General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012

Art and Design (Photography)   **ARTF2**

(Specification 2200)

Unit 2: Externally Set Assignment

Report on the Examination

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.

Photography
This is a popular endorsement and digital photography featured in a substantial number of submissions. The ease of digital recording resulted in some students presenting large numbers of images with little sense of purpose and selection was lacking. The most successful students demonstrated clear intent when planning photo-shoots and in the selection of images. However, in some schools and colleges there was evidence of a return to traditional photographic techniques. Pinhole photography was used by many as an introduction to traditional techniques. Some students included their own black and white prints and in doing so, learnt valuable lessons about darkroom techniques.

An increasing number of entirely digital submissions were seen this year and some students used PowerPoint to present their work. Restricted access discussion forums such as Flickr were used effectively by some schools and colleges. The use of Adobe Photoshop alone to manipulate images was not always successful in demonstrating the development of ideas.

Annotation was extensively used by the majority of students, although the quality and amount varied considerably. In the least successful work, students provided a basic commentary which did nothing to inform or enhance the work.
A wide range of contextual materials were investigated. Frequently, these included the work of well-known photographers but reference was occasionally made to less well-known practitioners. Contextual materials drawn from other areas of art and design frequently informed the development of students' ideas.

Some students presented work in the form of commercially produced books. Although this can be an interesting method and format, it tends to limit the student's control over the quality of the images produced, which is important. In successful work, students had considered the nature of the images as well as their order and layout.

Externally Set Assignment
The range of starting points provided ample opportunities for students of all abilities. Most students carefully considered the potential of a starting point before beginning their investigations. They looked at a range of appropriate contextual references, often drawn

from other areas of art and design. The more successful students presented carefully considered and well-produced outcomes. Less successful students produced disparate collections of images with little relevance to the chosen theme. The timing and administration of the 5 hour period of supervised time was used inappropriately in some schools and colleges, but most teachers saw it as a useful period in which students focused on the exploration of ideas.

Personal Possessions
In response to this starting point some students based their work on personal possessions, such as mobile phones. The most successful students provided evidence of sustained work in which they had thoroughly explored ideas, often linking possessions with identity. Candidates of all abilities tended to adopt a documentary approach to their photography.

Black and White or Colour
A significant number of students investigated the nature of different genres of photography and many successful responses were seen. There was a lot of experimentation with Adobe Photoshop and desaturation featured heavily in the work of some students.

The Passing of Time
In response to this starting point students experimented with layering, the sequencing of images and various photographic techniques. Multiple exposures and the use of different shutter speeds were also considered. Many students produced exciting and imaginative outcomes. Some students explored the concept of mood and atmosphere in staged images where the passing of time was implied.

Decay
In response to this starting point students often documented their observations of decay using traditional photographic methods. Some students produced a series of carefully controlled still-life images. Others adopted a more esoteric approach in which they explored the decay of society and relationships in various ways. Some excellent traditional monochrome studies were presented and fixed-point photography was used to explore the decay of flowers, fruit or other organic objects over a period of time.

Patterns
Some successful traditional approaches were seen where students explored patterns that can be found in nature and in architecture. A few students explored the possibilities of creating patterns using Adobe Photoshop, sometimes to good effect. The most successful submissions were well informed and demonstrated effective use of appropriate techniques.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available at
www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html

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