GCE

Art and Design

Advanced GCE **A2 H560-H566**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H160-H166**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, OCR Nationals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

GCE Art and Design Units F410 – F446

General Comments

As in previous years, a wide variety of work was seen that reflected an enthusiastic approach by candidates, some excellent support and guidance within centres and well-planned courses.

Most centres devise courses, which reflect the requirements of the qualifications to very good effect. Some course structures have been refined to incorporate the evolving nature of digital applications. However, other centres seem to repeat long established approaches, which neither meet the demands of the specifications nor reflect current trends within Art and Design. Indeed, a few still continue to deliver courses that were conceived in response to previous GCE qualifications.

Successful candidates' work was often solidly founded on gallery visits or artist workshops, which exemplified excellent practices within some centres. In contrast, it is regrettable that some candidates still resort to downloading a thin veil of superficial contextual images, which neither support practical work nor promote the development of ideas.

Moderators reported that contextual studies had once again underpinned the work of most candidates. Even so, for some connections with personal artwork were tenuous and showed scant understanding of the essential role contextual research plays in the development of ideas. **Meaningful contextual referencing is an aspect of the specifications that centres can readily improve upon within the framework of support and guidance.**

Candidates' responses to contextual and critical sources had a vital influence on the practical directions taken in the work. Those that engaged with their local environment through investigations into museum collections, architecture and landscape often benefited from highly stimulated and intensely individual outcomes.
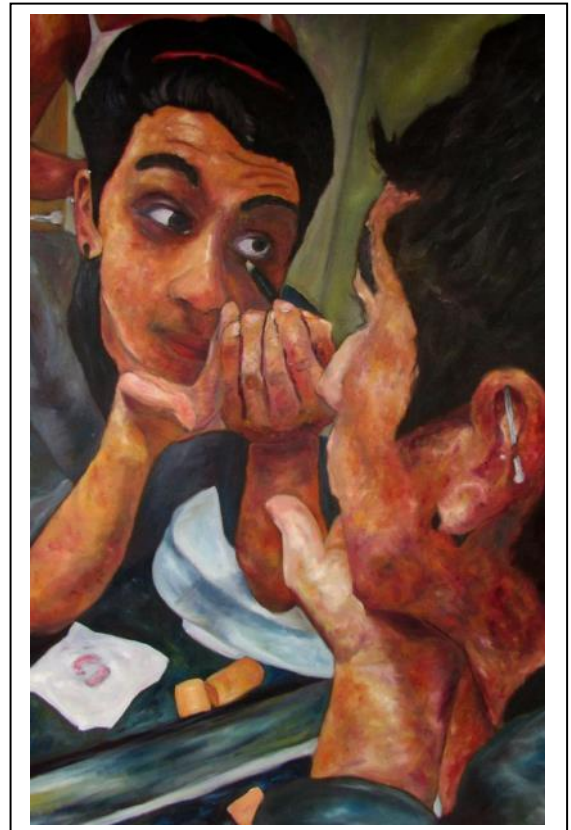
Again in 2015, a small number of candidates produced large volumes of work but failed to develop their ideas in sufficient depth. As emphasised in previous reports the specification gives no specific guidance in respect of an ideal quantity of work. Candidates should refer to the Assessment Objectives and carefully consider the extent to which their initial intentions are realised as their work progresses. Successful work often provided evidence of a coherent creative journey which was **selected and presented** for moderation. Less successful work often lacked direction and was invariably fragmented and poorly executed.

Most centres completed administrative procedures satisfactorily and met the May 31 deadline for the return of mark sheets. Indeed, those that submitted marks before the deadline and forwarded the documentation early are to be thanked for their proactive efficiency.

Commendably, many centres completed the paperwork electronically by downloading from the OCR GCE website PDFs of Centre Authentication and Assessment Summary forms. Although the latter reduced arithmetical and transcriptional errors some still occurred during the marking process. In such instances sample selection and the moderation process was impeded. Centres are positively encouraged to use the electronic interactive Assessment Summary forms (GCW269i for AS and GCW315i for A2), which are available on the OCR website.

The Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) is a mandatory Code of Practice requirement and moderators must be in receipt of a completed copy before commencing their duties. This should be forwarded to the moderator with MS1 mark sheets and the Assessment Summary Forms.

Centres are reminded that displays must be by Unit in separate rank orders to facilitate the moderation process. This requirement cannot be compromised.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Download and use the Assessment Summary Forms (GCW269i for AS and GCW315i for A2), which are available on the OCR web site. This option allows for the entry and addition of marks thus avoiding arithmetical errors.

Display the Units in separate rank orders.

Clearly identify individual Units and highlight final outcomes.

Centres are reminded that in addition to the work sampled for the purposes of moderation all submissions must be readily available.

Most centres established a reliable rank order within individual Units. However, when inconsistent the moderation process was adversely affected and in the most undependable cases a centre re-mark was required. It is therefore of critical importance that centres' rank orders in all Units are accurate before moderation commences.

Cross standardisation across endorsements is essential to the successful completion of the marking process.

Each of the Assessment Objectives has different demands and Centres should recognise that candidates' achievement is not necessarily consistent within these.

Written analysis, annotations and in some instances more extensive prose continued to be widespread across both AS Units. For some candidates this provided genuine insight into ideas. Nonetheless, some candidates merely filled spaces or pages in books without real purpose or meaning. **Written material should provide evidence of how knowledge and understanding will impact on the creative directions taken.**

The use of ICT continues to be a significant feature of work across all endorsements. The Internet enables candidates to access the work of an ever-widening range of artists, designers and craftspeople.

However, teachers and lecturers should be vigilant in checking the websites used by candidates to ensure material is appropriate.

The trend to use a digital camera both as a tool for recording and a means to explore ideas continues to grow. Specifically, Adobe Photoshop was frequently used for the exploration and refinement of ideas. As has become customary, many Graphic Communication candidates exploited computers extensively in both preparatory work and final outcomes.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Candidates' achievement was often directly related to the quality of task or theme set by teachers and lecturers.

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It was again noticeable that there was a significant increase in digital sketchbooks. These continue to be well-presented and displayed candidates' critical thinking and development of personal outcomes effectively. Regrettably, presentation in this form showed a sharp contrast to the poorly annotated and labelled sketchbooks produced by others, in which thinking was often confused and lacking in direction. For some sketchbook, submissions were often presented as a journey through the Assessment Objectives, with different pages describing candidates' thinking and personal responses. Even so, there were many mature submissions that had synthesised the Objectives into a series of powerful personal images, which were cohesive, informed and possessed a strong sense of purpose.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Some centres insufficiently support the principle of selection when presenting work for assessment. Invariably in such cases all the work produced throughout the course is submitted. Consequently, this results in inconsistent levels of achievement, which are responded to in the moderation process.

Candidates must select and present for assessment.

Coursework Portfolio, Unit 1: AS Level

Qualities and good practice established in the Coursework Portfolio had a significant impact on understanding and achievement in the subsequent Units.

Once again in 2015 the opportunity to explore different materials, techniques and ways of working was fully embraced in many centres. However, it must be stressed that exploration should be specific to the development of the given theme or idea. At best, candidates were encouraged to study a more extensive range of critical and contextual materials than at GCSE and some had opportunities to engage directly with the work of artists, designers and craftspeople in studios and workshops.

The contemporary thrust of museums and galleries to be more inclusive and widen participation has been mirrored by the production of educational support materials. These have been well received by candidates and have distinctly benign effect on levels of critical appreciation and understanding.

Candidates continue to be greatly influenced by all aspects of 'Street Art'. Although the focus of attention was frequently towards the practitioners of graffiti and other 'alternative' art forms for some candidates, a keen understanding of 'Public Art' in the broader sense was evident.

A noticeable feature of successful delivery of this Unit was the way in which a period at the beginning of the course for guidance and the establishment of foundation skills enabled candidates to understand the demands of GCE and progress with greater confidence and independence. Changes in the new AS Specification further support this observation.

Many candidates selected a single project for their Portfolio whilst others submitted more, which may have reached a consistent standard. Multi-themes were to be found in endorsements such as Graphic Communication in which candidates successfully produced more than one outcome when considering different aspects of their chosen theme.

Candidates' achievement was often directly related to the quality of task or theme set by teachers and lecturers.

The range of skills, media and techniques employed by candidates in the production of the Coursework Portfolio largely left a healthy impression with moderators. Most candidates had followed courses with a clearly defined structure. Centre determined themes were memorable for their diversity, originality and appropriateness to the needs of candidates with the widest range of abilities. Candidates were frequently the beneficiaries of inspirational teaching and evidently responded positively to the advice and guidance given.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Qualities and good practice established in the Coursework Portfolio have a significant impact on understanding and achievement in the subsequent Units.

Cross standardisation across endorsements is essential to the successful completion of the marking and moderation process.

Controlled Assignment, Unit 2: AS Level

Candidates' responses to the starting points and design briefs were predominantly lively, showed much personal engagement and strongly suggested that the 2015 paper had been favourably received. Sufficient scope was offered to match candidates' various abilities. A strength of the qualification is the discrete AS and A2 papers, which were especially welcomed and highlighted the difference between the levels and the shift of emphasis in meeting the requirements of the Assessment Objectives.

Moderators reported that candidates largely chose starting points, which allowed them to build upon previous experiences and practices in producing work that very much reflected their individual strengths. However, a number of candidates were less prudent in their selection and over ambitious in their approach, which sometimes resulted in unimaginative and incomplete final outcomes.

Many candidates used the preparatory period to good effect and showed a clear progression through the Assessment Objectives. Most clearly relished the opportunity to demonstrate the intellectual and practical maturity gained from the positive experience of the preceding part of the course.

Candidates who had prepared carefully used the five hour supervised period effectively and the many excellent outcomes distinctly demonstrated that time constraints do not necessarily have a negative impact on quality.

Some candidates require guidance in respect of an appropriate range of techniques for a five-hour assessment period. Teachers may, and, indeed, are encouraged to give advice and guidance during the preparatory period. Assistance must not, of course, be given during the five-hours of supervised time.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

To enable the preparation of teaching and learning resources teachers should access the paper on receipt by the centre.

Provisional entry lists submitted to OCR in the Autumn Term generate the dispatch of papers to centres.

Responses to all of the starting points in Section 1: Stimuli, Section 2: Observational and Section 3: Design brief was seen. Section 4: Art in Context proved attractive to a number of discerning candidates whilst Section 5: Visual Starting Points remained, somewhat surprisingly, undersubscribed. Popular starting points included:

'Woodland' a popular choice through all the endorsements with candidates using a variety of sources to develop ideas, ranging from contemporary landscape artists such as Franklin Carmichael and Frederick Varley to more traditional sources such as Monet and Constable. The subject when developed literally was, in the best examples, an opportunity to showcase the accomplished observations and painting skills. However, there were frequent examples of work that was under developed pastiche of the primary source. In some instances, candidates explored the folklore and traditions of woodcraft to develop and respond creatively to the stimuli.

'Eyes' a very popular choice in many centres, with examples of observational studies that gave candidates the opportunity to exploit their 'recording skills' in the development of their ideas. The almost obligatory use of Agnes Cecile and Marian Bolognesi was in some instances an inhibiting factor rather than one that encouraged diversification and experimentation. Some chose to respond with more diverse approaches with links to natural and man-made events with the reflective qualities, both physical and psychological, interpreted within the work.

'Community' also a popular choice in many centres and which generated a diverse range of responses. Many candidates were inventive and frequently perceptive in their development of ideas and observations. Often the use of artists such as Banksy were used inform expressions of 'youth culture' with varying degrees of sophistication and success. Many candidates used links to their personal heritage and exploited cultural associations through the research of such diverse artists as Manish Khattry, Ellen Gallagher and L. S. Lowry using both contemporary and historical associations.

'Tools' gained favour with candidates to use detailed drawing, painting and photography. There were many examples of aged, distressed and patinated surfaces, in both wood and metal, recorded with sensitivity and skill. However, in some instances where compositional elements had not been carefully formulated, the outcomes were less successful.

'Baking' was also popular with candidates. The choice of the work of Wayne Theibaud was the starting point for many, although contemporary practitioners such as Paul Fearney, Jai Johnson and Angela Johnson were also in evidence. Some chose to look at traditional still life painting and developed sound compositional structure through the study of this genre.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Use a wide range of sources to develop ideas and establish a balance between the use of media and photographic imagery.

Section 3: Design brief

All of the starting points received responses especially Textile Design and Graphic Communications candidates.

Assessment Objectives: AS Level

AO1 (Develop)

Candidates' ability to develop ideas was an essential aspect of the most proficient work and impacted directly on success in the other Assessment Objectives. Those in the upper mark range not only demonstrated the knowledge gained from contextual sources but also simultaneously developed their own visual language.

Cultural understanding and critical analysis were demonstrated in both visual and textual forms. Written work not infrequently gave insight into candidates' knowledge, understanding and decision-making but for the less successful was superficial and did not add cohesion to submissions or clarify intentions.

AO2 (Experiment)

Well devised AS programmes place emphasis on providing candidates with opportunity to explore the qualities of an often extraordinarily diverse range of materials, processes and techniques. When investigating a particular concept or theme, candidates should be equipped to give fluent expression to the review and refinement of their ideas and to do so with ever increasing technical ability.

Nonetheless, exploration should be relevant to ultimate intentions and genuinely assist in creative progression rather than being simply repetitive. In some cases, extensive experimentation had been undertaken but subsequently candidates simply reverted to copying initial imagery thus ignoring and nullifying the benign impact of earlier review and modification. The least successful submissions tended to display an unskilful and inappropriate use of materials, processes and techniques and culminated in unresolved outcomes.

The rapid expansion in the use of electronic media, particularly digital photography, digital sketchbooks, image manipulation, moving image and Photoshop, continues unabated in all of the endorsements.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Each of the Assessment Objectives has different requirements and centres should recognise that candidates' achievement is not necessarily consistent in meeting these.

AO3 (Record)

Digital cameras and mobile phones with cameras are now part of our everyday culture and are used extensively. Candidates now recognise these as a valid means of recording. At a basic level, snap-shots and moving images may be produced with immediacy. However, more able candidates extended the creative potential by employing image processing and software packages to review and modify imagery.

As in previous years, there were many examples of carefully observed, analytical drawings, which recorded using a wide range of materials and a variety of techniques appropriate to the endorsement entered. Some candidates recorded observations in written form, which is particularly helpful when insight is given into thought processes rather than being a mere log of factual data.

Sadly, the tendency of weaker candidates to be over dependent on secondary sourced material, which is often simply copied without any form of development, persisted in this examination series.

In 2015 moderators once again reported that some candidates did not select sources that were appropriate to their intentions. In more accomplished submissions a wide range of sources were recorded in ways that promoted selection and offered a variety of creative directions.

AO4 (Present)

The most successful candidates produced impressive outcomes that embodied sophisticated use of detail, colour, scale as well as considerable technical ability.
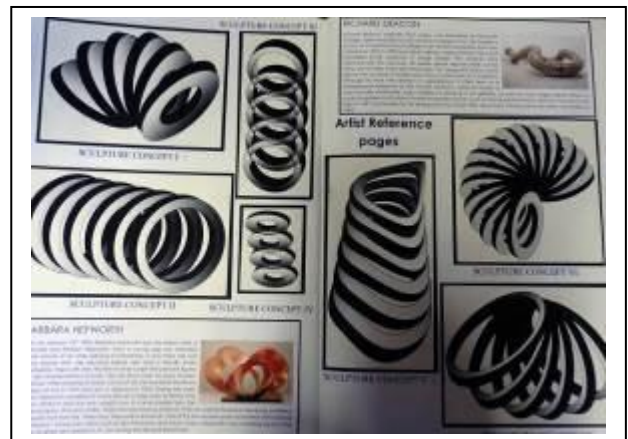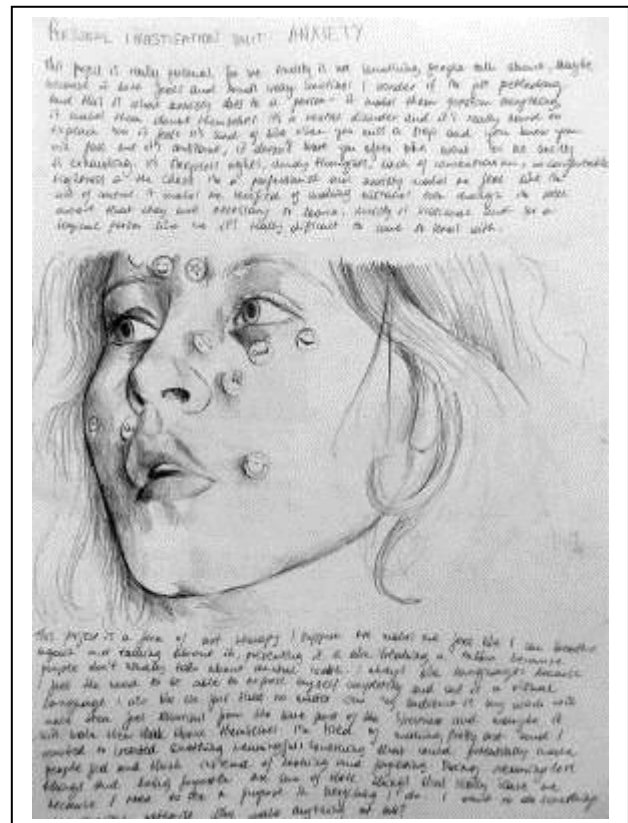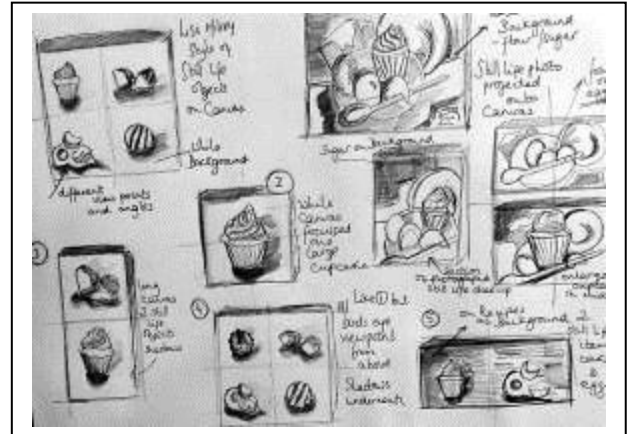
These works represented the culmination of a year's study and a thorough and mature understanding of the other Assessment Objectives.

Most candidates had spent time selecting, considering and presenting their work with attention to detail before submission for assessment. Disappointingly others had not and the progress and development of their ideas was at best obscure.

The overall submission should be cohesive and distinctly demonstrate how the requirements of the Assessment Objectives have been addressed.

In this respect, successful candidates had ensured that perceptive critical thinking, on-going experimentation and purposeful recording informed all stages of 'the creative journey' and were not restricted to the initial phases of development.
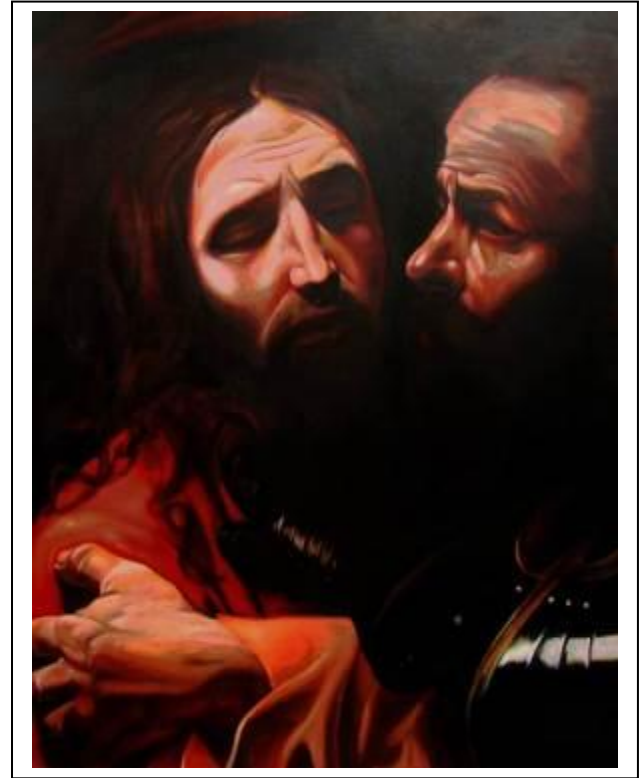
Personal Investigation, Unit 3: A2 Level

Again, the level of critical understanding within the Related Personal Study varied considerably from the descriptive or biographical to those that showed perceptively analytical and genuinely informed personal development as the work progressed. Biographical detail is important in placing practitioners within a historical context but basic 'cut and paste' from the Internet can never be a feature of successful submissions. Centres are reminded that candidates should use an appropriate technical vocabulary if they are to attain marks within the Mature Band.

Often candidates find it easier to write analytically when they compare the approach of different practitioners. Centres should be mindful of this and encourage candidates to investigate a range of related sources. An analytical approach is not an innate skill for many and therefore needs to be cultivated by adopting appropriate teaching strategies. For example, candidates could be asked to give detailed descriptions of others' work and in doing so identify areas of similarity and difference.

Candidates undertake the Related Personal Study in significantly different ways. Some produce a dedicated separate sketchbook, which often includes an easily read transcription. Whilst the specifications do not advocate any preference, this method does allow for a focused approach in which candidates can explore in depth and the Study has a distinct beginning, middle and end.

Candidates that fail to respond to the Related Personal Study by providing written material in continuous prose should be requested to submit material in an appropriate way or be withdrawn from the Unit.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Candidates' success in this Unit was often dependant on the guidance given and the establishment of foundation skills during an AS course, which cultivated an understanding of the demands of A2 and greater confidence and independence in the approach to work.

Other centres adopt a different approach in that the Study is located within the body of the visual research. This can have a strong developmental quality when candidates enter into a dialogue between their work and that of their selected subject. The potential area of weakness is that this approach can lead to a rather confused or diluted Study within the submission. It is important that candidates conspicuously and coherently link the various written elements for the Related Personal Study within their work.

Transpositions from one media into another did not guarantee success. Some candidates were simply copying the style and techniques of an existing artist in their own work without any meaningful critical analysis.

There appears to be a good connection between the critical and contextual work that is carried out at AS and the Related Personal Study at A2. Candidates occasionally selected a method or subject that was introduced at AS level.

Once more it is important to stress that at A2 individually negotiated programmes of study appear to be a successful model in which candidates review and reflect on their AS work and identify their strengths. These can be developed further whilst producing the main theme of the Personal Investigation. Even so, many candidates require guidance and support in the acquisition of relevant skills and techniques if they are to achieve their full potential.

Centres are reminded that for the Personal Investigation Unit candidates must set their own task or brief.

Moreover, it is essential when candidates choose their own themes that guidance is given by teachers as to the suitability or appropriateness of the selection for public assessment.

Far too often the less successful submissions tended to be simply descriptive rather than showing sustained critical analysis. Candidates would be better advised to pay attention to the analysis of their own work and that of others by providing insights into their intentions and progress.
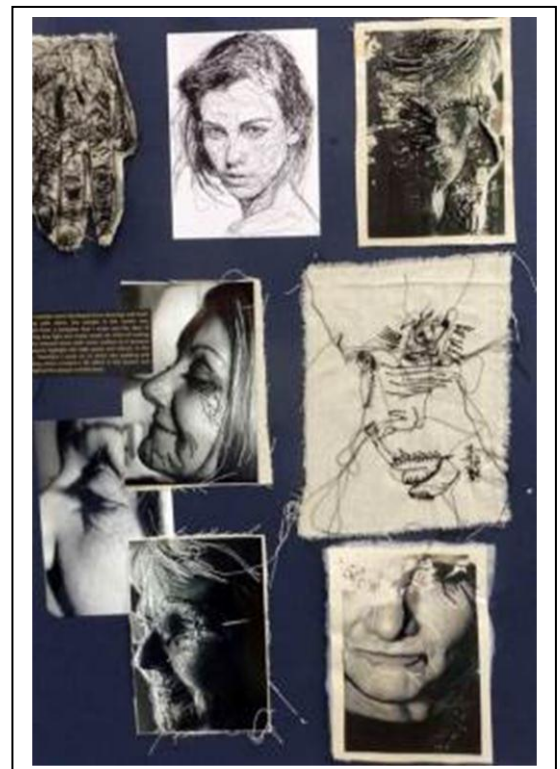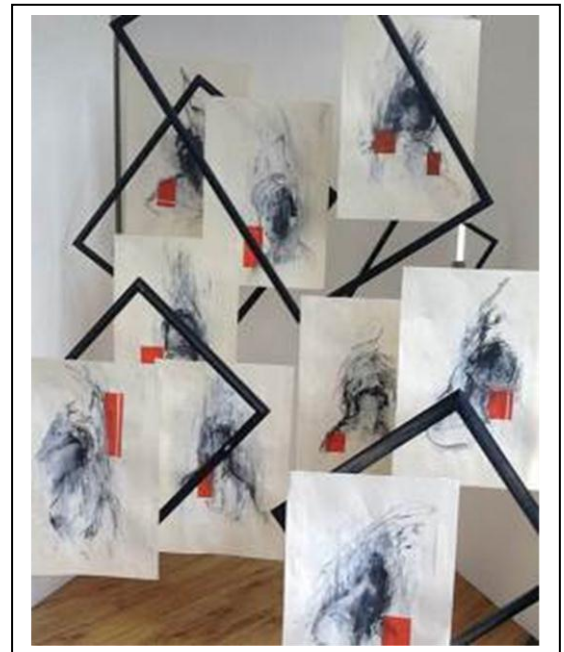
Moderators also praised the inventiveness and ambition of many submissions seen at A2. Many of these demonstrated a highly individual response and significant intellectual or critical content. The levels of creativity, critical understanding and technical accomplishment were often impressive.

A2 themes were often negotiated on a 'one to one' basis with the individual candidate. When appropriate advice and guidance was given and an on-going dialogue occurred between teacher and candidate the submissions presented were frequently mature or confident in nature.

This year saw much innovation in the approaches adopted by candidates. Digital technology continues to make an impact and, in particular, more exciting departures into 'the moving image' or 'digital art' were seen. Some candidates' submissions focused on work of a more conceptual nature, sometimes with expansive installations as an outcome, but the supporting studies did not always reveal convincing levels of technical ability or intellectual engagement.

The size, scale and display of the submissions varied considerably with successful candidates sourcing interesting subject matter and producing final pieces that were professional in execution.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Exploit local resources:

- Museums or galleries.
- Botanical gardens, parks, zoos
- Artists and designers
- Community Arts Centres
- Workshops or artists in residence
- Exhibitions or studio visits
- Carnivals, fairs, parades.

The best work often provided evidence of a coherent journey with a genuine sense of purpose. More successful candidates demonstrated not only that they had learnt from others' work but also simultaneously developed their own visual language.

Controlled Assignment, Unit 4: A2 Level

The 'starting points' in the A2 Controlled Assignment Paper were well received. The themes and design briefs offered sufficient scope to meet needs of candidates over the whole ability range.

Generally, there was good use of the preparatory period. Preliminary studies are a vital aspect of this Unit and successful candidates produced sustained recording and clearly defined their creative progression towards a final outcome.

As in previous years, most centres encourage candidates to work to their individual strengths and confidently take advantage of the experiences and skills gained earlier in their Personal Investigation.

The highest achievement was by candidates that took best advantage of the preparatory time to develop, experiment and refined their ideas before the supervised fifteen-hour period. Candidates who prepared carefully were able to use this time more effectively.

As in 2014, for less successful candidates poor time management made the major contribution to under achievement. Such submissions often displayed incomplete developmental work, limited or superficial connections with the work of other practitioners or context and unfocused exploration of ideas, which combined to produce outcomes that were unresolved and lacking in conviction.

Some candidates require guidance in respect of an appropriate range of techniques for a fifteen-hour assessment period. Teachers may, and, indeed, are encouraged to give advice and guidance during the preparatory period. Assistance must not, of course, be given during the fifteen-hours of supervised time.

There were responses to all the Section 1 and Section 2 starting points at A2 with the following proving to be the most popular:

'Angel' was a popular choice with a range of responses that included much photography with carefully choreographed 'shoots'. The inclusion of popular culture and particularly film was frequently in evidence but this was not to the exclusion of Renaissance and Pre Raphaelite references which also featured with some regularity.

'Tension' was probably the most frequently seen response with many choosing to direct their research through a portraiture based approach, often with reference to artists such as Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach, and Kwang Ho Shin. For some the very nature of this theme inspired work from individual or family subject matter and resulted in very personal responses. Frequently, the standard of recording was accomplished with many examples of work developed from family members or even self-portraiture. Whilst many strove for tension in the physical appearance of the sitter, some chose to approach this through colour and the vigorous application of paint.

'Ancestral' for many candidates this became an opportunity to delve into family history and often this provided fertile ground for creative and stimulating responses. Whilst this direction was popular it by no means precluded much personal research into cultural history, often related to the individual's personal background.

Assessment Objectives: A2 Level

AO1 (Develop)

Candidates' ability to develop ideas is an essential aspect of the most proficient work and impacted directly on success in the other Assessment Objectives.
Evidence of analysis and critical understanding was provided in many different ways. At A2 this Assessment Objective met with much good practice by candidates using a wide range of approaches and sources for reference. Indeed, some showed excellent levels of investigation by using first-hand contacts, gallery visits and workshop experience often linking to contemporary practitioners. As a result, much of the work demonstrated a confident and creative combination of visual elements and written responses.

AO2 (Experiment)

The requirements of this Assessment Objective were generally ably realised at A2. However, in some centres candidates were inclined to experiment with a wide range of materials and techniques at the expense of **selecting and refining**. Exploration should be relevant to ultimate intentions and genuinely assist in creative progression rather than being simply repetitive.

Most candidates showed an ability to review, refine and communicate through experimentation with confidence. Less successful submissions tended to display an unskilful, unfocused and inappropriate use of materials, processes and techniques and culminated in unresolved outcomes.

AO3 (Record)

Once again and increasingly so, digital cameras and mobile phones with cameras had a significant impact on approaches to recording. Photographic images were often produced first and subsequently followed by drawings and studies in a variety of media.

Some candidates recorded ideas and observations in written form, frequently making notes whilst observing stimuli at first-hand. Sometimes candidates' initial ideas were recorded as a series of thumbnail photographs or sketches. Others, particularly Textile Design candidates, presented their ideas in the form of mood boards. Observational drawing produced in life classes continued to flourish in a number of centres.

Whichever method of recording is used, it is essential for candidates to understand that there is a direct link between the accomplishment shown in recording and the quality of outcomes.

AO4 (Present)

In many cases the personal responses in outcomes were thought provoking and individual because candidates had capitalised upon purposeful visual research and perceptive critical thinking with successful review and modification techniques.

In the majority of submissions there was an appropriate balance in the volume of preparatory work produced and the time spent in realising intentions. Most candidates fulfilled their potential and exploited the particular opportunities made available in producing final outcomes.
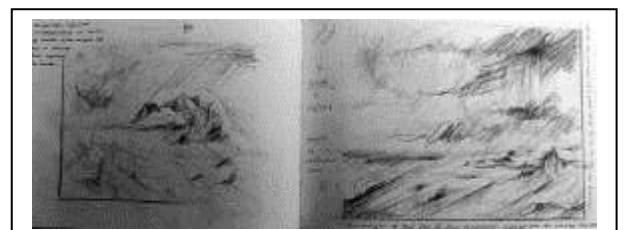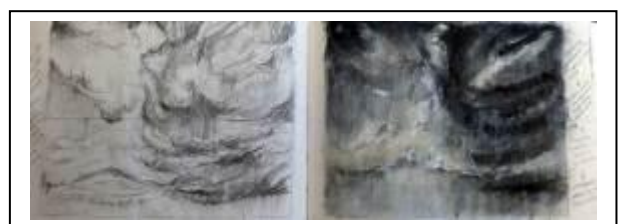
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Summary and Guidance

Centres are reminded that applications for **Special Consideration** must be made well in advance of the moderation visit. This responsibility lies entirely with centres as the moderator cannot activate the procedure. It is advisable to notify the moderator of such cases when forwarding documentation for the May 31 deadline.

OCR thanks the many teachers who attended the Professional Development meetings for New AS and GCE Art and Design during 2014-2015. Their encouragement was much appreciated and the suggestions made greatly informed the on-going development of support materials for both candidates and teachers.

Further information regarding professional development for the New GCE Specification 2015-2016 will be available on the OCR website, www.ocr.org.uk or by contacting OCR Training on 02476 496398 or by email to cpdhub@ocr.org.uk in September 2015.

The exemplar photographs used in this report show a small selection of the work displayed for moderation and are reproduced with the permission of the centres concerned.

OCR would like to thank all the candidates, teachers and moderators who made this possible.

Additional Exemplar Work: 2015
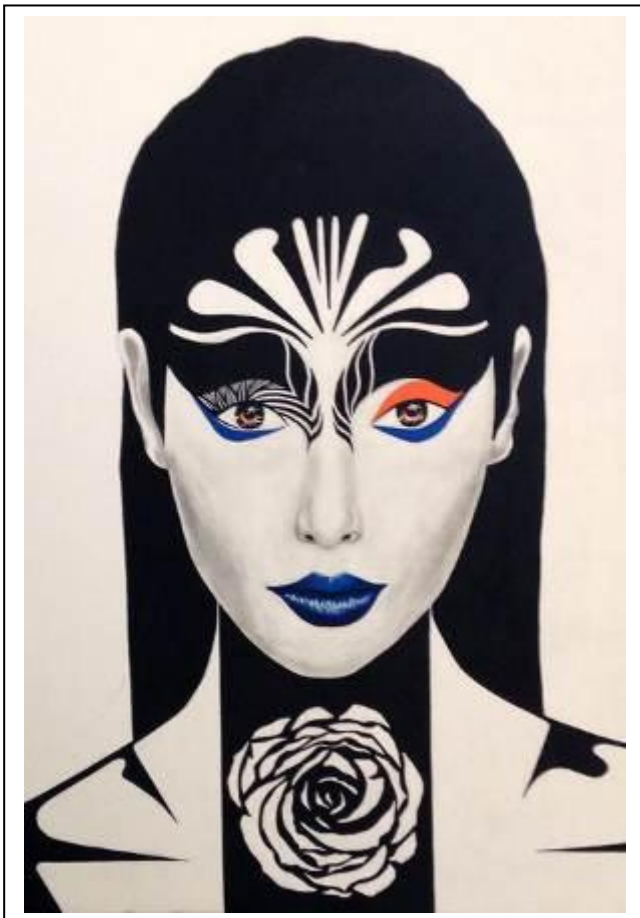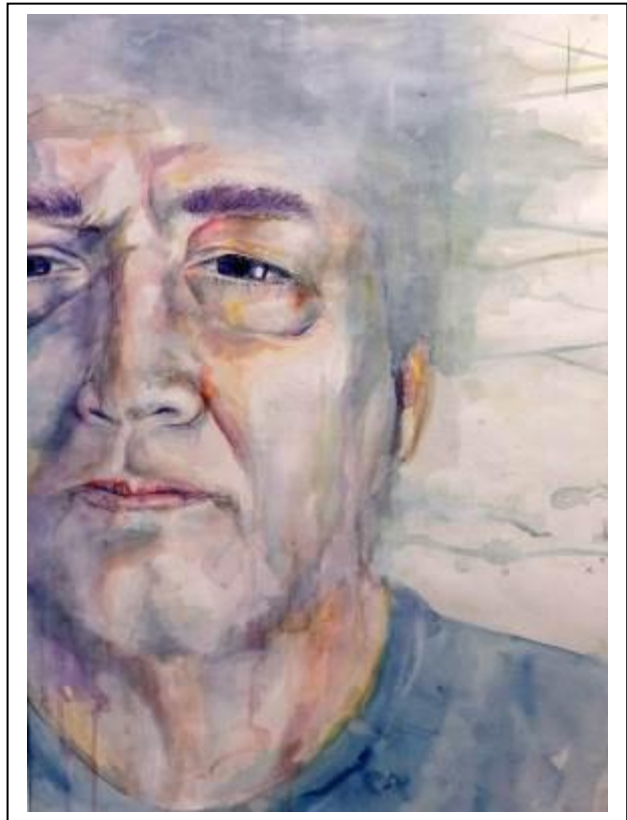
Photography

GCE Photography Units F413 – F443

Once again in 2015, a wide variety of work was seen reflecting an enthusiastic approach by candidates, some excellent support and guidance within centres and well planned courses.

Most centres devise courses, which respond well to the structure of the qualification. Some course structures continue to be refined to incorporate the evolving nature of digital applications and the moving image. However, other centres seem to repeat their standard approach, which may not respond well to the demands of GCE Photography.

Moderators reported that candidates' work was underpinned by gallery visits, location/ site visits or artist workshops and this exemplified the best of good practice in some centres. Conversely, some candidates still resort to downloading or researching a thin veil of contextual images which neither supports practical work nor promotes the development of ideas.

Critical studies and good contextual links had underpinned the work of most students. Nonetheless, the level of connection with the candidates own photographic work continues to show mixed understanding of the essential role contextual research plays in the development of ideas. **This is typical of the areas that centres can improve within the framework of support and guidance.**

Candidates used a wide variety of resources including material from books, magazines, the Internet and visits to museums and galleries. There was also evidence of candidates engaging with contemporary practitioners and gaining feedback on their work. Regrettably, some candidates seemed unable to make connections to inform their work and this resulted in unresolved final submissions. Candidates who successfully forged strong contextual links produced some engaged and inventive outcomes which demonstrated the integral role of pursuing a relevant and related contextual knowledge.

Many candidates produced large quantities of photographic work or long Power Point presentations, but failed to develop their ideas in sufficient depth. There is no specific guidance in the specification about an ideal quantity of work. Candidates should be guided by their teachers and consider carefully the extent to which their initial intentions are realised.

Once again in 2015, most centres completed administrative procedures satisfactorily and met the May 31st deadline for the return of mark sheets. Indeed, those centres that submitted marks before the deadline and forwarded the documentation early are to be thanked for their efficient administration.

It is emphasised that all work must be displayed in rank order by Unit and the requirements of the moderation process take precedent over 'end of year' shows.

Commendably, many centres completed the paper work electronically by downloading PDFs of the various forms required from the OCR GCE website. Although this reduced arithmetical and transcriptional errors some still occurred during the marking process. In such instances, sample selection and the moderation process is either inhibited or delayed.

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Download and use the Assessment Summary Form GCW269i for AS and the GCW315i for A2, which is available on the OCR web site. This option allows for the entry and addition of marks, thus avoiding arithmetical errors.

Display the Units in separate rank orders.

Clearly identify individual units and highlight final outcomes.

Centres are reminded that in addition to the work sampled for the purposes of moderation all submissions must be readily available.

In 2015 most centres sent in their 'paperwork' appropriately. The Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) is mandatory and moderators must be in receipt of a completed copy before commencing their duties. This should be dispatched to the moderator with MS1 mark sheets and the Assessment Summary Form (GCW269i for AS and GCW315i for A2).

Most centres correctly established a reliable rank order within individual Units. **However, when this was not the case the moderation process is adversely affected. In the most undependable situations a centre re-mark was requested.** It is of critical importance that centres establish consistent and accurate rank orders in all Units before moderation commences.

Written materials and annotations are now widely used in photography and they provide a vital insight into candidates' thinking and ideas. The more successful candidates demonstrate genuine subject knowledge, use subject terminology and reasoned arguments but the least successful tend to fill pages with descriptive and superficial language.

In 2015, the use of the latest digital technology and all aspects of ICT was a significant feature in Photography and the Internet enabled candidates to access the work of a wide range of photographers. Some sites provided direct access to photographers and galleries, providing up to date information on exhibitions and on-going work. Moreover, some centres encouraged the presentation of photography as websites offering a directly interactive submission.

Specifically in experimenting, Adobe Photoshop and other image manipulation packages were widely used for the exploration and refining of ideas. Digital media are now dominant in photography including the use of photographic Apps and public image sharing such as Flickr. Constant developments in new media are supporting this evolution. This is, however, matched by an enthusiasm by some candidates to explore traditional, analogue techniques. There are a number of candidates using film media, stop frame or gaming animation as part of their exploration of film.

In 2015, there continues to be a noticeable improvement in submissions with better organisation, structure, selection and clarity of thinking. The more successful submissions displayed well-conceived photographic analysis and critical thinking, with personal ideas and observations being reviewed and refined in response to critical materials. **Less successful candidates often tended to produce simple interpretations of existing photographers' work or reproduction of factual information.**

The most popular formats for presenting work were annotated sketchbooks, work sheets and mounted display boards, digital sketchbooks and PowerPoint presentations. There were many excellent examples of lively and thoughtful submissions, which displayed sustained and informed critical thinking, experimentation and analysis. These were underpinned by the use of an appropriate subject vocabulary, which had informed personal directions and outcomes.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Often the quality of candidate responses was directly related to the quality of task or theme set by teachers and lecturers.

Moderators continue to report that there is a significant increase in digital sketchbooks. These were generally very well presented and displayed candidates' critical thinking and development of personal outcomes. They were, however, not a guarantee of further selection or refinement in the candidates' work. Conversely they often showed a sharp contrast to poorly annotated and labelled photography workbooks, where thinking was often confused and lacked direction. The digital submissions were often presented as a journey through the Assessment Objectives, with different pages describing candidates' thinking and personal responses. Nonetheless, there were many mature, creative, exciting and in-depth photographic submissions that had synthesised the AO's into a series of powerful personal images, which were cohesive, informed and possessed a strong sense of direction.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Some centres do not support the principle of selecting and presenting for assessment. Invariably in such cases all the work produced during the course is submitted which results in inconsistency in levels of achievement and a corresponding response by moderators.

Candidates must select and present for assessment.

Coursework Portfolio, Photography Unit 1: AS Level

The opportunity to explore photographic, techniques and ways of working was fully embraced in many centres. At best, candidates were encouraged to study a more extensive range of critical and contextual materials than at GCSE and some had opportunities to engage directly with the work of photographers, graphic designers and film makers in studios and workshops. Galleries, museums, photographic websites, and specialist Apps have promoted wider access for all students and produced some excellent and informative educational materials.

Many candidates selected a single project for their Portfolio whilst others submitted a range of two or more which may have reached a consistent standard. Regrettably, in some instances submissions were a random collection of items that did not form a cohesive portfolio of work. Other Centres included elements of the taught course that showed admirable teaching and learning but did not contribute to the development of the chosen theme**. Again in 2015, centres are reminded that candidates are required to select and present work for assessment.**

The range of photographic skills, media and techniques employed by candidates in the production of the Portfolio units left an excellent impression with moderators. Most candidates had followed courses with a clearly defined structure. Centre determined themes were memorable for their diversity, originality and appropriateness for the needs of candidates with the widest range of abilities. There was evidence of candidates' understanding of photography as a process utilising acquired skills and techniques resulting from both traditional and contemporary practice.

2015 clearly showed a wide range of photographic subject matter with some extremely well informed critical connections using the work of professional photographers. Portraiture and abstraction were equally popular with candidates often using themes to develop a personal interest such as narrative or editorial design. Some centres still deliver traditional film photography whilst others offer a combination of darkroom and digital photography.

Candidates produce digital work, often to a high standard, by employing a range of software to enhance and manipulate their images. Some candidates had extended this approach and gave a further demonstration of their skills by incorporating in their submissions 3D photography, animation, sound and short films. These principally were generated by storyboard and narrative methods or stop-frame animation, which tended to be more interactive. Carefully selected or produced sound sometimes added an additional dimension.

A number of Centres continue to invest in high quality printers and software. However, care must be taken to ensure that candidates adequately display their critical thinking, development and visual recording of their personal journey and not curtail the creative process by relying solely on pre-determined software options.

In the initial stages of their courses most centres teach basic photographic skills, as many candidates are new to the subject area and these 'skills workshops' are usually combined with reference to specific techniques and photographers. Therefore candidates develop both a skill base and a cultural understanding, which proves invaluable. This work, however, did not make a positive contribution to the chosen Portfolio theme and Centres should be mindful of the 'select and present' requirement in this specification.

Candidates who were working at a confident or mature level reviewed, refined and identified new directions in their work. Moreover, the work was characterized by an ambition in using the photographic elements such as layers, focus, composition and light. In contrast, less successful submissions often lacked a sense of direction and cohesion.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Qualities established in the Portfolio Unit had a significant impact on the understanding and achievements made in the subsequent Units. Throughout the marking process cross standardisation with all teachers delivering this Unit is essential.

Controlled Assignment, Photography Unit 2: AS Level

Candidates' responses to the starting points were predominantly lively, showed much personal engagement and strongly suggested that the 2015 paper had been well received. Once again, discrete AS and A2 papers were especially welcomed and highlighted the significant difference between the two qualifications.

Many candidates in the upper mark range chose starting points which allowed them to build upon previous experience and practice in producing work that very much reflected their individual strengths. However, a number of candidates were less prudent in their selection which resulted in very literal interpretations of the 'starting point'.

Most candidates used the preparatory period to good effect and showed a clear progression through the developmental stages of the work. It was largely understood that the most crucial aspects of the AS Controlled Assignment are the developmental and exploratory areas and an appropriate degree of emphasis was placed on these Objectives.

The many excellent outcomes distinctly demonstrated that, with thoughtful planning time and a focused approach throughout, the preparatory period created a strong foundation for the final five hours.

A minority of candidates, especially those in the lower mark range, did not plan sufficiently well for the Controlled Assignment and as a result their work lacked maturity and cohesion. For such candidates' poor time management, research and selection made the major contribution to under achievement. Their submissions often display incomplete developmental work, limited or superficial connections with the work of other practitioners, and a narrow exploration of ideas.
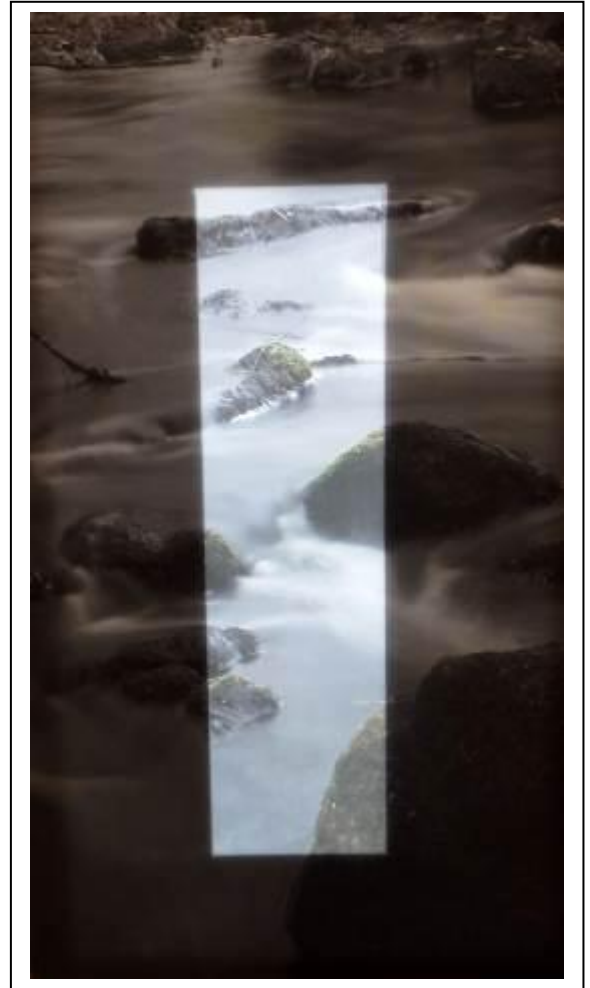
SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Teachers should access the paper on arrival to enable the preparation of teaching and learning resources to support candidates. The provisional entry lists submitted to OCR in the Autumn Term generate receipt of the paper.

There were responses to all the Sections 1, 2 and 3, with the following proving to be the most popular;

'Woodland' – this proved a popular choice amongst candidates who sought to use traditional photographic techniques in addition to more digital approaches. Layering, double exposure and darkroom effects were amongst notable exploration seen. Contextual links used included Don Mcullin and Ansel Adams.

'Track' – the notion of sequences, graphic charts and information were all well explored in visual imagery in response to this question with candidates often referring to contextual links such as Jasper Johns, Sol Lewitt and Richard Long. Lyonel Feininger and Laszlo Moholy Nag were amongst photographers commonly explored.

'Flicker' – this won much support amongst Digital Photography candidates and fostered an interest in photographic, moving image and digital layering techniques. Photographers such as David La Chapelle and Wolfgang Tilmans were both commonly successfully used as starting points for candidates' research.

'Community' – this gave rise to some starkly contrasting responses. Whilst some candidates resorted to unimaginative and rather literal ideas, other candidates used more lateral thinking supporting their ideas with links to historic photography such as Ansel Adams, Henri Cartier Bresson and Dorothea Lange were widely explored; however, use of more modern photographers such as Richard Billingham, Weegee and Cindy Sherman was also popular.

'Passage' – This gave opportunity for candidates to explore the passage of time in addition to the process of creating photographic work. More imaginative responses harnessed ideas relating to contexts and connections such as Futurism and Travel photography. The photographic work of Steven Pippin and Edweard Muybridge was referenced.

40

Assessment Objectives in the context of Photography: AS Level

AO1 (Develop)

It was pleasing again in 2015 to note that AO1 was generally well demonstrated. Students were engaging actively in researching and combining ideas, processes and media, which is a vital part of the experience of Advanced Study. With some candidates, too many resources were investigated and as a result there was insufficient experimentation and recording. Careful timing within the course may help candidates from under-achieving in this way.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Each of the Assessment Objectives has different demands and centres should recognise that candidates' achievement is not necessarily consistent within these.

AO2 (Experiment)

As in previous sessions, many centres teach this AO exceptionally well in the first few months of the course by providing candidates with a thorough grounding in skills and techniques. This can be used as part of their individual journeys of exploration. A wide range of experimentation was evident this year. However, it does need to be appropriate and the focus related to the subject matter or theme of the candidates' work. Centres that encouraged exploration of a range of related processes enabled candidates to build a repertoire of skills that equipped them to experiment effectively with their ideas and different media.

Many candidates are using Photoshop and there was some excellent understanding of this software. Nonetheless, some candidates should develop their understanding further, for example by not simply using a single filter change but using them in combination with other applications and adjustments within Photoshop.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:
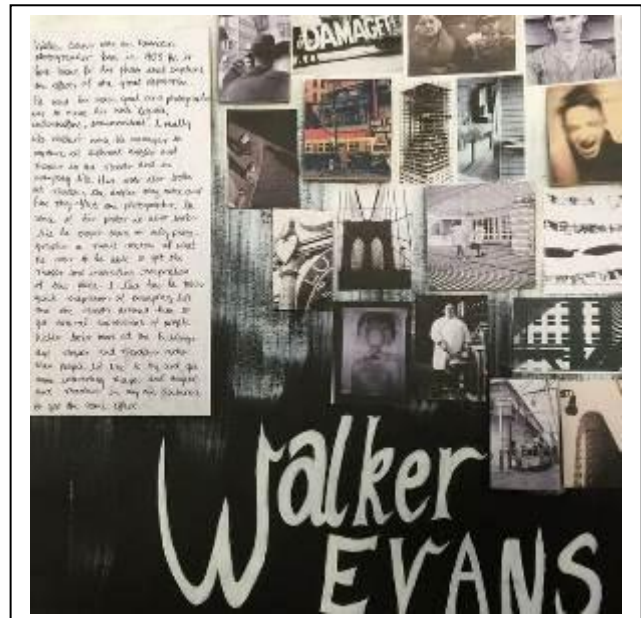
Use a wide range of sources to develop ideas and establish a balance between the use of media and photographic imagery. Avoid too much reliance on secondary sources from the Internet or magazines.

AO3 (Record)

Digital cameras and mobile phones with cameras are now part of our everyday culture and are used extensively. Candidates are now recognising this as a valid means of recording. At a basic level it can provide snap-shot and moving images. However, more able candidates were extending the creative potential by reviewing and refining through the use of image processing and software packages.

Candidates need to ensure that they select carefully from their body of work to make clear the progress and development of their ideas. This body of work should be coherent and address the demands of the Assessment Objectives.

AO4 (Present)

The strongest candidates produced exceptionally impressive outcomes with significant and mature use of detail, colour, scale and techniques. These works represented the culmination of a year's study and a thorough and mature understanding of all the other Assessment Objectives.

The quality of presentation, especially with the use of professional quality equipment and software, was in the main very impressive.

Candidates had spent time selecting, considering and presenting their work with attention to detail before submission for assessment.

Some Centres concentrated on delivering a tightly structured technical course at the expense of developing candidates' personal responses. Others promoted the exploration of a wide range of ideas and themes, which often resulted in a shallow response and unresolved outcomes. The most successful submissions showed a balance between the technical and the creative, in which work was continually reviewed, refined, developed and presented.

Personal Investigation, Photography Unit 3: A2 Level

At this stage of their programme candidates should be able to demonstrate significant inventive abilities combined with an excellent grasp of photographic skills and an assured use of appropriate techniques.

Successful candidates were generally articulating photographic media with confidence. PowerPoints, journals, digital sketchbooks, Web Pages and work sheets were well documented and demonstrated a range of mature and convincing experimentation and development.

Again in 2015, the level of critical understanding within the Related Personal Study varied considerably from the descriptive or biographical to those that showed perceptive analysis and genuinely informed personal development as the work progressed. Biographical detail is important in placing practitioners within a historical context but basic 'cut and paste' from the Internet can never be a feature of successful submissions. Centres are reminded that candidates should use an appropriate technical vocabulary.

Often candidates find it easier to write analytically when they compare the approach of different practitioners. Centres should be mindful of this and encourage candidates to investigate a range of related sources. An analytical approach is not an innate skill for many and therefore needs to be cultivated by adopting appropriate teaching strategies. For example, candidates could be asked to give detailed descriptions of others' work and in doing so identify areas of similarity and difference.

Candidates undertake the Related Personal Study in significantly different ways. Some produce a dedicated separate sketchbook, which often includes an easily read transcription. Whilst the specifications do not advocate any preference this method does allow for a focused approach in which candidates can explore in depth and the Study has a distinct beginning, middle and end.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Candidates' success in this Unit was often dependant on the guidance given and the establishment of foundation skills during an AS course, which cultivated an understanding of the demands of A2 and greater confidence and independence in the approach to work.

Other centres adopt a different approach in that the Study is located within the body of the visual research. This can have a strong developmental quality when candidates enter into a dialogue between their work and that of their selected subject. The potential area of weakness is that this approach can lead to a rather episodic style within the submission. To overcome this problem, candidates should conspicuously and coherently link the various written elements within their work. For example, they could examine how two different practitioners have approached the subject, which is central to their own practical work.

Transpositions from one media into another did not guarantee success. Some candidates were simply copying the style and techniques of an existing photographer in their own work without any meaningful critical analysis. Furthermore, the process of applying effects with 'Apps' or 'PhotoShop' often replaced sustained exploration and only offered superficial refinement of ideas.

Once more it is important to stress that at A2 individually negotiated programmes of study appear to be a successful model in which candidates review and reflect on their AS work and identify their strengths. These can be developed further whilst producing the main theme of the Personal Investigation. Even so, many candidates require guidance and support in the acquisition of relevant skills and techniques if they are to achieve their full potential.

Centres are reminded that for the Personal Investigation Unit candidates must set their own task or brief.

Moreover, it is essential when candidates choose their own themes that guidance is given by teachers as to the suitability or appropriateness of the selection and resulting photography for public assessment.

Far too often the less successful submissions tended to be simply descriptive rather than showing sustained critical analysis. A 'catalogue of events' is not especially informative and candidates would be better advised to pay attention to the analysis of their own work and that of others by providing insights into their intentions and progress.

Moderators praised the excellent work seen at A2 in photography. Much of this demonstrated a very personal response by individual candidates and a significant intellectual or critical content. The levels of technical skill combined with this critical understanding were often impressive.

A2 themes were often negotiated on a 'one to one' basis with the individual candidate. When appropriate advice and guidance was given and an on-going dialogue occurred between teacher and candidate the submissions presented were frequently mature in conception and displayed direct relationships with contemporary practice and a sound knowledge base founded on first-hand research.

In 2015, moderators reported much innovation in the approaches adopted by candidates. Digital technology and its developments continue to make significant impact and, in particular, exciting departures into 'the moving image' and 'games designs' were seen. Filmmakers inspired some candidates with Shane Meadows and Danny Boyle, once again being referenced. Theatrical photo shoots, stop-motion and blue screen are increasingly popular approaches and the care and attention taken resulted in professional outcomes. Often these were presented as large-scale images in sets or series.

The size, scale and display of the submissions varied considerably with successful candidates sourcing interesting subject matter and producing final pieces that were professional in execution often using studio techniques, digital editing and specialist equipment.

A variety of camera types were often skilfully used and contact strips gave evidence of a consistently thoughtful approach by recording the variety of options taken on a photographic shoot. Candidates who adopted such practices distinctly demonstrated their thought processes and understanding of the visual language.

There appears to be a good connection between the critical and contextual work that is carried out at AS and the Related Personal Study at A2. 'Portraiture', 'Landscape' and 'Documentary' continue to be commonly explored. Candidates often selected a method or subject that was introduced at AS level. The use of both Photographic and Fine Art based critical connections was a feature of some successful submissions.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Exploit local resources:

- Museums or galleries.
- Botanical gardens, parks, zoos
- Artists and designers
- Community Arts Centres
- Workshops or artists in residence
- Exhibitions or studio visits
- Carnivals, fairs, parades.

The best work often provided evidence of a coherent journey with a genuine sense of purpose. More successful candidates demonstrated not only that they had learnt from others' work but also simultaneously developed their own visual language.

Controlled Assignment, Photography Unit 4: A2 Level

The content of the A2 Controlled Assignment paper was well received. The starting points and design briefs offered sufficient scope for photographers to meet needs of candidates over the whole ability range.

There was good use of the preparatory period. Preliminary studies are a vital aspect of this Unit and successful candidates produced sustained recording and clearly defined their creative progression towards a final outcome.

Generally, centres encourage candidates to work to their individual strengths and confidently take advantage of the experiences and skills gained earlier in their Personal Investigation Unit.

The highest achievement was by candidates that took best advantage of the preparatory time to develop, experiment and refined their ideas before the supervised fifteen-hour period.

Candidates who produced only limited preparatory work did not achieve the levels of attainment of which they may have been capable.

Some candidates require guidance in respect of an appropriate range of techniques for a fifteen-hour assessment period. Teachers may, and, indeed, are encouraged to give advice and guidance during the preparatory period. Assistance must not, of course, be given during the fifteen-hours of supervised time.

There were responses to all the Section 1 and Section 2 starting points at A2 with the following proving to be the most popular:

'Play' – this encouraged a wide variety of interpretations and approaches. Much excellent contextual referencing was evident with purposefully sustained research into literature and the graphic arts as well as photographic contexts. Candidates evidently enjoyed the process of responding to 'Play' as a means of using the formal elements in photography. Anne Geddes and Nan Goldin were both commonly used for contextual links or research.

'Tension' – this led to many highly individual responses that were discreet, dynamic and commonly bold in use of subject matter. The human pose was commonly used as a means of approaching 'Tension' with artists such as Horst P Horst often referenced in contextual links. Photographers such as Nick Knight and Walker Evans were often explored as contextual links successfully amongst many candidates. Candidates using more abstract approaches often chose to link their work contextually to practitioners such as Andreas Gursky.

'Ancestral' – This led to many candidates developing a strong historical feel to the submissions with more purposeful work going further than obvious connections to more immediate ideas. Themes of memorabilia were explored well with artists such as Kurt Schwitters referenced and photographers such as Taryn Simon explored.

Assessment Objectives in the context of Photography: A2 Level

AO1 (Develop)

The requirements of this Assessment Objective were well demonstrated at A2. During their AS and A2 course candidates had learnt to value sustained and focused research informed by contextual and other sources. As a result much of the work that was produced displayed a confident and creative combination of visual elements in photography. There were examples of development from local and national sources and candidates had formed ideas using web-based as well as primary research.

AO2 (Experiment)

Similarly the demands of this Assessment Objective were ably met at A2. Candidates at this stage of their course were usually more than willing to take responsibility for the direction of their work and engaged actively in exploring their chosen focus. Experimentation that indicated much originality of thought was seen including digital image manipulation, layering and combined approaches using moving image.

AO3 (Record)

The most successful candidates produced some truly outstanding photographic work, which impressed by the sensitive attention to detail often combined with an ambitious approach to content, viewpoint and location.

This Assessment Objective is weighted more heavily at A2 than AS and some candidates needed to ensure that their submissions reflected this greater emphasis.

To reach the highest attainment within this Assessment Objective there needed to be a range of successful observational viewpoints. Candidates who restricted themselves to just one approach limited their potential. There continues to be a mixture of traditional and modern approaches to recording in photography including sophisticated technologies to aid time-based recording.

AO4 (Present)

There were some memorable examples of adventurous work that firmly embedded all the Assessment Objectives by creating photography that was determined, perceptive, analytical and highly aesthetic. The formal visual elements were executed with flair and excellent technical control at a mature level. There were examples of candidates utilizing web-based presentation methods such as 'scan-codes' which link to websites.

Candidates need to ensure that the submission addresses all the Assessment Objectives and that it has a clear, coherent line of research culminating in a fully resolved and well-executed final piece or series of works.

There is no doubt that centres and candidates should be congratulated on the quality of the photographic work that is produced. The ambition, inventiveness and skill shown are a credit to all involved in photography.

Summary and Guidance

Centres are reminded that applications for Special Consideration must be made well in advance of the moderation visit. This responsibility lies entirely with centres as the moderator cannot activate the procedure. It is advisable to notify the moderator of such cases when forwarding documentation for the May 31 deadline.

OCR thanks the many teachers for their encouragement which was much appreciated and the suggestions made greatly informed the support materials for both candidates and teachers.

Further information regarding professional development for the New GCE Specification 2015-2016 will be available on the OCR website, www.ocr.org.uk or by contacting OCR Training on 02476 496398 or by email to cpdhub@ocr.org.uk in September 2015.

The exemplar photographs used in this report show a small selection of the work displayed for moderation and are reproduced with the permission of the centres concerned.

OCR would like to thank all the candidates, teachers and moderators who made this possible.

Critical and Contextual Studies
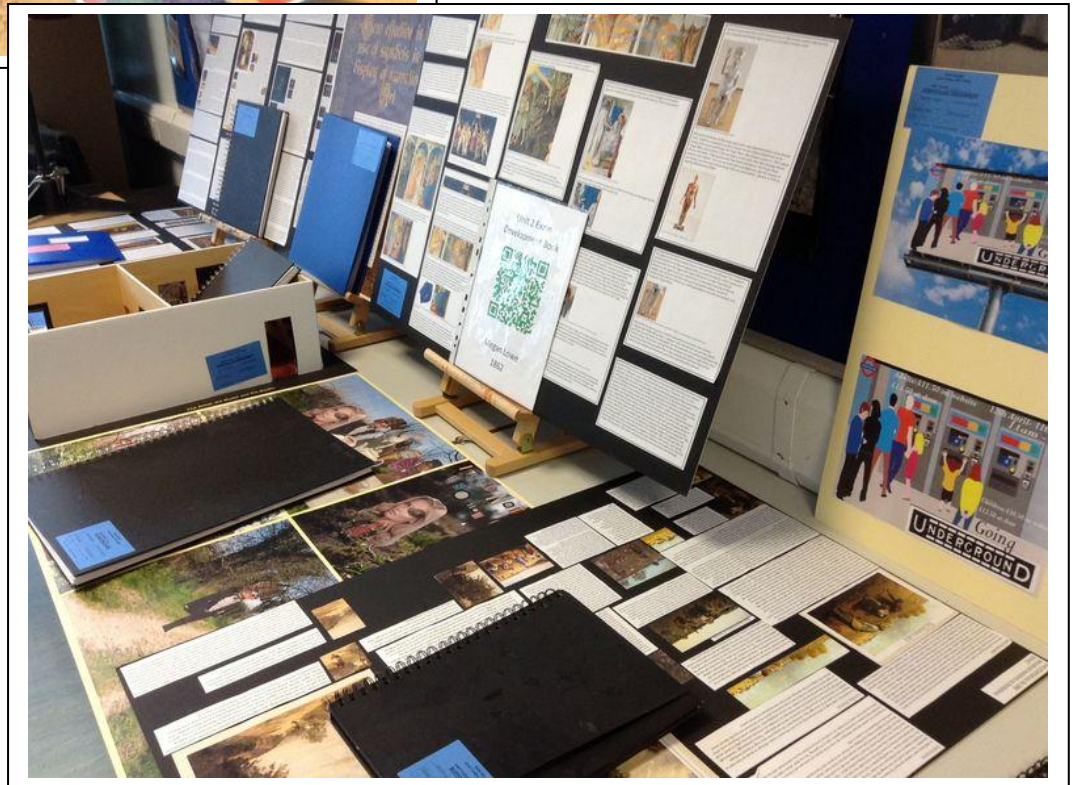
GCE Critical and Contextual Studies Units F416 – F446

The Critical and Contextual Specification is well understood by some centres that have developed creative programmes for their candidates. Some centres concentrate on an analytical or ideas based approach, whilst others emphasise the visual aspects of presenting and exploring art works. Some centres stress the importance of citing references – it would be good to see this more actively taught as a skill in all centres. **This is an important academic aspect of the specification and should not be ignored.**

Yet again this year the use of photo-copied hand outs and highlighted pages from the internet are discouraging candidates from reaching their potential by clouding progression through the Assessment Objectives. Some centres in all of the Critical and Contextual Units filled their workbooks with seemingly unnecessary copied pages from books. In some instances candidates were reconstituting copied information, which resulted in restricted personal development. 'Research' as shown by some candidates often remains narrow - sometimes a single source – with an over reliance on exhibition hand-outs rather than Art Historical texts. In the best submissions there were many excellent responses driven by first-hand research and experience of works of art accompanied by detailed and sustained analysis and excellent practical skills.

Some of the work for these Critical and Contextual Units showed high levels of commitment, personal research and analysis of art works. Other submissions, however, did not show a sustained or in-depth approach to AS study.

Generally teachers expressed that the Specification gave them the opportunity to structure a course that integrates their own areas of expertise and interests as well as make use of local and national resources. Centres found that candidates from this course were considerably aided in applications to study related courses at HE Level.

Where centres run a course which allows candidates to present more than one unit in a sketch book or portfolio this must be clearly marked so as not to hinder the moderation process and to allow achievement to be recognised.

Some candidates produced quantities of work but failed to develop their ideas in sufficient depth. There is no specific guidance in the Specification about an ideal quantity of work. As highlighted at the start of this report it is particularly important to stress that **Critical and Contextual candidates should be guided by the Assessment Objectives and consider carefully the extent to which their initial intentions are realised as their work progresses.**

Successful work often provided evidence of a coherent journey, with a genuine sense of purpose and achievement. Less successful work often lacked direction, and was invariably fragmented and poorly executed.

Centres are also reminded of the requirement to edit, select and present work for moderation, which shows candidates' achievement through the Assessment Objectives.

Some candidates did not analyse the more primary elements and formal features of their chosen artwork and lacked an appropriate technical vocabulary. These initial responses would allow candidates to engage with the more complex contextual elements and give them further opportunities to work successfully through the AO's.

It was pleasing again in 2015 to see some centres embracing the use of digital journals and PowerPoint presentations. Digital submissions allowed candidates to present a journey through the Assessment Objectives, with different pages describing candidates' thinking and personal responses. Digital submissions also facilitate a good way of presenting research of sources and context, and allow for diverse and succinct recording. Digital images are of a size and quality which allow candidates to manipulate artworks visually to enhance their analysis and understanding.
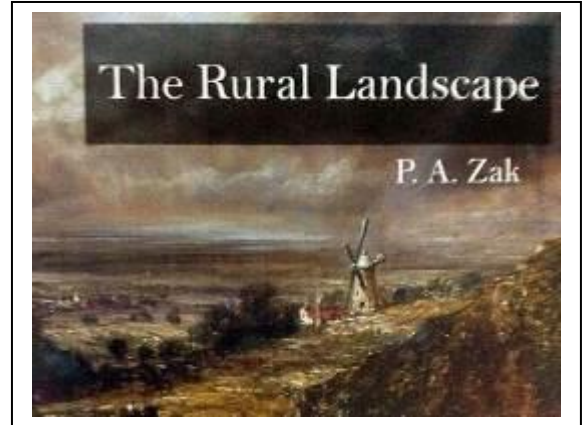
Coursework Portfolio Critical and Contextual Studies Unit 1: AS Level

In the areas of study, once again, The Human Body and Built Environment continue to inspire personal and creative responses. As in previous years there were fewer submissions based on the Machine Age and Contemporary Media in Art, which is somewhat disappointing as both areas provide many opportunities for a personal, engaged and well-resourced response.

An increasing mix of practical and written analysis was more in evidence this year, which allowed for more creative and personal submissions. In some centres there had been a marked shift towards practical explorations that developed a personal theme or explored an idea using a range of media, which had facilitated some excellent technical responses. This was very much in line with the thinking of the new Specification and these centres should be congratulated for their forward thinking.

However, achievement in each area was, again, in some centres, inconsistent and subsequently centre marking tended to be generous when this imbalance in achievement occurred. Two essays tend to be submitted - the first of these based on teacher set titles, which ensured the basics of extended prose were being covered. The second essay, however, is more personal, often dictated by the candidate's own interests - for example, *'The Differences between Contemporary and Historical Art' or 'The Importance of Water in Religious Art'.*

Most centres had timelines. These ranged from the very formal images with captions, to those produced where candidates really had understood the notion of 'context' - to the extent of using themselves as a starting point, and including a lot of cultural material. Some were, however, inadequate and did little to relate to context or vital socio-economic events. The most successful timelines were created using digital programmes and based on individual themes. This allowed candidates to present focused, engaged, and personal responses. Stronger submissions also had Gallery notebooks, where they kept informal notes/analysis on the works/exhibitions they had visited, this is another area which could be further utilised and developed.

Less successful submissions were little more than personal scrapbooks with limited annotation and simple developments of ideas.

Once again a wide variety of responses was seen this series, some taking a very practical outcome with annotations, some building up visual diaries, others teaching course elements and assessing essay outcomes.

Many of the candidates made good use of gallery or architectural visits to inform their work and allow access to first-hand analysis and experience. This Unit requires candidates to show critical analysis, recording whilst on visits using cameras, sketching techniques and digital resources.
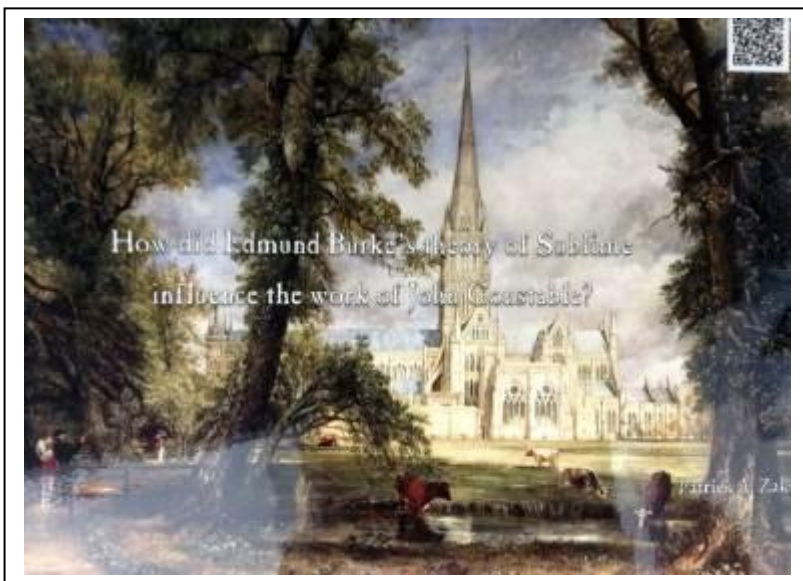
SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Qualities and good practice established in the Portfolio Unit have a significant impact on the understanding and achievements made in the subsequent Units.

Cross standardisation across Endorsements in centres that enter in other areas of study is essential to the successful completion of the marking process.

Controlled Assignment, Critical and Contextual Studies Unit 2: AS Level

The 2015 paper was well received by teachers.

An increasing number of centres approached the starting points with an essay and practical responses, a journal format or entirely a practical response. In centres where candidates follow the same starting point, centre marking should adequately differentiate individual candidates' ability to develop and present a personal and engaged response.

The more successful essay formats continue to be academic and well-researched, revealing growing confidence with critical analysis and subject-specific language. The less successful submissions failed to develop individual responses much further than continuing to highlight downloaded text and highlighted photocopied materials. Moreover candidates failing to capitalise fully on the opportunities presented by the 'starting points' still failed to add research details such as footnotes and a bibliography. Centres are reminded of the importance of 'select and present' in this Advanced Level Specification, which is not just the outcome but includes the entire submission.

An increasing number of centres are embracing digital technologies, especially in the creation of exhibitions designs and booklets. These processes can often be manipulated successfully by candidates and allow them to experiment, develop and record ideas. There were many excellent examples of final outcomes which looked professional, sustained, and mature. Digital submissions also facilitate a good way of presenting research of sources and context, and allow for diverse and succinct recording. Digital images are of a size and quality which allow candidates to manipulate artworks visually to enhance their analysis and understanding. **There were some excellent examples where candidates had used scanned QR Codes to take the viewer to specific home created web pages. This had clearly helped these candidates to fully engage with their chosen area of study and had facilitated a range of exciting and creative personal responses.**

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Teachers should access the paper on arrival in the centre to enable the preparation of teaching and learning resources to support candidates.

The provisional entry lists submitted to OCR in the Autumn Term generate receipt of the paper.

Responses to Section 4: Art in Context proved attractive to a number of discerning candidates, whilst Section 5: Visual Starting Points remained popular.

Section 4 – Art in Context:

16 'The Artist, Model and Studio'- some used this question as starting point for a range of 3D responses, including model-making and computer graphics for an exhibition. The more successful outcomes demonstrated sustained analysis of selected artworks and mature technical and practical skills.

17 'Social Realism'– this was highly popular and allowed candidates ample opportunity to explore a range of social and historical issues and themes. These included gender roles in society, poverty, social status and political influence. There were many examples of historical themes that were translated into contemporary life through the use of photography and digital media.

18 'Rural Landscape'– was another popular choice, which allowed for a wide range of historical and contemporary analysis and exploration. Candidates demonstrated personal and creative departures most frequently when working fluidly between written and practical outcomes.

19 'National Costume'– was often very popular with candidates producing a range of practical responses, including textile and 3D outcomes. These were generally well-researched and demonstrated sustained understanding of the nature and use of materials, including national regional traditions.

20 'Story Telling' – this was another popular choice as it allowed candidates to record a popular narrative in a range of visual media, in particular photography. The more successful submissions demonstrated an understanding of an artist or style, which were creative and engaged going beyond the literal and descriptive.

Section 5 Visual Starting Points

21 'Olympic Orbit Sculpture in Olympic Park' – although not so popular there were some interesting responses questioning the use of installations by sculptors in modern day society and the use of public space.

22 'Divan Japonais' by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec 1892-1893 – there were strong examples of candidates creating exhibition leaflets, posters and ticket stubs based on a range of art styles, ranging from Mucha, Constructivism to the London Underground. The more successful submissions demonstrated sustained written and practical elements using photographic and digital manipulations comparing different artists and painting styles.

23 'Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain'– there were some excellent responses to this question exploring the form and function of room space and exhibition design. Successful submissions frequently incorporated a range of multi-media responses allowing candidates to demonstrate personal, informed and sustained investigations.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE:

Use a wide range of sources to develop ideas and establish a balance between the use of media and photographic imagery. Avoid too much reliance on secondary sources from the Internet or magazines, especially highlighted downloaded text.

Personal Investigation: Public Art, Unit 3 A2 Level

The work produced resulted from visiting art galleries, assessing public sites of sculpture or public buildings and sometimes included research elements of high academic rigour. Centres should be congratulated for utilising local resources, where available, which often resulted in stimulating and lively submissions. Presentation varied from annotated sketchbook formats, mini-thesis structure, mounted panels, 3D models, portfolios, practical artwork and CD Rom.

Most centres fully understand the requirements for this Unit, and their candidates produced excellent work. In one centre each candidate had curated an exhibition and designed and made models of the Galleries, including relevant information booklets and tickets, which were both diverse and imaginative. This encourages candidates to explore issues of space, scale, placement and audience.

Many Personal Investigations showed well-balanced submissions, though it was only when they reached the Controlled Assignment that candidates wrote at their best. Some centres supported inclusion of research folders, with clear evidence of the processing and development of analysis whilst some weaker candidates simply presented a 'scrap book' or descriptions of exhibition leaflets with little evidence of serious analysis.

Long essays were also presented, some of which related directly to the exhibition content; others were rather more 'teacher-directed' but again dealt very appropriately with art in the public domain - one theme being 'An Investigation into the St. Ives Group'. Another centre's candidates chose to respond via A3 notebooks, which contained a diverse range of set projects on War Art - 'Local War Artists' and 'The effect of the War on Woman's Social Rights'. The more successful candidates perceptively made connections to contemporary equivalents or contrasting contexts. Good practice was evidenced in the final presentation of these longer essays, some centres allowed candidates to synthesise their written skills alongside visual elements.

Controlled Assignment, Critical and Contextual Studies Unit 4: A2 Level

Candidates have sufficient time to both write and present creatively, however, some candidates fail to make the most of the opportunities offered. For others, the synoptic achievements of candidates in this paper were often impressive. Commendably, some candidates used the skills acquired during the earlier stages of the A2 course with often fluent prose and well-constructed essays. Exhibition design remains a popular choice and the production of imaginative models clearly demonstrated good understanding of architectural style. Other interesting responses included very well researched 'exhibition designs' exploring the use of materials in contemporary sculpture, and textile designs. In the strongest submissions presentation was often of a high quality. Candidates who had made limited preparations failed to make the most of their potential in terms of content and quality of outcome. Where candidates are suggesting ideas and theories, statements do need the evidence to support them.

At its best, some of the essay writing was of an extremely high standard, full of evaluative critical analysis, thoroughly researched with an excellent use of subject language and terminology.

Weaker submissions were often too descriptive, simply restating existing biographical material. Failure to develop and explore initial research is likely to compromise refinement into more successful work. It is recommended that centres should give guidance to candidates in the direction of their personal response. Some candidates respond to their chosen starting point in an overly complex way, which can result in the production of work that lacks focus or fails to realise intentions.

Centres are advised to ensure that a supporting study folder or sheets should be edited, selected and submitted as evidence of research and planning, including class notes, sketches and any relevant materials, which inform the submission. Once again, centres are reminded that the use of highlighters on photocopied and internet source material can cloud the candidates' progression throughout the AO's.

There were responses to all the Section 4 and Section 5 starting points at A2 with the following proving to be the most popular:


16 'Contrapposto'– was a popular choice and featured a wide range of Renaissance artists, in particular the influence of classical art on figurative sculpture. Responses ranged from a practical rendering of three dimensional forms to critical and analytical written submissions.

17 'Female Artists'– produced a range of strong responses where candidates had engaged with social and historical contexts. The more successful submissions incorporated the writings of feminist thinkers and their role in the promotion of gender equality in art and life.

18 'Solitude'– there was a wide range of excellent practical responses that incorporated photography and digital technologies using local public spaces and architecture as effective starting points. In the more successful submissions there was fluidity between written and practical elements that fulfilled the Assessment Objectives.

19 'The Family Group'– was less in evidence. Those that selected the question frequently made reference to the work of Henry Moore and Renaissance Genre Painting. The written responses were generally personal and analytical, often making reference to family dynamics and the role of family in today's society.

20 'The Clown or Jester in Art'– this was a popular question with candidates making a variety of personal observations and responses, which often contained photographic transcripts of the work of artists including Picasso, Seurat and James Ensor.
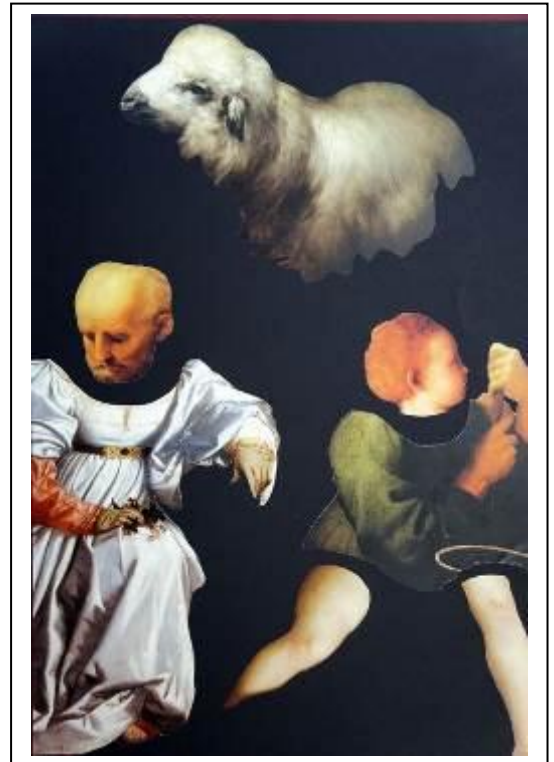
Assessment Objectives in the Context of Critical and Contextual Studies

AO1 Develop

The range of approaches taken by teachers is important. Often there is creative teaching at the early stages of the courses with works studied leading towards linked essays. Sometimes candidates have difficulties making connections between works and have not been sufficiently encouraged to find connecting threads that will develop their understanding.

The time line offers a good opportunity to show developing understanding of the relationship between critical and contextual elements at AS.

Written work at A2 level showed good development of ideas. Most centres have formulated a strong programme for the first term of A2 with visits and themes from which candidates can develop a personal direction for their Personal Investigation.

AO2 Experiment

The analysis of materials and processes is often a weakness, with candidates concentrating on an art historical framework rather than making a detailed exploration of individual works. The reviewing of ideas as understanding develops is a challenge and the refining of ideas and building of relationships is often missing, especially at AS level.

When centres employed practical studies sadly, in some instances, the practical work did little to enhance the final outcomes. Too often it was clear that candidates had one idea and explored that with limited success. This then created a negative impact across the AO's.
Experimenting can take the form of different approaches to text or to visuals.

The use of different prose styles, as appropriate to a newspaper or gallery guide rather than just an art appreciation essay are well explored by some teachers. Similarly, the production of gallery leaflets, exhibition models or power point displays all enhance understanding through experimentation; though this has become formulaic in some centres, rather than being driven by the need to communicate insight of the works studied.
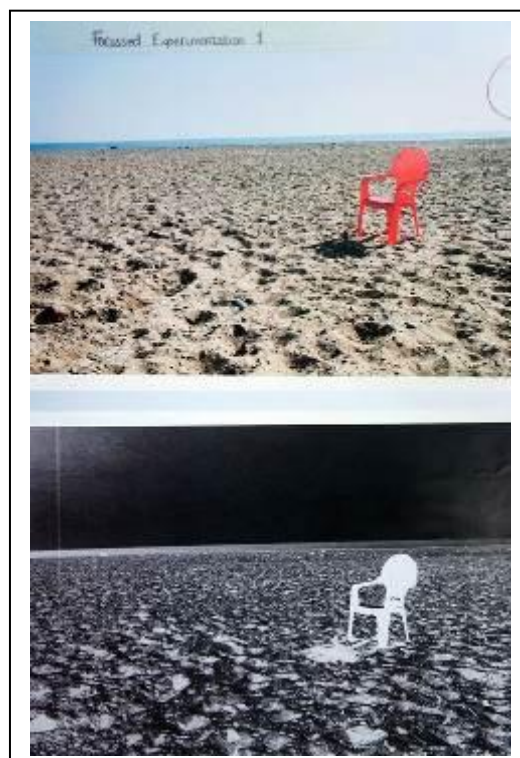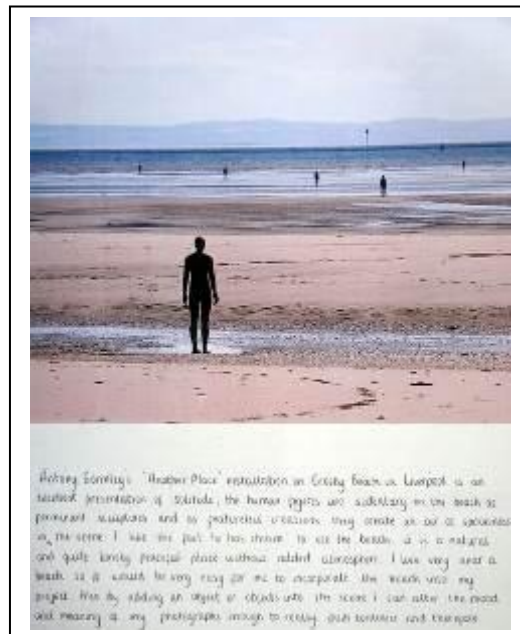
AO3 Recording

Greater emphasis could be placed on the use of specialist vocabulary to enable candidates to analyse works more perceptively. There was little unmediated use of the internet and it is encouraging to see some centres actively promoting the accurate referencing of sources and the citing of quotations. This enables candidates to make appropriate use of their own first hand observed recording as distinct from secondary material that is used to enhance their understanding.

At A2 candidates did not always spend long enough researching material. It would be good to see more extensive referencing of Art Historical sources and more detailed notes from gallery visits. Sketching was rarely used as a way of responding to Art works and there was surprisingly little evidence of candidates using their own photographs to record works considering that most museums permit this now.

AO4 Present

There is scope for more considered presentation of written material through the use of ICT. The use of illustrations is not always carefully considered and consequentially opportunities for exciting juxtaposition of visual images to reinforce ideas are missed. Candidates tend to miss opportunities to make connections between works studied both in text and visuals.

Submissions as a whole should be seen as embodying AO4. The standards of presentation, practical artwork, critical analysis and the development of ideas into realised outcome(s) should be viewed in their entirety.

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