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Edexcel

Moderators' Report
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Art and Design
(9AD0/9FA0/9GC0/9PY0/9TD0/9TE0)
Component 01 Personal Investigation

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Introduction

This report is a comprehensive overview of the performance of candidates in the GCE Art and Design Advanced Level 2022 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 2023 examination series.

2022 has been yet another unusual year, as the world started to recover from the effects of the pandemic. For all candidates the experience was unique and unprecedented in their lifetime.

It is extremely important to start this report by recognising the incredible hard work and resilience of teachers and Centre staff over this year. It is their efforts that have enabled candidates to continue to produce work of astounding insight and skill. This year's submission generally represents the work of candidates produced over the last two years and it must be remembered that they bore the brunt of lockdowns and disruption. There are many examples of teachers going beyond their remits, such as personally delivering materials to candidates who were prevented from attending their schools. Online teaching increased workloads exponentially and many teachers were stretched to the limits trying to cover absent colleagues. This sort of support and care, against the odds, cannot be praised highly enough and highlights the dedication and professionalism of Centre staff.

The standard of the work seen this year reflected their diligence and endeavour. Many moderators were surprised and delighted at the quality and quantity of candidates' submissions. Yet again, we often encountered work that exhibited all that is best in the qualification. Most candidates continued to address all of the assessment objectives comprehensively and their outcomes were unique and exciting.

In light of this, candidates too must be praised for their resilience and tenacity. Many had to face protracted periods of time out of school, illness and personal family losses. These circumstances have inevitably had an impact on the nature of the work seen and many candidates have explored various aspects of the pandemic in their work.

It is important that the observations recorded in this report are seen as just that, observations, not criticisms. Each centre has had its own particularly unique set of circumstances to deal with during the pandemic. The report is designed to give feedback on general performances and must be read in that context.

This year only, the exam component was removed from the qualification and candidates were required to only submit the coursework Component 1. It was hoped this would help relieve some of the pressures associated with exam organisation and

preparation. Most centres were in favour of this and were grateful for the extra time this afforded for the completion of the coursework unit.

Component 1 - Overview

Component 1, for this year only, represents 100% of the total qualification mark. Therefore, it is important to note that the weighting of the two elements, practical Portfolio and written Personal Study, had to be adjusted so that it is representative of a normal year. Without this adjustment the written element would contribute a greater percentage than in a normal year. To enable this Centres were asked to submit the marks for the Portfolio and the Personal Study separately.

We asked Centres to continue to use the existing Assessment Grids and Performance Calculators. The raw marks generated from these would then be scaled to represent their normal contributions to the final marks. The weighting of the Personal Study element has therefore been adjusted to remain at 12% of the qualification's overall total.

The Personal Study is assessed separately from the practical coursework in the Personal Investigation, whilst still being marked across all four assessment objectives. Training and exemplar material have been produced to explain how the marking criteria relate 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; a full bibliography should be provided, and spelling and grammar are important.

For the Portfolio 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 years' published themes 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

Component 1A Portfolio

Candidates with the most ability and resources were able to spend more time developing their own ideas without distraction and produced projects of exceptional maturity and individuality. Teachers commented that they found it harder to re-engage less able candidates, who often had remained trapped in superficial and less productive ways of working when isolated from support and guidance. For these Centres' candidates were producing work that still resembled GCSE in concept and execution up until Christmas of the second year of the course. Where teachers had managed to remain in close contact with pupils, progress was more akin to normal years, with valuable and productive work made at home that could then be further developed with the renewed momentum and ambition that working in the school environment encourages.

Centres often commented that they found not having to do Component 2 a relief under the circumstances and that their students were able to concentrate better on one extended coursework topic. However, many Centres commented that they were looking forward to the re-introduction of Component 2 due to the stimulation and sense of pace and energy that it imparts in students.

Some departments were able to offer candidates the equivalent of the normal Component 2 practical 'exam' time, both for 'mocks' in January and also in April/May. This enabled students to test themselves to produce sustained final outcomes in periods of uninterrupted practical work. However, this was by no means the norm.

There was a notable and unsurprising exaggeration of the trend in recent years for students to explore ideas around the theme of their own and other's mental health. For a few candidates this produced some portfolios of profound personal sensitivity and depth, with exceptionally creative approaches and outcomes. However, in other Centres, without significant teacher intervention, this theme caused students to revert to a predictable orthodoxy with the same approaches and the same pool of superficial contextual sources referenced. This was particularly the case in overseas Centres where students had often experienced even more severe lockdowns and restrictions than in the UK.

More time spent working alone also increased the tendency for students to browse in shallow depth through a large number of contextual references. The old patriarchal order of historic white male artists has often now been debunked in a welcome democratisation of ideas and references. However, there has been much discussion as to how to encourage students to research ideas with the necessary depth and sense of

cultural perspective so that they can then in turn produce informed and significant work. Fewer sources explored in more depth seems to be the answer. Exposing students to Art 'in the flesh' was also harder than in previous years as for the majority of the period it was very difficult for Centres to arrange visits or for students to go to museums and galleries as individuals.

Fine Art and Art and Design were once again the most popular titles. Photography continues to become increasingly digitally presented in the form of blogs. Graphics and Textiles submissions were also seen. Three-Dimensional Design was a rarity, although exceptional jewelry courses were offered in some overseas Centres.

In Photography the technology to produce and tell stories through film and animation has become extremely accessible. These may well be worth promoting as candidates are becoming more and more familiar with them, through social media platforms. They often find it a very satisfying and successful method of expressing their imagination, creative intent and ideas.

Component 1B – Personal Study

Even though the weighting of the Personal Study remained as before, this element took on greater significance this year, partly because Centres found it easier to concentrate on the written aspect during periods of lockdown. However, it was noted that students continue to find it difficult to find the balance between demonstrating contextual insight through critical analysis and simple description of their own and others' work. In the best studies students were well enough informed to be able to 'move through the writing', keeping the thread of an argument or idea going and comparing and contrasting different aspects of their research. Weaker studies continue to be more disjointed additions of paragraphs that lack an overall coherence. Issues concerning mental health dominated Personal Studies.

The teaching and marking of this element continues to be poorly understood by some Centres. Many, particularly overseas, Centres submit Studies that are either a discussion of a social issue with little direct analysis of visual culture, or 'stand-alone' essays with little relevance to the students' practical work, or simple diaries of what students did in their coursework.

General Assessment Observations

The report this year has been quite difficult to compile. Under normal conditions moderators' comments often form trends, which can be consolidated to statements that represent the situation with a fair degree of confidence. This year, however, those trends are not so obvious. The main reason for this is the wide diversity of the impact of the pandemic. Some Centres have had protracted periods of closure and staff absence, others have not. Some candidates have likewise had large amounts of time out of school, whilst others have not. A moderator reporting on their experience

of several schools with tiny cohorts, is giving a different view to one who has had the experience of several large Centres taking many different Titles. For example, some have missed the exam Component 2, others have not. Every experience seems to have been unique, due to each Centres individual circumstances. Although one could say this is always true, the pandemic seems to have seriously exaggerated these differences.

Some issues are consistent, however, and it is important to take this opportunity to highlight them. One of the most important is rank order. This is probably the most important factor in assessment procedures that involve sampling. It is the one that creates the greatest anomalies when the results of the sample are applied to the full cohort. The mathematics behind this is not complex and it is worth taking time to understand the process. Rank order is often mentioned in reports yet its true impact is not always understood. Once Centres have used the assessment tools to individually mark their candidates and established a rank order, it is essential that they step back, look at the candidates in rank order and compare the characteristics of each candidate alongside each other. Ask the question "Is this candidate really better than this one below it?" If not, then this is the time to go back to the assessment tools and try and investigate why. Please bear in mind that this is what the moderator is going to see. If you are seeing anomalies so will they. Rank order issues are one of the most common observations made by moderators. This is probably because the first time Centres and Moderators see the work in the context of rank order is when it is laid out for the actual moderation, usually in the form of an exhibition. It is only then, that some of the real anomalies jump out. Time pressures for Centre assessors are probably to blame. It is emphasised in this report, so that Centre assessors can help make respective Line Managers aware of the importance of having free and uninterrupted time at these crucial stages, to make accurate assessment decisions.

Returning to the use of formal assessment tools such as the Performance Calculators generally raised issues. Whether it was uncertainty about where the grade boundaries were going to fall, or just lack of practice, Centres generally were veering towards consistently placing candidates inaccurately in Level 6. It is recommended that Centres take time to read the descriptors on the Performance Calculators carefully, for Level 6. The descriptors "erudite, intuitive, surprising, questioning, ideas synthesised into highly sophisticated realisations, fully informed and accepting of the unexpected" set very high benchmarks and it is rare to see candidates express these at their stage of development. This is intentional; for several years now candidates have comfortably been able to gain an A* without entering Level 6. A* is the highest award for this qualification. Level 6 is for the truly exceptional that have far exceeded the expectations of the qualification. Please bear this in mind next year when you are marking your cohorts, as moderators are trained to recognise these characteristics and will always adjust accordingly, to ensure all submissions fit the Common Standards.

Summary

Obviously the unprecedented impact of the pandemic has been our greatest concern. Bearing in mind the extreme conditions experienced in the last two years, we were surprised at the quality and quantity of work submitted this year. It would be fair to say that generally the standard of the work was not greatly different to that of a pre-pandemic year. As mentioned before, this can only be attributed to the resilience of the candidates and the dedication and support of their teachers. The differences that have been perceived, have been acknowledged and compensated for at national level.

Digital presentation has played an important role during this time and for certain Titles, such as Photography and Graphics, this has proved very effective. For others, however, its shortcomings have been obvious, with both Centre assessors and moderators pointing out that it is extremely difficult to make accurate appraisals of Titles such as Textiles and Three Dimensional Design, for example. The sensory qualities of textiles, or the presence in space of design projects, being more difficult to access through digital slides. It is probably these factors that have caused the overwhelming relief, of both Centre staff and moderators that, where possible, we have returned to live, face to face moderation. For some Centres, however, digital moderation has proved very successful and has been a valuable alternative for many overseas Centres isolated by travel restrictions during the pandemic.

To conclude we would like to congratulate and thank everyone who has stoically worked through the very difficult conditions over the past two years, to ensure this year's series successfully and justly rewards candidates for their efforts.

