxation, regulation and/or legislation regimes in operation at the time of completion.

It is essential that references to taxation, regulation and/or legislation regimes are consistent. Candidates should NOT mix reference points. For example, if a certain tax year is chosen as the basis of the assignment (such as 2013/14), then reference to legislation or regulation must be as it stood at that time.

The following rules apply:

Coursework based on the 2015/2016 tax year that is submitted after the new 2016/2017 tax year comes into force on 06 April 2016 will be accepted up until 06 July 2016.

This three-month window allows candidates who commence an assignment immediately prior to a new tax year to complete and submit their work without needing to alter the principles upon which it is based partway through completion.

Candidates who need to re-submit an assignment that was based on the previous tax year may continue to use this tax regime as the basis of their work. Alternatively, they may change their assignment, on re-submission, to reflect the current tax year rules. In either and every case, the tax year rules on which the assignment is based should always be clearly marked on the assignment to prevent any confusion.

18. How often are assignments changed?

In order to ensure assignments are up to date and relevant, assignment questions will be refreshed regularly. Therefore, the questions that one candidate is being assessed on may differ from those another candidate is being assessed on.

19. Where should I direct queries?

Candidates should direct all queries regarding J09 (Paraplanning) to coursework.queries@cii.co.uk and can expect a response within five working days from receipt of the query. Although we are unable to offer a bespoke tutoring service, we can address any general queries on our policy and approach. Candidates receive feedback on their assignments on their results notifications. Avenues to consider if a candidate receives a fail for an assignment are detailed in **question 6** in this document.