

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE

Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Art and Design

(8AD01/8FA01/8TD01/8TE01/8PY01/8GC01/8CC01)

First examination 2009

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1- INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of the 2009 series of GCE Advanced Subsidiary Art & Design.

The Edexcel GCE specification aims to expand on student's art and design experiences providing an expansive framework of endorsed disciplines to encourage them to develop their personal strengths in the subject. The specification is supported by a comprehensive selection of training materials and subject specialists. Working with traditional and new media, students develop confidence, competence, imagination and creativity. They learn to appreciate and value images and artefacts across times and cultures, and to understand the contexts in which they were made. They are also encouraged to reflect critically on their own and other people's work, and to think and act as artists, craftspeople and designers. During this journey they develop an appreciation of art, craft and design, and its role in the creative and cultural industries that enrich their lives.

GCE ideally builds on art practice carried out at GCSE but will also embrace other art and design introductory courses.

GCE candidates should be able to:

- enhance practical artistic skills and abilities
- demonstrate an understanding of past and contemporary art and design practice
- produce personal responses developing ideas through experimentation and analysis
- Reflect on their own work and on the works of others.

The format of the New Specification was welcomed by centres and in particular the relief at having to deal with very few changes. Over the last two years they have refined their planning in the light of the two units and were pleased with the continuity of both unit content and assessment procedures. Many commented favourably on the new assessment objectives,

which they felt offered greater opportunity for an integrated approach to covering the criteria. They also felt the new objectives offered candidates a less fragmented method of working through their coursework assignments. The Externally Set Assignment theme "Sanctuary" was warmly received by candidates and the variety and imaginative responses to it were noted by moderators. Many centres commented on the ease with which their students accessed the information contained within the paper.

2- ADMINISTRATION AND MODERATION

The Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document is updated each year, taking on board lessons learnt from the preceding year. The ICE is made available to centres on the Edexcel website. Centres that read the ICE carefully and in detail made sure that assessment and moderation processes were accomplished successfully.

An Assessment Grid must be completed accurately for each candidate and made available for moderators when they visit the centre. Centres found it very useful that the current version of the ICE and AG are available on the Edexcel website. As in 2008, many centres photocopied the AG and the authentication forms back to back and this helped to lessen paperwork for centres. Candidate marks may be submitted to Edexcel using the OPTEMS forms provided or by direct input online. Moderators have commented this year that, where centre marks had been submitted online, there was a welcome opportunity for them to prepare for the moderation visit. It is certainly worth reminding centres of the need for accuracy in transferring teacher examiner assessment marks from the Grids to the Optems or direct online input.

Moderators reported that most centres presented candidates' work for moderation in an exhibition format. This provided the ideal scenario for evaluation of individual candidates work and an opportunity for the whole centre to appreciate the work of their students. Some centres with a large

number of entries were at the mercy of constraints of space and unable to display candidates' work as an exhibition. In these circumstances the work was presented in folders. Candidates who had been encouraged to select, edit and organise their folders assisted the moderation process. Moderators have reported that they particularly welcomed an order of merit and were pleased to see many centres providing this. Centres are reminded that the presentation of work as an exhibition necessitates clear labelling and separation of the two units. Many centres provided detailed layout plans and these enabled moderators to locate each candidate's work easily. The time and care that heads of department took in explaining the approach taken in their centre toward course design, delivery, assessment and internal standardisation was greatly appreciated.

Centres must mark their candidates' work, using the assessment criteria on the assessment guide/grid. Centres that followed this practice diligently showed an accurate understanding of suitable mark levels. Standardisation across the endorsements is still an issue in some centres. Only joint understanding of the respective standards in relationship to the criteria will solve this. Centres with several departments must therefore meet to discuss these, prior to marking their own endorsement areas.

The moderation sample is a computer generated random selection of candidates. In addition, a centre must ensure that the highest and the lowest candidate, for coursework and for the ESA, are presented with the selected sample.

It is worth reiterating and emphasising the significance of accurate internal standardisation. Where this has not taken place within the centre, it may result in substantial changes to the overall centre marks affecting all endorsements. Centres must take care to thoroughly internally standardise, otherwise candidates' final marks may be compromised.

It is important for centres to note that assessment criteria must operate consistently for both the coursework and ESA components. Although the amount of work offered for the two components may differ, the assessment requirements remain constant.

It is crucial that centres secure a credible grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent and Confident in the national context for GCE Art and Design. Edexcel makes available to centres a helpful annual programme of INSET to promote a sound appreciation of standards within the national context.

Strengths:

- Adherence to assessment and moderation processes set out in the ICE
- Accurate and complete grid/guides, Optems and authentication forms
- A secure order of merit
- Coursework Unit 1 and ESA Unit 2 clearly identified with a map to enable moderators to locate candidates' work
- An informative dialogue with a head of department that sets out in detail the centre's approach toward course design, delivery, assessment and internal standardisation procedures
- Accurate use of the grid/guide and a good grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent and Confident. in the national context for GCE Art and Design to arrive at secure assessment decisions
- Thorough internal standardisation across all endorsements.

Weaknesses were seen where these criteria had not been fulfilled.

3- COURSEWORK UNIT 1

This unit continues to be used by most centres to lay down the foundation skills needed at advanced level. In certain endorsements such as photography, textiles and three dimensional design, many candidates have no previous

experience of the techniques and materials used. In the centres offering these the unit is often designed and delivered specifically to introduce students to them. This creates problems unless the separate skills based tasks are carefully co-ordinated to push forward a single focus or theme. A unit consisting of several random projects struggles to provide evidence of sustained development for AO1 and reviewing and refinement for AO2. This is particularly true in situations where the different skills are delivered by different staff.

Centres with a good understanding of the specification are, however, aware of these pitfalls and carefully divide the academic year to enable their students to score highly across all of the assessment criteria. They also unify the projects with a common theme or focus. It was observed that Fine Art candidates often have an advantage here, as they rarely arrive on the course without some knowledge of the disciplines and formal elements of this endorsement.

These characteristics were observed nationally with few regional variations. It was generally noted that the introduction of the new specification with its minor changes and revised assessment objectives has had very little impact on the standards and achievement of candidates. As all the existing criteria and structures were easily transferable centres seamlessly moved from the legacy to the new.

Whilst it is observed that candidates continue to present work of a personal and diverse nature; it is also noticed that improving course structures and efficiency of delivery at GCSE are providing valuable springboards for candidates intending to continue their qualifications. For students experiencing this type of foundation it is generally enhancing the quality and standard of their work at AS level.

The effects of comprehensive and informative Inset training over the past few years have made noticeable improvements in the performance of those centres that have sent delegates to these events. The cumulative effect of both these factors is generally raising the standard of work seen nationally. Some centres now have well established patterns of delivery. Although

sometimes imparting a house style, they enable weaker students to accrue marks through tasks that are specifically targeting individual assessment criteria. It is interesting to see that the higher achieving students in these centres are often displaying work that consistently reflects the “Fluent” criteria at A2 surpassing the expectations of AS. Many of them are using these candidates as benchmarks and working their rank orders down from them, under-marking is often observed in these cases.

In stark contrast to the above, centres whose cohorts have little prior experience of art and design issues and whose staff do not attend Inset, continue to over-mark their weaker candidates. Often work that would struggle to achieve a D grade at GCSE is presented with a mark that would result in a D grade at AS. In these centres this generosity inflates the middle as well as the bottom of their cohort. The over-marked bottom end candidates pushing the marks of those above to unrealistic levels, as the centre tries to establish a rank order using the inflated low marks as their benchmark. It is essential that teacher examiners in these centres familiarize themselves with the national standards placed in context with the criteria on the assessment grid and guide.

Strengths:

- Well-structured courses that provided candidates with a secure foundation of visual language skills.
- Courses that provided candidates with opportunities to learn and show their grasp of several processes and methods for research (including digital photography and ICT), the use of a range of media, analysis of artists’ work and, the development of individual and personal ideas and outcomes.
- Courses that emphasised the purpose and value of visual research and promoted the use of primary sources such as first-hand observational studies and independent or organised study visits to galleries and museums.

- Courses that offered candidates opportunities to work with an artist in residence and in workshop settings.
- Work in which appropriate contextual study was meaningfully linked to the focus of projects through articulate visual and, where fitting, verbal description, annotation and analysis.
- Journals that were personal, enlivened and informative, expressing thoughts, ideas, experimentation, contextual links and showing review, refinement and development.
- Courses which emphasised and promoted the production of ambitious and imaginative final outcomes and that supported candidates in using a variety of media and scale.
- Secure understanding of the inter-relationship of the assessment objectives and appreciation of appropriate evidence of candidates' level of achievement.
- Course that balance the time between foundation skills and development of a personal journey.

Weaknesses were observed where centres failed to exhibit the above characteristics.

4- EXTERNALLY SET ASSIGNMENT UNIT 2

Centres universally welcomed this year's Externally Set Assignment and candidates responded to the theme "Sanctuary" with highly personal, unique and interesting outcomes. Many commented on how the paper provided a stimulating and useful resource for students and teachers.

It was reassuring to see a larger percentage of candidates using the suggested starting points, many centres used them as project briefs, especially in the graphics and three dimensional design endorsements, building specific assignments around them.

Centres who use the preparatory period to structure and deliver the ESA continue to place their candidates at an advantage over those who do not. There was a clear divide in standard between the Coursework and ESA in the centres that left their students to develop their ideas without assistance. The strength of the Edexcel foundation Unit 1 continues to enhance the performance of candidates in the Externally Set Assignment. As more and more centres adopt good practice in Unit 1 so the standard of the outcomes in Unit 2 rises. Some outstanding responses were seen this year with candidates often exceeding the expectations of this level of the qualification. The scale and range of these continues to impress the moderation team and this is reflected in their comments. Here is one such comment from an experienced Team Leader:

"Moderators reported that student response to the ESA was largely personal and energetic. The vast majority of centres had engendered an admirable ability within the students to develop ideas in an independent manner"

Although the majority of centres have now established excellent working practices for the delivery of this unit some are still leaving their candidates to develop the externally set assignment unaided, during the preparation period. As mentioned before this dramatically affects the performance of their candidates and places them at a disadvantage over those that do.

High achieving candidates are seen in centres that launch the assignment with vigour and enthusiasm, encouraging their students to thoroughly explore the paper before embarking on a personal focus.

Some centres were again confused by the change in documentation and mixed up the legacy theme "Opulence" with the new specification one "Sanctuary". As with Unit 1 all of these issues were dealt with efficiently and tactfully by the assessment team. It was pleasing to note that none of the administrative problems had any detrimental effects on candidate's submissions.

Strengths:

- Carefully structured, centre devised and teacher led programmes for preparatory studies enabling candidates to accomplish coherent, imaginative individual responses
- Reading the entire externally set paper
- Suitable and informative contextual research and analysis ideally supported through gallery or museum visits
- Thorough first hand observation and research, including that obtained from the skilled use of a candidate's own film and digital photography.
- Focused development of ideas with pertinent experimentation and use of media
- Convincingly authoritative application of the formal elements enabling realisation of individual creative intent
- Accurate centre marking

Again weaknesses were observed where candidates failed to meet the above criteria.

5.- Summary

There was a rich range of work across the centres visited with very varied and often innovative approaches to developing ideas from candidates. It was commendable to see some candidates attempting conceptual ideas and employing contemporary methods such as video and installation to communicate their understanding. The best of these approaches tended to be those candidates who had established a clear focus for study. They had researched and recorded extensively from primary sources.

There were, however, many examples of candidates barely moving beyond the obvious and literal when developing their ideas. Many of these candidates had gathered copious amounts of research material leaving insufficient time to consider their own personal focus. This resulted in weak development where candidates' supporting studies lacked a sustained critical journey. Sketchbooks and study sheets were often filled with contextual investigations which remained unused at later stages of the work. They also contained large amounts of cut and pasted text from websites and these did little to develop their enquiry. In these cases the outcome tended to spontaneously appear, without any sense of a critically reviewed visual journey or refinement in the final work.

The new assessment objectives stress the need for personal review and critical analysis of candidates' work in all four criteria. Centres are reminded that candidates need an intention or a focus upon which to base their research and that it is only through the process of a sustained critical journey that meaningful work will emerge.

Each endorsement exhibited its own unique characteristics. Here is a brief outline of observations that are pertinent to each one:

Art, craft and design /Unendorsed

Candidates choosing this endorsement generally presented rich and exciting submissions, especially where there were opportunities to explore different media and approaches. These were enhanced when candidates were encouraged to move towards their strongest disciplines and techniques. At times courses were a little too broad and failed to develop students control over the formal elements sufficiently, for example candidates choosing a discipline such as graphics, but whom, without tutor expertise, had insufficient skills or understanding. Sometimes, however, the very personal and meaningful paths chosen by the candidates in pursuit of their ideas, outweighed these problems.

Fine Art

Some of the best work was evident under this endorsement, where candidates had demonstrated depth, range and subtlety in their interpretation of ideas. In these cases, concepts were understood and candidates had explored the potential of ideas and selected media. However, there were also some very weak examples where there was little evidence of understanding of the formal elements, particularly colour which in many cases was used with scant regard for its qualities. There were examples where candidates had made clumsy copies of Jackson Pollock or Mark Rothko with little comprehension of why they were doing so. Here contextual references were used to fulfil the assessment criteria and not the students own understanding.

3D Design

This is not a very widely chosen endorsement. Where seen, the approach was often one of design technology with candidates working through the design process to produce functional objects. There were some excellent examples of innovative lighting design, where candidates had explored contemporary architectural form as inspiration for fragmented light. There was however a

tendency for the work to be somewhat formulaic especially where candidates had followed the same brief within a tightly structured course.

Textiles

Some very exciting costume design pieces were seen where candidates had explored organic and inorganic forms as stimulus for innovative fashion pieces. Sketchbooks and design worksheets were exemplary and here the process of design innovation, development and critical review and refinement was fully understood. Candidates had produced extensive samples, swatches and maquettes in their exploration of their ideas and selected media. Often mixed-media and scrap/recycled materials had been used to excellent effect. Here it was evident that candidates had understood the process of transforming their selected material to communicate their fashion ideas.

Photography (film and video) and lens based media

There was a very mixed range of submissions for this endorsement. The best work was evidenced where candidates' had developed the ability to grasp the complexities of taking a good photograph or using a lens for video or film for the purpose of communicating an idea effectively. There was too frequently a lack of understanding of the medium, with candidates taking vast amounts of digital snaps with little sense of pursuing an idea and little understanding of analysis or selection from this array of disparate images. Some excellent work was seen where candidates had used traditional wet processing of black and white film and it is pleasing to see them use this to acquire knowledge of the characteristics of exposure and light before progressing to digital imagery. Digital photography is now fairly dominant in this endorsement and students are collecting images, sensitively re-working and modifying them using design software. It was evident that the stronger work emerged from a clearly defined purpose and a sustained pursuit of an idea towards a final outcome.

Graphic design/communication

Where centres had used Unit 1 to introduce the essential components of graphics, candidates tended to have a sound understanding of graphic visual language. The best work demonstrated both traditional and digital approaches to design, where candidates had explored line, shape and colour using a wide range of experimental studies as starting points for their developing ideas. Greater authenticity of design was achieved through candidates' primary sourcing their ideas. Too many candidates resorted to ready-made images or pastiches of art works with little understanding of how to pursue an idea from conception to realisation.

Critical and contextual studies

It was evident from submissions that some of the most academic candidates had been entered for this endorsement. At the top range of marks, they demonstrated in-depth research together with some excellent examples of critical analysis in their coursework studies. Generally their dissertations were focused and well structured with a genuine sense of personal investigation into a chosen area of art and design. The best work showed the ability to select and use artists' quotes and critics' writings to support candidates' own personal judgment. Where they had seen the work first-hand, there was a significantly greater sense of involvement and personal analysis and this should be actively encouraged.

6- Statistics

Unit 1 Coursework (6AD01 - 6CC01)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	71	62	53	44	35
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

Unit 2 Externally Set Assignment ((6AD02 - 6CC02)

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	71	62	53	44	35
Uniform boundary mark	80	64	56	48	40	32

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