



AS & A-LEVEL **ART AND DESIGN**

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Report on the Examination

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General

This is a very popular specification and work seen in centres was an exciting, vibrant and rewarding celebration at all levels of student achievement. The enjoyment of art and design was seen in investigations which led to imaginative and creative outcomes that were personal in nature. Student endeavour and achievement, nurtured by the expertise and dedication of art teachers, contributes to the continuing success and popularity of this specification.

Continued changes to Teacher Standardisation meetings which included the introduction of separate half day sessions for A-level and AS, additional samples of work awarded high marks and more time available for marking, were welcomed by teachers. The majority of teachers consider the opportunity to see live marked work is one of the strengths of this specification. There was positive feedback from teachers for the AQA specification in Art and Design, its extensive support material and the popularity of successful CPD courses. Many teachers commented on the wide range of stimulating starting points provided by ESA question papers that are clear and easily accessible to students of all abilities.

At AS, the majority of portfolios included at least one extended personal project in which students demonstrated their abilities to produce a personal response from inception to realisation. The majority of students included carefully selected additional material from the earlier part of the course which supported the personal project. A variety of tasks and assignments introduced students to materials, processes and techniques. Workshops and short projects were designed to develop students' knowledge and understanding of formal elements, and time was given to developing observational, drawing and recording skills.

At A-level, the Personal Investigation is not intended to be a portfolio. Where students include work from earlier in the course or work produced for AS, it should be directly relevant to the Personal Investigation, providing a starting point, for example. Teachers are reminded that where earlier work is included, it will be assessed at A-level standard.

Practical work was often supported by meaningful and concise annotation which provided additional evidence of the AOs and gave valuable insight into students' intentions. Less helpful were examples of unnecessarily lengthy annotation when more evidence of practical work would have been appropriate.

Successful examples of the required written material for the Personal Investigation provided a rationale for the practical work. Students explained both how contextual sources informed the development of ideas, and their choices and decisions as the work progressed.

The four AOs are not a methodology and should not be interpreted as a linear progression. A minority of students followed the AOs in numerical order which inhibited the natural progression of their work. The AOs are interdependent and overlap.

AO1

Successful students were able to demonstrate their abilities to manage and produce sustained and focused investigations. The most effective examples provided evidence of in-depth investigations that were assured, thoughtful, personal and organised. Clear intentions enabled students to develop ideas in a coherent and logical manner. Successful examples provided evidence of how students developed their ideas and provided insight into their thinking.

The majority of teachers provided students with a stimulating choice of starting points which included broad open-ended ideas and themes based on the natural and built environments, the human figure and objects. Some students based their investigations on astronomy, science and technology. Examples of two- and three-dimensional abstraction were seen, often on a large scale. Students revealed awareness and sensitivity in response to issues that included health and mental well-being, care for the elderly, ageing and dementia. Often these were inspired by personal experience. Images which related to conflict, self-harm, bullying and anxiety were powerful and occasionally disturbing. A number of investigations focused on students' concerns about environmental pollution and global warming.

Starting points from the previous year's Externally Set Assignment question papers were used or adapted by teachers. Starting points provided by some students did not provide sufficient scope for the successful investigation and development of ideas.

Students resourced their ideas with fieldwork or found objects, specimens and other materials to produce sketches, drawings and photographs. Some students identified a starting point and began their investigations by exploring relevant work by artists, photographers or designers. Others began their investigations with initial studies of their source material, then looked for examples of relevant work by artists, designers or photographers.

Investigation of appropriate contextual sources informed the development of students' understanding of formal elements and visual language. Exploring relevant examples helped successful students to consider different approaches to their chosen starting point and enabled them to develop their own personal language as their work progressed. When students understood the purpose and value of investigating contextual sources, selecting and referring to relevant examples for a variety of reasons at appropriate points in their investigations had a meaningful impact on the development of ideas.

Marks are not credited for the number of contextual sources that students refer to. Appropriateness to students' intentions and evidence of learning are important. One fine art response to *Water* explored distortion, reflection, confinement and the human figure, informed by references to work produced by Samantha French and Erica Craig.

In some submissions there was little or no connection between contextual sources and students' investigations. A small yet significant number of teachers provided all students with the same set of contextual sources with little regard to their relevance to the starting points chosen by students and to the independent nature of the personal investigation.

Moodboards that were indiscriminate collections of images downloaded from the Internet showed little evidence of understanding, purpose or selection. Where it might be appropriate to include a moodboard, students could be directed to look at examples produced by professional designers in which a few carefully selected images are juxtaposed for a particular purpose.

A large number of investigations included analytical studies or copies of contextual sources. When these were closely allied to students' intentions, they contributed to students' understanding and helped them to develop their own personal language. In one example, an in-depth study of work by John Singer Sargent informed a student's understanding of composition and the subtleties of implied colour. Photography and graphic communication students often produced initial ideas, images and designs in response to contextual sources which informed the development of their own ideas. Using their own source material in responses to Art Deco designs for posters and print enabled one student to develop their understanding of particular graphic codes and conventions.

This helped them to develop their own ideas when producing the brand identity for a company specialising in restoring classic cars.

The specification does not require students to copy contextual sources. In some examples, copying or producing work *in the style of* other artists was disproportionate to the amount of time devoted to developing students' own ideas. Moderators reported that some students produced sketchbooks that were predominantly copies of contextual sources and included little evidence of investigating and developing their own ideas. Students who were unable to apply the knowledge they had gained produced copies that were more skilful and controlled than their own preparatory work. Where there was least evidence of understanding, students went on to realise their intentions in pastiches of work by others.

There were many examples of sketchbooks, workbooks and mounted sheets of studies which provided clear evidence of purposeful investigation and development. However, where preparatory work was entirely in sketchbooks, some students missed opportunities to explore their ideas on a larger scale. It was apparent that some students found difficulty in translating their work in sketchbooks to larger formats, to a large canvas for example.

Some students prepared sketchbook pages, laying down carefully considered grounds on which to work by staining the paper with a variety of materials that included watercolour, acrylic, linseed oil, coloured inks, PVA, button polish, wax and coffee. In contrast, largely unnecessary title pages decorated with elaborate lettering and pages of predominantly collected images interspersed with untidy and illegible handwriting obscured and distracted from the single, small drawing on a double page.

In both practical work and written material, students' responses to contextual and other sources, the choices and decisions as their work progressed and, meaningful connections made between images by setting one image against another, all provided evidence of analytical and critical understanding. Successful students were able to provide evidence of learning from work produced by others.

Less successful investigations often included a large element of repetition. In some examples of graphic communication, computer software was used to produce numerous repetitions of a design using different coloured backgrounds, when more evidence of developing and improving the design would have been appropriate.

In successful examples of graphic communication, students were able to demonstrate their understanding of the nature, character and appropriateness of typefaces when communicating ideas and information in different contexts. Effective and sensitively managed examples of composition and layout were seen in which the use of space and connections between design elements were understood.

In the required written work for the Personal Investigation, it is important that students investigate and develop their ideas in a sustained and focused manner. They should demonstrate analytical and critical understanding when responding to work by others, in providing a rationale for their own work and their choices and decisions, and explaining how contextual sources informed the development of their own ideas. Written work presented in the form of a log, a journal or a report should also provide evidence of analytical and critical understanding

AO2

Successful students were able to demonstrate their abilities to select appropriate resources and to explore materials, techniques and processes that were appropriate to their intentions. The development, application and honing of skills were important to enable students to articulate, develop and refine their ideas. In the majority of examples, exploring materials and techniques was integrated into the investigation and development of ideas. However in some of the work seen, it was a separate activity. Some students lacked awareness of both the potential and limitations of materials and processes and this was reflected in their levels of technical skill.

There was less evidence of gratuitous experimentation with materials and techniques this year, and more evidence of students' abilities to select and explore purposefully the media and techniques that were relevant to the development and realisation of their ideas. Less successful were examples in which students explored an unnecessarily wide range of materials with little regard to intentions and the development of understanding and skills. Careful selection of materials and techniques provided opportunities for students to explore in depth.

Exploration in drawing and painting, photography, digital manipulations, printmaking, collage and montage advanced students' responses. Mixed media work, free and machine stitching, projection techniques, casting, film, video and animation were explored purposefully and often successfully. Photography and graphic work included advanced levels of digital manipulation, layering and photo-montage techniques.

Reviewing work and progress is important when selecting and exploring materials and refining the chosen idea. Students' abilities to review their work was evident in their choices of materials, in their preferences and in the decisions made when exploring relevant processes and techniques. In many examples, further clarity was provided by meaningful and informative annotation.

In the most successful work, it was clear that students understood how to use their knowledge and experience to refine their ideas by managing materials and techniques and improving compositions, designs and layouts, clarifying details and resolving problems.

Refining ideas is often the least understood element of this AO. Some students provided little or no evidence of refining or improving their chosen idea. The development and honing of skills when exploring, managing and handling materials, enabled students to refine or improve their ideas in in-depth studies, working drawings, thumbnail sketches of compositions and layouts, diagrams, fashion drawings, design roughs and scamps, maquettes and models. Some students were adept at using electronic media to manipulate and refine ideas, layouts and compositions.

Evidence was seen in the use of contact sheets and in prints which documented manipulations, adjustments and enhancements at important points in the refining of images. Prints at key points is an effective and efficient method of demonstrating the development and refining of images. It is not necessary to produce numerous screenshots.

In three-dimensional design, students explored alternative materials and processes to produce maquettes and models. Students used traditional illustration media and techniques, CAD and other software to make adjustments and refinements to their chosen idea.

Textiles students explored a wide range of materials, processes and techniques when producing samplers. Accomplished fashion drawings using traditional media and techniques were seen. In some examples, students incorporated intricate woven textiles and transparent overlays into a

series of drawings which demonstrated the often subtle yet significant refinements made to their ideas. Successful and interesting examples of woven and constructed textiles were seen.

Students used both traditional and electronic media to refine ideas in illustration, print, branding and packaging design. However, it was not unusual to see a series of related ideas none of which were refined by taking an idea further and improving it by making alterations or adjustments to scale, space and layout.

Successful students made choices, decisions and changes clear as they refined their ideas. Less successful were submissions in which students produced outcomes with little or no evidence of how they improved their chosen idea. In some centres, even less successful students were able to demonstrate how they had refined their ideas in thumbnail sketches and simple diagrams. Some examples in which students demonstrated more confident and accomplished skills when refining the handling of media and techniques included little or no evidence of refining or improving their chosen idea, and jumped to the final outcome.

In the required written work for the Personal Investigation, it is important that students review and refine ideas in their response to work by others and in the way that they revise, amend and direct their written work.

AO3

The linear specification has created opportunities in the first year of study for more time to establish working practice and to develop understanding and skills. Evidence suggests that courses include more emphasis on developing skills in managing and handling materials and in providing opportunities for developing students' abilities to record ideas, observations and insights and to reflect on their ideas and progress.

A diversity of approaches to recording ideas and observations included a wide range of traditional, digital and electronic media and techniques that were appropriate to students' intentions in the different areas of study. Moderators report that there were many examples of accomplished skills in drawing in a variety of forms from a diversity of source material, for different purposes. It is important that students record their ideas and observations in ways that are appropriate to their intentions.

In photography, carefully produced sketches and diagrams, hand-drawn or using computer software, provided evidence of planning photoshoots and studio lighting. Contact sheets provided evidence of recording on location or in the studio. However, in many examples, contact images were too small to appreciate fully and to gain a clear understanding of students' thinking and what they had achieved. Successful students were able to demonstrate their abilities to use manual settings on digital cameras by documenting aperture, speed and ISO settings.

Ideas for installations, page layouts, packaging, surface design, printed textiles and fashion, ceramics, architecture and product design were recorded using a variety of appropriate recording methods, materials, processes and techniques.

Recording and observational skills were evident in students' initial responses to their source materials and in sustained, analytical studies which revealed shape, form and structure. Intense scrutiny of cell structures, plant-forms, bones and fish skeletons provided evidence of purposeful and meaningful recording and a starting point for the development of ideas in some of the work seen. Sketches, drawings and photography which recorded observations on location provided

material to be developed into paintings, printmaking, textiles, illustration and design for print, publishing and advertising.

Successful examples demonstrated students' understanding and appreciation of scale. Although it was appropriate for many students to produce all of their work in sketchbooks or workbooks, it was important in many fine art submissions particularly to use sketchbook work as a platform from which to explore broader media on a larger scale, especially when planning a large scale outcome.

In successful work, students were able to demonstrate their abilities to reflect critically on their work and progress. When students were clear in their intentions, their abilities to reflect critically were evident in the choices and decisions as the work progressed. Changes in emphasis or direction, preferences and choices in favour of one thing over another and rejecting ideas or solutions to problems were evident in the practical work in the way that one study led to another or in the way that an avenue of enquiry was abandoned.

The majority of students supported evidence of reflection in the practical work by using annotation to record their thoughts. When this was successful, it provided helpful insight into students' thinking and provided a rationale for their choices and decisions. Clearly, it helped students to reflect critically on what they had produced and to consider how might they progress the work towards a successful conclusion.

In the required written work for the Personal Investigation, it is important that students understand and use appropriate language and terminology to record their ideas, observations and insights when responding to work by others and in explaining connections with their own work. It is a requirement of the specification that students **must** document the sources they have used in the production of the written material. Sources may include books, articles found in magazines, periodicals and newspapers, in television or sound recordings and on websites and the Internet. Acknowledgement of authorship is important. It is insufficient, for example, to simply list 'Wikipedia' as a source.

AO4

Students were able to demonstrate their abilities to present a personal response that enabled them to realise their intentions. Successful students developed their own personal language when investigating, developing and refining their ideas, which led to realisations in a finished outcome or a series of related outcomes. Intentions were realised at important points during the progress of their work, in a particular image, a drawing, a print, a sampler, a working drawing or a sheet of design ideas, as well as in the finished work.

Accomplished examples of paintings, sculpture and printmaking were seen. Successful oil and acrylic paintings demonstrated high levels of understanding of formal elements and image making. Highly developed skills in handling and managing materials enabled students to produce either highly polished and refined outcomes, or powerful and expressive responses. Samples included very successful examples of etching, relief printing and screen printing. Sculptures based on the human figure, natural objects, animals and abstract form were produced in clay, wax, wire, metal, Perspex and wood.

Installations were occasionally the result of in-depth research in which students were able to demonstrate an assured and mature understanding of contextual sources. In successful examples, students provided evidence of awareness, skill and reflection when developing ideas and realising their intentions. Less successful and occasionally credited with high marks by teachers were

assemblages using found materials that were little more than collections of objects loosely related to an idea, a memory, an experience or an event. In these examples, there was insufficient evidence that students understood contextual sources accompanied by a lack of skills, understanding and reflection when investigating, developing, refining and realising ideas. Some examples of performance were well produced using video and sound. Contextual sources occasionally had an over-bearing influence on ideas, process and outcome, which resulted in students creating a pastiche of what they had seen. Some students were locked into what they were going to produce, at the outset of their investigation.

Accomplished examples of traditional and electronic media were seen in illustrations for children's stories and nursery rhymes with intentions realised in designs for book covers, sample page layouts and advertising material. High levels of drawing skills were seen in character development for games, animation and publishing which led to a variety of skilfully designed promotional graphics, stills, sleeves and sample pages. Many examples of branding were based on in-depth investigations in which students demonstrated their understanding of formal elements and their abilities to manage them into coherent and cohesive designs. There was clear evidence of students learning from contextual sources. The most effective examples revealed understanding and awareness of design context and purpose. The importance of communicating ideas, ethos and information was understood by successful students. In less successful realisations, students relied on producing multiple applications of a corporate logo design when there was insufficient evidence of investigation, development and refining ideas.

Garments, costumes, fashion and fashion accessories, imaginative wall hangings, printed textiles and a variety of installations used traditional and upcycled materials and a wide range of processes and techniques. Examples of relief printing, screen printing and digital printing resulted in accomplished fashion designs and designs for wallpaper, furnishings and interiors. In one centre, all the fabrics used in fashion outcomes were printed by the students, using a variety of printmaking methods and processes. Fashion outcomes presented on mannequins were often accompanied by good quality photographs of students wearing the garments. Machine and hand stitch were used skilfully to produce embroidery and free-flowing textiles illustration.

Successful examples of product design, jewellery, furniture, ceramics and architectural models provided evidence of students' understanding of context, purpose, function and aesthetics. In the most successful examples, students were able to demonstrate their understanding and awareness of design and design process. Students provided evidence of learning from contextual sources and were able to apply their knowledge when developing ideas and realising their intentions in well-designed, well-crafted and skilfully produced outcomes. Less successful examples revealed ideas that took little account of aesthetics and lacked skills when managing materials, processes and techniques.

Traditional, digital and electronic media were used in photography to realise intentions in a single image or in a series of related images. Some students presented outcomes as a series of projected images accompanied by finished prints. Sets of unrelated images and images loosely connected by a common theme were less successful. This year, moderators reported an increase in darkroom work. High levels of understanding and awareness were seen in accomplished image-making that was accompanied by assured technical skill in managing photography processes, techniques and the camera. Successful work provided evidence of students' understanding of lighting, depth of field and composition. Atmospheric, engaging and occasionally challenging personal responses were seen. Realisations in the form of reliefs, installations and three-dimensional outcomes were, on occasion, less successful than the skills and understanding that

were evident in students' photography. When enlarged, some digital images were pixilated which affected their visual impact and quality.

Moderators reported an improvement in the organisation and labelling of electronic files in a logical sequence that was accessible and easy to follow. However, in some centres, students presented numerous folders, poorly identified, which included hundreds of images. In photography, successful realisations were supported by evidence of several photoshoots provided in contact sheets, accompanied by evidence of selection, edits and manipulations, which documented clearly the process which led to the finished outcome. A minority of students produced too few photoshoots to provide sufficient evidence of investigation and development in preparation for the finished outcome.

The majority of students demonstrated their understanding of the need to be selective in the work they submit for assessment. It is also important that students present their work in a manner which is appropriate to the nature of the title, particularly in photography and graphic communication. High standards of presentation that was both thoughtful and considered were seen in the majority of submissions.

In the required written work for the Personal Investigation, successful students were able to demonstrate their abilities to present a personal response that enabled them to realise their intentions. Meaningful connections were made between written material and the practical work. In less successful examples, a minority of students produced essays in which there were no connections with the practical work. Reference should be made to page 11 of the specification.

Administration, marking and moderation

In most centres, marks were received by the 31 May. Teachers and moderators found e-submissions straightforward and easy to manage. Teachers found helpful the identification of the moderation sample which immediately follows the submission of marks.

The majority of centres completed Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) and Centre Declaration Sheets (CDSs) before the moderation visit. Teachers' comments on the CRFs were often very helpful, particularly when they referred directly to the AOs and used the language of the assessment criteria. A small number of CRFs were not signed by the teacher(s) or students and some did not match the work displayed.

There were some arithmetical errors on CRFs and transcriptional errors between the CRFs and e-submissions. When submitting marks electronically, it is important to check that they are entered accurately and agree with marks on the CRFs. Errors identified during moderation can result in a revised sample which is inconvenient, time-consuming and can be stressful.

Preparation for moderation visits was generally very good and often quite outstanding. Samples were displayed as an exhibition or presented in folders. Displays were usually considered and carefully organised. Where space was limited, teachers went to great lengths to make best use of what was available. Samples presented mostly in sketchbooks sometimes accompanied by mounted sheets were carefully organised on tables and ample space was set aside to lay out the work. In contrast, large, heavy portfolios, work piled on the floor and the lack of a suitable work surface hampered moderation.

Labelling was usually very clear, but there were exceptions. Work displayed on walls or panels was not always identified clearly. Where both components produced by a student were displayed

together, it was not always a straightforward task to identify which work belonged to which component. It was most helpful when different sets of work were separated clearly on different screens or separated by coloured cord, a length of string or strips of paper.

Work produced in the period of supervised time was, in the majority of centres, identified by a coloured dot or a label. It is a specification requirement that work produced in the supervised period is identified. This was overlooked or ignored in a minority of centres.

It is important that students are provided with copies of the ESA question paper and given access to all of the starting points. Evidence suggests that in a small minority of centres, students are unfairly restricted in their choice of questions.

Although it is not a requirement, the majority of teachers organised the samples in rank order, which made the moderation process straightforward. The majority of centres presented each component separately. A minority presented the sample as a single rank order. Where the sample was not presented in rank order, teachers provided clear and easy to navigate maps or plans to assist the moderator.

Most moderators were provided with a quiet, private space to work in. Teachers are reminded that moderation is a confidential process and the moderator must not be asked to mark work in public thoroughfares.

Moderators commented on the overwhelmingly positive approach of teachers to the moderation process and to the warm reception they received in the majority of centres. There were very few occasions when they felt under pressure to reveal marks, which they cannot do.

Understanding of the assessment objectives resulted in marking that was accurate or broadly in line with the AQA standards exemplified at Teacher Standardisation. Discrepancies generally occurred when teachers awarded their most able students high marks when a lower mark was appropriate. This most usually occurred when marks were credited in the 21-24 exceptional mark band when evidence provided by the work did not match the criteria for exceptional achievement on a national scale. It is important to note that where evidence in the sample does not match the higher marks credited by the centre, regression can impact other marks in which there is a discrepancy between the centre's marks and the moderator's marks. In the majority of centres, marking in the mid and lower bands was accurate or close to the AQA standards.

Many teachers commented on the value of Teacher Standardisation meetings where successful examples of work at different levels of achievement can be seen. Examples of work from all six titles represent the standards of the specification. Achievement in each title is the same standard. Erratic marking was often linked to non-attendance at these meetings.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.