



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

Art and Design (Fine Art)

ARTB4

(Specification 2200)

Unit 4: Externally Set Assignment

Report on the Examination

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GCE Art and Design - General

Work seen by moderators covered a wide range of traditional and contemporary approaches and the different demands of each unit were generally understood. Students engaged with a diverse range of ideas and themes. Where appropriate, many undertook fieldwork to obtain relevant source materials. Others worked directly from a selection objects or specimens. Some students were creative in the ways that they investigated and responded to images, artefacts and other materials they had found. Students often demonstrated an awareness of, and personal feelings about, important issues.

In the coursework portfolio, students developed a sound basis for working practice. In many schools and colleges, teachers provided courses in which there was a clear emphasis on exploring different approaches, materials, processes and techniques. The development of skills during the AS year was an important foundation for students' work at A2. High levels of drawing and observational skill were evident in the more successful work.

In many schools and colleges, an introductory project at the beginning of the AS year enabled students to develop greater understanding, confidence and independence as the course progressed. Students are required to produce an extended personal project in the Portfolio. Most students responded to a starting point, theme or brief provided by their teachers. Some students produced more than one project and many students included additional materials such as work produced in workshops or on gallery visits.

Where chosen contextual materials were appropriate and had been understood, they informed students' work in many different ways. When looking at works of a particular artist, or a range of work by several artists, students considered the ways in which the subject, theme or idea had been interpreted, how formal elements were used, how elements of composition, layout or design were manipulated and how media and techniques were used. In the work of some students references were made to examples of music, poetry, literature, architecture and cultural artefacts from different times and places.

Sketchbooks and workbooks continued to be used by many students. However, their content varied considerably in quality. The most successful were lively, thoughtful and well considered and clearly recorded the development of ideas. Some students presented their work on mounted sheets and carefully considered connections between images. Some students presented electronic sketchbooks.

Many students produced large quantities of work but did not develop their ideas in sufficient depth. Students should consider the level of skill and understanding they have demonstrated in response to each of the Assessment Objectives and how well they have realised their intentions.

Successful students provided evidence of a coherent journey, revealing clear engagement with source materials and ideas. Their work was focused and sustained and had a real sense of purpose. Less successful work was often fragmented and poorly executed revealing a lack of understanding and skill.

Many students chose to annotate their work and these often provided insights into their ideas and decisions. They also made clear the connections between different aspects of the work. Sometimes, annotations, statements of intent and evaluations were used to help students focus their ideas and their investigations. However, some students wrote copious notes that often provided little in the way of insights and merely repeated what was already evident in the work.

Many students used some form of ICT, either in resourcing their work or in the process of producing it. Many students have access to digital cameras or camera phones and these were often used confidently to record observations and to source contextual material. In Graphic Communication digital and electronic media were often used extensively. Adobe Photoshop was widely used by students to develop their ideas. The Internet was used to access the work of artists, designers and craftspeople.

Administration, marking and moderation

Many moderators reported improvements in administration. In the majority of schools and colleges, mark sheets were correctly completed and deadlines were met. Problems occurred when Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) and Centre Declaration Sheets (CDSs) were not completed prior to the moderation visit. Detailed comments on the CRFs were often helpful and informative.

Teachers are reminded to send both pink and yellow copies of the centre mark forms or EDI print outs to the moderator. One copy will be returned to the school or college with the samples required for the visit indicated on it.

Preparation for moderation visits was generally good and samples were organised in an exhibition or as a collection of folders. In the majority of cases, labelling was very helpful and clear. Maps indicating exactly where samples might be found, were particularly useful. Most provided a quiet, non-public space for the moderation process to take place which is essential. Many moderators commented on the warm reception they received but there were occasions when they felt under pressure to reveal marks which they cannot do. General feedback was well received and thought to be helpful.

An understanding of the assessment objectives resulted in accurate marking in the majority of schools and colleges. Problems generally occurred when teachers awarded their best student maximum marks when a lower mark was more appropriate.

Many teachers and lecturers commented on the value of standardisation meetings where examples of work at different levels can be seen. Erratic marking was often linked to non-attendance at these meetings.

Assessment Objectives

AO1

The ability to develop ideas in a coherent and sustained manner was a key feature of the most successful work. Successful students provided sound evidence of learning from contextual materials and developed their own, personal visual language. Evidence of analytical and critical understanding was provided in different ways. Written materials often provided insights into students' knowledge and understanding and explained decisions made when developing their work. Less successful work was fragmented and intentions were not always clear.

AO2

An introductory project at the beginning of the AS year, often gave students opportunities to experiment with media and to develop a good basic understanding of a range of materials, processes and techniques. Students were then more able to develop their skills when responding to a starting point, idea or theme. The development of skills and understanding of handling materials enabled students to refine their ideas as their work developed. The least successful work was lacking the development of basic skills which made it difficult for students to explore ideas confidently and to demonstrate understanding in the development of their work.

AO3

Ideas, observations and insights were recorded in many different ways, for different purposes and at different stages of the work. Digital cameras were used as a valuable sketchbook tool

and proved to be particularly useful in obtaining source materials. Drawings and colour studies often included analytical work that was detailed, considered and closely observed. They also included drawings that were vigorous, loose and expressive. Some studies were small, fine and delicate whilst others were of a much larger scale. Initial ideas and alternative ideas for compositions or layouts were often recorded in thumbnail sketches. Contact prints, printouts of computer generated materials and textile samplers also provided evidence of recording observations and ideas. Students provided evidence of reflecting on their work and progress both visually and in written materials. Some of the least successful students provided large amounts of collected images and annotations added little to understanding.

AO4

In AS, many students focused on developing their technical skills and established a good working practice that enabled them to successfully develop their ideas. The development of a personal visual language was much more evident in A2 work. Confidence and maturity was also evident in much of the A2 work. Critical understanding was clear in the choices and decisions made by students and they were able to successfully realise their intentions. Many students realised their intentions at various stages and produced a rich diversity of responses. Many students made some connections between different elements of their work as it progressed. In the least successful work, little attempt was made to link the written element to the practical work.

Fine Art - general

Students explored a wide range of ideas, issues and approaches. This often resulted in work which was personal, thoughtful and innovative. The majority of students made extensive use of traditional media and well-established techniques. There was increasing use of photography, video and film. Computer software was also widely used for investigating and developing ideas.

When visiting galleries, students encountered a broad spectrum of practice. It was encouraging to see so many engaging with live work rather than simply relying on reproductions in publications and on the Internet. Major exhibitions by David Hockney, Grayson Perry, Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Lucian Freud and Anselm Kiefer generated a range of positive and negative responses.

The central task for students was to find appropriate ways to develop their own practice, whilst demonstrating analytical and critical understanding of their chosen context. When this relationship worked well, students were able to provide meaningful insights into their own work and that of others. In less successful examples, responses to the work of others revealed a lack of understanding and were often somewhat superficial. Some conceptual work proved to be particularly challenging for students.

Externally Set Assignment

Responses to the A2 paper were often highly personal and some work reflected the challenging and uncertain times that many young people are currently experiencing. Outcomes were often surprising and, on occasions, both original and innovative. Many students made reference to aspects of contemporary practice in their work.

Water

There was a wide range of responses to this starting point. Many students looked carefully at various aspects of water, such as reflections, patterns and colours; others looked at the appearance of people under water. Extensive use was made of photography. Swimming pools, fast moving streams and running taps were often observed. The work of Leonardo da Vinci, Monet and Hockney was clearly popular. References to the studies of the Thames by Kurt Jackson were also seen.

Coverings

This starting point provided opportunities for observational studies exploring the impact of light on surfaces, distortions in patterned materials and the particular characteristics of objects when covered, wrapped and tied. Some students considered the idea of hidden identities. There were many examples of students wrapping objects, photographing them and then digitally manipulating them. Christo and Jeanne-Claude offered an obvious source of inspiration and a number of students made reference to contemporary artists such as Debbie Lawson and Nina Saunders.

Women in Art

Moderators saw many examples of drawings, paintings, photographs, collages and sculptures based on women. Studies from life were particularly popular. Some students based their work on the depiction of women in magazines, with aspects of Pop Art providing a source for contextual material. References to the work of artists such as Paula Rego, Cindy Sherman and Tracy Emin often introduced a more political dimension. Aspects of feminism such as gender stereotyping provided a focus for a number of students.

Possessions

Many students based aspects of their work on their own possessions or on memorabilia found in their homes or work places. There were many examples of closely-observed and detailed studies. Some students linked possessions to the notion of greed and excess. References to the work of Peter Blake and Martin Parr were found to be particularly helpful by many; others were inspired by Dutch still-life painting.

African Art

Unsurprisingly, masks were a widely used source for study in both two- and three-dimensional work. However, some students looked at elements of African design seen in textiles, ceramics and architecture. Collections of images based on aspects of African culture were also popular; occasionally these included images of wild life. Some students made reference to work inspired by African Art such as that produced by Picasso.

The Natural Environment

Many students responded enthusiastically to this starting point. Work ranged from closely-observed studies of natural forms to paintings, photographs and prints based on landscapes. Local parks and woodlands provided popular locations. Some students produced and photographed work constructed in the landscape, inspired by artists such as Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy. Some studies led to abstract interpretations of light, colour and form seen in the landscape.

Self-Image

This starting point inspired a number of students to explore what lies behind superficial appearances. This provided opportunities to explore their hopes, aspirations and anxieties. Many engaged with a range of political and social issues. There were also references to aspects of youth culture such as music, fashion and drug culture. Other students produced more traditional work based on self-portraits. Contextual references ranged from artists such as Lucian Freud and Frida Kahlo to Gillian Wearing.

Mixed Media

Students explored a wide range of ideas, issues and themes in response to this starting point. Many appeared to enjoy the experience of experimenting with different materials and approaches and there were many examples of students combining aspects of painting, printmaking and photography. Abstract forms and images were popular. Cornelia Parker and Chris Ofili inspired some interesting responses. The work of abstract Expressionists and Robert Rauschenberg was also popular.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion