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# Moderator's Report Principal Moderator Feedback

## Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Level  
in Art and Design  
(9AD0/9FA0/9GC0/9PY0/9TD0/9TE0)

Component 1 Personal Investigation

and

Component 2 Externally Set Assignment

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## **Introduction**

This report is a comprehensive overview of the performance of candidates in the GCE Art and Design Advanced Level 2018 series and is compiled from observations made nationally and internationally by the whole moderation 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 2019 examination series.

The second year of the reformed specification has proved highly successful. Centres have rapidly resolved any issues that had arisen from the previous year. Moderators have again commented on the high standards seen in centres and the quality of performance and skills demonstrated by candidates. Issues with the separately marked written element in Component 1 have been addressed. Many Centres are now appreciating the logic that this restructure has brought to a previously ambiguous element. Now the actual impact of this written study on the total mark can be measured. Previous fears have been alleviated. This is because our predicted minimal impact of the separate mark was proven by candidates still comfortably achieving the grades they deserved. Obviously, until the first series had run, it was impossible to accurately predict the effect of the written element on grades. However, many centres have been reassured from their own experiences of candidates with low to average written element marks still achieving top grades when combined with high practical marks in Component 1. Also, this works in reverse where candidates with weaker practical elements have had grades lifted by strong Personal Studies.

It should be recognised that it is an Ofqual mandatory requirement for all the examination boards to have written elements in their A Level Art and Design qualifications. By Pearson Edexcel structuring the delivery and assessment of this efficiently, it is now possible for centres to see exactly what impact this element is having on their candidates' final marks. Pearson's unique solution has proved highly successful in practice, and those centres that were apprehensive, are now appreciating its clarity and transparency. By isolating the Personal Study, candidates who are struggling with it can be given focused guidance. In the past, its ambiguous nature integrally interwoven with the practical work concealed its impact and influence on the final mark. It would be true to say for this reason the legacy assessment grid presented a crude and inaccurate tool for its assessment. The specification has been made clearer and is proving an excellent vehicle to stretch and develop candidate's abilities and knowledge in the field of Art and Design. This is ratified by the impressive work seen nationally and internationally.

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 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.

## **Component 1**

### **9AD0/01 – 9TE0/02**

#### **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); 90 marks in total.

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 / 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 are 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 simply 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 to gain further contextual awareness of sources and crucially enable them to experience art at 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:

- This has been the first year where the outcome of a two-year linear approach has been seen in most centres. Commonly much of the first year was treated as a 'foundation' year of skills building workshops, followed by a second year of more independent study. This has been a very successful approach.
- Exploiting the opportunity provided by a two-year programme has given students a wider range of experiences and challenges than before. For instance, observational skills were given more focused attention in structured life classes, whilst critical analysis was enhanced through more frequent visits to galleries, student presentations, discussion and specific essays that developed analytical skills systematically.
- In contrast to the previous point, however, a less coherent and considered approach resulted in a series of disjointed exercises that confused students and simply delayed them from getting started on their own independent body of work.
- Finding the right balance between structuring skills and knowledge on the one hand and encouraging personal expression on the other remains a key factor for success.
- The now separately marked Personal Study was generally delivered with more focus and attention. In many centres this seriousness of intent was a factor in improving students' contextual understanding at an earlier stage. In the best cases it also had the (intended) beneficial result of improving the scope and ambition of practical work. In these examples, a combination of directed study, discussion and drafting enabled teachers to steer students away from predictable and superficial artistic references. Bland descriptive passages, of both practitioners' and students' work still characterises weaker submissions but is beginning to be less common.
- In some centres, teachers from essay-based subjects such as English were specially drafted in to deliver guidance to students.
- Another consequence of the focus on the Personal Study was that less written work was seen in the general body of practical work for Component 1 than before. This is probably a good thing as at both GCSE and A Level students often write too much in sketchbooks, focusing on description rather than visual analysis. There is now more time to develop the specialised skill of annotation.
- Bibliographies are now the norm, in the best cases evidencing an impressive range of references across different media, from books to films, critical blogs to press articles. It is also worth noting visits.

- Photography has matured further as a title in many centres, who recognise the need to sustain practical enquiry into a specific theme over an extended period and also balance this with genuine depth of contextual analysis. Less successful approaches saw students working through numerous superficial practical exercises informed by even more lightweight sources.
- The best textile courses have also tended to give greater weight to first hand observation than before, leading to more original practical developments. Courses that can accommodate both fashion and 'art – textile' approaches tend to provide the richest potential experience for students.
- Students continue to respond to advancing technology in several titles. More blogs, moving image pieces, animations and multi-media installations were in evidence in Art and Design, Fine Art, Graphics and Photography. However, centres did not always show the same rigour in meeting the assessment objectives for new technologies as for more traditional approaches. The need to develop ideas, experiment with alternatives and fully contextualise sources is just as clear.
- Fewer centres are submitting entries in Three-Dimensional Design.



## **Component 2**

### **9AD0/02 – 9TE0/02**

#### **Overview**

The theme for Component 2 is set by Pearson Edexcel in the form of a pre-release examination paper. In 2018 this was available for students to respond to from the 1st February. The theme this year was 'Freedom and/or Limitations'.

Students have an unrestricted amount of time after the release date to prepare for a timed test of 15 hours.

Component 2 forms 40% of the total qualification 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 upon their academic calendars and the corresponding holiday dates such as Easter and the half-term's either side. These vary from year to year. Easter is always a key opportunity to collect resources for this component; 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 a final timed test outcome(s) for assessment.

#### **Observations:**

- As expected the breadth of potential offered by the theme 'Freedom and/or Limitations' resulted in a wide range of diverse and highly personal responses. As in former years, the paper was received with enthusiasm by centres and candidates alike.
- The theme allowed a multitude of different interpretations and facilitated recording from direct observation and experience. Successful centres stressed the vital importance of a creative visual journey, informed by critical and cultural contexts and gallery visits
- In many centres Component 2 was more personal, creative and successful than Component 1 with teachers stepping back allowing for student's creativity. There was an increased use of quite sophisticated technology, film and computers, alongside traditional methods of Fine Art and Craft techniques.
- Previous ESA papers continue to be used as starting points for coursework components and are archived by centres for this purpose.

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

- Personal studies were very often over-marked. Sometimes there appeared the tendency 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 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.

## Summary

The new specification is still bedding in and centres have yet to adjust to the new marking tools and scales. This is evident from the inconsistency in marking patterns and the universal tendency to 'hedge bets' and place candidates too high in the relevant bands on the assessment grids.

Significant over-marking was widely reported, with concerns that this was still happening in the second year. It is not clear that there is a specific reason for this - many centres report attending training and finding it helpful, but there are still discrepancies in centres' marking and national standards. Some centres have not had a chance to attend training and are working from exemplars. Mostly report training / exemplars as being helpful, and most centres are using Performance Calculators and finding them helpful.

In the second year of the qualification centres have successfully adjusted to the major changes inherent with the introduction of a new specification. It has been noted that the JCQ regulation on mark disclosure has had some impact on centres' delivery of the specification and centres should consider the new procedure when scheduling the marking of their students' work.

Most centres are enjoying the freedom offered by a linear, two-year qualification. As stated earlier in this report, the quality of the outcomes resulting from more time spent on acquiring control over the formal elements, demonstrate delightful sensitivity and observational accuracy. As mentioned before centre staff must be applauded for absorbing all the demands created by change and yet still delivering superb results. One of the joys of being a visiting moderator is the wealth of diverse and impressive work seen each year. This year was especially uplifting with consistent bold use of colour, scale, diversity and skill.

## **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>



