



Pearson

Moderator's Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Level GCE in
Art and Design

Component 1 Personal Investigation
9AD0/9FA0/9TD0/9TE0/9PY0/9GC0

&

Component 2 Externally Set Assignment
9AD0/9FA0/9TD0/9TE0/9PY0/9GC0

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Introduction

This report is a comprehensive overview of the performance of candidates in the GCE Art and Design Advanced Level 2017 series and is compiled from observations made nationally and internationally by the whole assessment team.

It is important, therefore, that the practitioners who are delivering this qualification receive copies of it and examination officers in centres relay it immediately to the relevant personnel, as it may help to inform their procedures for the 2018 examination series.

The new specification has been well received due to its linear nature and close relationship to the legacy qualifications.

One of the real advantages is that the basic general demands of the specification remain the same as the legacy, along with similar assessment criteria. This has enabled centres who have established good practices to carry on seamlessly into the new qualification. It has also enabled areas of the specification that were less effective to be reviewed and improved and provided opportunities to further enhance what was already a highly successful qualification. New assessment tools have been introduced, such as the 'Performance Calculator,' that has made marking quicker and less subjective. These will continue to be enhanced using the hyperlinks to add even more exemplar work across all of the offered titles. This work will also be from the live qualification, rather than re-marked Legacy exemplars.

Obviously, any new qualification will take time to become familiar with and during this time, there will undoubtedly be uncertainties. The most significant of these for centres is probably the relationship of marks to grades. However, these are established and available now, as the 2017 series has run its full course.

Feedback from this report is invaluable in providing information for centres to help them adapt and re-structure their course design and assessment strategies, to suit any nuances of the reformed qualification.

Here are the observations pertinent to each component, as reported by the Principal Moderators responsible for them.

As mentioned in previous legacy reports, the observations are generic and must not be seen as lists of criticism or praise for individual centres. They have been taken directly from the moderator's reports and collated and edited to avoid duplication. Single issues are not commented on, so the points raised have been made by several individual moderators from different national and international locations. They, therefore, form important trends that need to be addressed if they are pertinent to your centre.

Components 9AD0/01 – 9GC0/01

Component 1

Overview

Component 1 represents 60% of Linear A level and is made up of 72 marks for the practical Personal Investigation (80% of Component 1) and 18 marks for the Personal Study element (20% of Component 1). Therefore, there are 90 marks in total for this Component.

The new specification A level gives the opportunity to candidates to work for two years before submitting journals and outcomes for assessment. Work previously made for AS titles can also be submitted for the full A level in that title, although there is an implication in the mark-scheme or performance calculator that to reach the higher performance bands, candidates needed only to select their best – and usually more recent – work, which genuinely reached the higher A level standard.

The Personal Study is now assessed separately from the practical coursework in the Personal Investigation, whilst still being marked across all four assessment objectives. Training and exemplar material has been produced to explain how the marking criteria relates specifically to the Personal Study.

The requirements of the Personal Study is a 1000-3000 word written and illustrated essay, which should demonstrate the student's depth of contextual understanding. The study should be a piece of continuous prose, not a collection of annotations. It should relate to the student's ideas, but does not necessarily have to contain examples of their work and should avoid being a diary of what they did in their coursework. The new specification also re-emphasises the need for critical rigour and that a full Bibliography should be provided.

For the Personal Investigation, centres may initially set themes for the cohort and structure both practical and contextual exercises, however, students are expected to develop their own, self-generated personal body of work and critical analysis. Practical work in this unit should begin to demonstrate the student working with independence and some degree of personal identity as a practitioner in their chosen title.

Many centres use the previous year's legacy specification title as a starting point for the current year's coursework. This can help less confident students get started, but should not restrict the range or independence of more assured students' ideas.

Visits and field trips to gather source material are encouraged and help students gain further contextual awareness of sources and crucially enable them to experience art, first hand.

There is no expectation of a single outcome, however AO4 implies that the coursework arrives at one or more practical resolutions of a creative journey.

Observations:

- **Linear A level** has not yet showed a clear identity as a single structured course over 2 years.
- Most centres are either including some or all AS work, or just putting in work from the second year.
- Many centres have not yet really begun to change their course structures from the Legacy specification. This is likely to evolve over the next year or two as centres gain the confidence to experiment with new approaches, once notional mark boundaries have been established.
- The new separately-marked **Personal Study** has been taken more seriously by centres, resulting in a general improvement in ambition and rigour.
- Although uncritical and descriptive 'diaries' are still very common, in many centres there is now more of an attempt to structure an informed and in-depth investigation – with the beneficial (and intended) result that students develop their own work to a greater depth. The study has often been drafted several times, with these drafts made evident at Moderation to show progress and development.
- The majority of centres started this component at the end of the AS year/post AS, giving candidates the opportunity to carry out independent research during the summer holidays.
- There was a mixture of very structured and 'taught' approaches to contextual studies in this unit and student-led personal investigation, where teachers became facilitators working with the individual as ideas developed.
- The best studies demonstrated that the essay had evolved in tandem with the student's own work.
- Well researched and ambitious formats, such as some audio visual presentations, revealed an individual, adventurous and unique approach and legitimately gained more marks.
- Photography Personal Studies often involved research into art and artists more broadly, rather than a narrow photography-based frame of reference and are generally improving in this title.

- However, some studies were very short, barely going over 1000 words.
- Bibliographies were much more widely in evidence, being evidence of the range of research a student had done. In some cases, this revealed a shallow approach, with brief lists of lightweight websites.
- Very often, students who extended their investigations from Component 1 into Component 2 were able to develop a consistent depth to concepts and critical understanding.
- Students with a habit/culture of engaging with artists and ideas through regular visits to exhibitions, and who considered a wide variety of sources from; press articles, TV programmes, films, novels as well as books and the internet, were inevitably the most informed and critically aware. This awareness of the breadth and depth of possible sources should be encouraged as much as possible.
- In Art endorsements, drawing as the primary way to drive a project and investigate ideas was a good indicator of visual confidence and, likely, high achievement. Photographic and other forms of recording could be successful or (often) an indicator of a lack of willingness to select and make visual decisions.

Components 9AD0/02 – 9GC0/02

Component 2

Overview

The theme for Component 2 is set by Edexcel in the form of an examination paper. In 2017, this was available for students to respond to from the 1st February.

The theme this year was 'Environment'.

They have an unrestricted amount of time after this date to prepare for a timed test of 15 hours.

Component 2 forms 40% of the total mark

The start of this preparation time and the date of the concluding timed test are set by the centre. Most centres start in February or March and give the timed test in mid-May, depending on their academic calendars and the corresponding holiday dates, such as Easter and the Half-Term holidays on either side. These vary from year to year. This year, Easter was fairly early again and the opportune break facilitated the collection of comprehensive visual resources. As expected, the more accomplished candidates used these to create some fascinating and skilled outcomes.

Candidates are required to provide a set of supporting studies and the final timed test outcome/s for assessment.

Observations

- Centres reaction to this year's theme reflected the pattern established over many years, with most centres enthusiastically embracing the theme and producing resource packs for their candidates in the form of PowerPoints and Blogs.
- A few centres commented on the fact that they thought there was not enough intellectual potential in the theme, but these were completely overwhelmed by the majority that found the theme an excellent platform to stretch and challenge even their most academic students.
- In fact, the breadth of this year's theme resulted in a very wide range of responses from highly personal investigations into family environments and microcosms, to expansive studies of unique landscape forms and structures.
- Strong students explored themes such as the environment of the body, with in-depth investigations of cell and bone structures. Others produced remarkable investigations into the natural and man-made landscape, producing photographs and paintings with fellow students performing and interacting within specific structures and forms found in the landscape.
- Weaker candidates used obvious and predictable responses to the theme, such as the environment of their school or bedroom. Although

these responses were still not devoid of potential, the type of student choosing them rarely resourced the project beyond single photo shoots of their bedrooms or basic perspective studies of cycle sheds or school halls stacked with chairs.

- The new format of the exam paper was very well received by both tutors and students alike, as was the AS paper last year. Positive comments were made by many teachers about the inspiring images and the abbreviated and punchier starting points.
- It was reported that candidates that had undertaken the exam in sustained blocks of time appeared to perform better than those who had the examination time split into smaller segments. Centres need to look carefully at their exam timetabling to facilitate such blocking if they are to stop potentially disadvantaging their students in the ESA.
- Centres appear to have moved seamlessly from the Legacy ESA to the New Specification ESA and the quality and diversity of the work seen upholds the high standards and technical competence established during the life of the previous Legacy Specification.
- The extra length of the examination time has not had any perceptible impact on the final outcomes, apart from the fact that very few unfinished final outcomes are seen. In fact, many centres reported candidates finishing early in the set time and working on additional pieces for the remainder of the time.
- Centres seem to be managing the preparatory time very well, but several centre Heads of Department requested that the student be allowed to start in January, rather than February. This is in part due to Christmas and the end of the Autumn Term forming a natural conclusion to the coursework projects.
- The theme seemed to inspire candidates in all titles, from Photography and Textiles to Graphic Design, Three Dimensional Design and Fine Art.
- It would simply be impossible to describe the huge variety and breadth of the responses in this report, but moderators consistently reported on how impressed they were by the quality of the candidate's outcomes.

Here are some specific observations related to assessment received this year:

- Centres who were familiar with last year's AS boundaries, who had attended training and who showed trust in the system were prepared to place their top candidates in Level 5, without going far into the Exceptional band. These centres were in the minority though, as most centres, even those claiming to have been to training events, automatically put their best students into the top of the Exceptional band.
- Personal studies were very often especially over-marked, in centres that tended to carry across the rough mark from the practical element, without close consideration of the individual merits of the Personal Study in relation to the assessment objectives.

- Centres were generally very positive about the new status of the Personal Study as a separately marked element.
- For all titles, teachers found it difficult to enable all of their students to produce a genuine creative journey and avoid the temptation to resort to formulaic approaches. However, it was found to be harder to separate out the individual student's creative 'voice' and effort in Photography and Graphics, than in other titles. In these particular titles, individual projects were often homogenised into anonymity by highly structured and formulaic courses, which relied on technical exercises and identikit 'responses' to a narrow range of practitioners.
- The combination of a separate Photography sample and the necessity to read Personal Studies more thoroughly has placed further demands on both centres and moderators in terms of time and also in finding space for the extra work.
- Problems of standardisation across titles are still present, but are less of an issue than previously, as it was often the difference between Photography and other titles that was most glaring example of poor standardisation in centres.
- The Performance Calculator continued to be welcomed as an improved, simple and accurate tool to establish performance.

General Assessment Observations

Assessment was again difficult for centres this year, as it was last year with AS, due to the uncertainty always associated with new mark schemes. This is always the case when a qualification is introduced.

It appears some centres still may have used some sort of mathematical formula derived from scaling the 80 marks of the Legacy qualification with the 90/72 of the new, to pitch their marks.

It is assumed that they did this because they were used to the Legacy Assessment Grid, whose criteria had fallen seriously out of alignment with the corresponding marks and grades. This was a mistake, however, because mark inflation in the Legacy had compressed mathematically all of the marks to the top end. Also, the separation of the written element and the 90/72 mark difference did not make correlation sensible.

Introducing the new qualification has been an opportunity to remedy this situation and use the full range of marks available. Therefore, any centre using some comparative formula would have, unfortunately, been considerably inaccurate. This would have been especially true if they were using it generously to predict grade boundaries.

Some centres had attended training, followed the guidance and placed their candidates more accurately in the mark bands. Here, little adjustment was needed. The new assessment tools, such as the Performance Calculator and online exemplars, have proved invaluable in establishing levels of attainment.

Moderators had been effectively standardised and trained, using the same materials that were made available to centres. This transparency had also assisted the procedures this year, as Teacher Examiners were using the same materials as the moderators. In light of this, it proved straightforward for them to establish the right levels to correspond with the nationally established standards.

It must be said that moderators did an exceptional job and established a consistency across the qualification that must be commended, as it firmly establishes the integrity of the qualification.

Centres next year can embrace the effectiveness of the new assessment tools, safe in the knowledge that candidates will truly receive the rewards that they deserve, in a qualification that demonstrates a genuine stable and consistent standard.

This is the best news for the start of a qualification and establishes a very solid platform to establish the trust of both teachers and candidates.

Summary

As can be seen from the individual reports above, the GCE Art and Design Advanced Level qualification has been received with enthusiasm and great success. It is re-assuring to witness and hear from the senior examining team that, generally, the incredibly high standard of the work seen, compares identically to that of the Legacy qualification and that all of the good practices established in it have been carried forward.

In last year's report, I made this statement about the future:

The development of this qualification has been a fulfilling and rewarding task and to see it flourish this year has inspired candidates, tutors and examiners alike. We all wait with eager anticipation to see what next year's cohort of candidates will create in June 2017.

I think I speak for the entire examining team when I say that yet again, we have been delighted with candidates' achievements. The quality and diversity of their responses have been outstanding and we all feel very privileged to have witnessed their effort and enthusiasm.

It is our intention to upload many of these examples on to the website, so please do watch regularly for updates for guidance.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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