



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

**Art and Design (Art, Craft and
Design)**

ARTA4

(Specification 2200)

Unit 4: Externally Set Assignment

Report on the Examination

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GCE Art and Design - General

Work seen by moderators covered a wide range of traditional and contemporary approaches and the different demands of each unit were generally understood. Students engaged with a diverse range of ideas and themes. Where appropriate, many undertook fieldwork to obtain relevant source materials. Others worked directly from a selection of objects or specimens. Some students were creative in the ways that they investigated and responded to images, artefacts and other materials they had found. Students often demonstrated an awareness of, and personal feelings about, important issues.

In the coursework portfolio, students developed a sound basis for working practice. In many schools and colleges, teachers provided courses in which there was a clear emphasis on exploring different approaches, materials, processes and techniques. The development of skills during the AS year was an important foundation for students' work at A2. High levels of drawing and observational skill were evident in the more successful work.

In many schools and colleges, an introductory project at the beginning of the AS year enabled students to develop greater understanding, confidence and independence as the course progressed. Students are required to produce an extended personal project in the Portfolio. Most students responded to a starting point, theme or brief provided by their teachers. Some students produced more than one project and many students included additional materials such as work produced in workshops or on gallery visits.

Where chosen contextual materials were appropriate and had been understood, they informed students' work in many different ways. When looking at works of a particular artist, or a range of work by several artists, students considered the ways in which the subject, theme or idea had been interpreted, how formal elements were used, how elements of composition, layout or design were manipulated and how media and techniques were used. In the work of some students references were made to examples of music, poetry, literature, architecture and cultural artefacts from different times and places.

Sketchbooks and workbooks continued to be used by many students. However, their content varied considerably in quality. The most successful were lively, thoughtful and well considered and clearly recorded the development of ideas. Some students presented their work on mounted sheets and carefully considered connections between images. Some students presented electronic sketchbooks.

Many students produced large quantities of work but did not develop their ideas in sufficient depth. Students should consider the level of skill and understanding they have demonstrated in response to each of the Assessment Objectives and how well they have realised their intentions.

Successful students provided evidence of a coherent journey, revealing clear engagement with source materials and ideas. Their work was focused and sustained and had a real sense of purpose. Less successful work was often fragmented and poorly executed revealing a lack of understanding and skill.

Many students chose to annotate their work and these often provided insights into their ideas and decisions. They also made clear the connections between different aspects of the work. Sometimes, annotations, statements of intent and evaluations were used to help students focus their ideas and their investigations. However, some students wrote copious notes that often provided little in the way of insights and merely repeated what was already evident in the work.

Many students used some form of ICT, either in resourcing their work or in the process of producing it. Many students have access to digital cameras or camera phones and these were often used confidently to record observations and to source contextual material. In Graphic Communication digital and electronic media were often used extensively. Adobe Photoshop was widely used by students to develop their ideas. The Internet was used to access the work of artists, designers and craftspeople.

Administration, marking and moderation

Many moderators reported improvements in administration. In the majority of schools and colleges, mark sheets were correctly completed and deadlines were met. Problems occurred when Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) and Centre Declaration Sheets (CDSs) were not completed prior to the moderation visit. Detailed comments on the CRFs were often helpful and informative.

Teachers are reminded to send both pink and yellow copies of the centre mark forms or EDI print outs to the moderator. One copy will be returned to the school or college with the samples required for the visit indicated on it.

Preparation for moderation visits was generally good and samples were organised in an exhibition or as a collection of folders. In the majority of cases, labelling was very helpful and clear. Maps indicating exactly where samples might be found, were particularly useful. Most provided a quiet, non-public space for the moderation process to take place which is essential. Many moderators commented on the warm reception they received but there were occasions when they felt under pressure to reveal marks which they cannot do. General feedback was well received and thought to be helpful.

An understanding of the assessment objectives resulted in accurate marking in the majority of schools and colleges. Problems generally occurred when teachers awarded their best student maximum marks when a lower mark was more appropriate.

Many teachers and lecturers commented on the value of standardisation meetings where examples of work at different levels can be seen. Erratic marking was often linked to non-attendance at these meetings.

Assessment Objectives

AO1

The ability to develop ideas in a coherent and sustained manner was a key feature of the most successful work. Successful students provided sound evidence of learning from contextual materials and developed their own, personal visual language. Evidence of analytical and critical understanding was provided in different ways. Written materials often provided insights into students' knowledge and understanding and explained decisions made when developing their work. Less successful work was fragmented and intentions were not always clear.

AO2

An introductory project at the beginning of the AS year, often gave students opportunities to experiment with media and to develop a good basic understanding of a range of materials, processes and techniques. Students were then more able to develop their skills when responding to a starting point, idea or theme. The development of skills and understanding of handling materials enabled students to refine their ideas as their work developed. The least successful work was lacking the development of basic skills which made it difficult for students to explore ideas confidently and to demonstrate understanding in the development of their work.

AO3

Ideas, observations and insights were recorded in many different ways, for different purposes and at different stages of the work. Digital cameras were used as a valuable sketchbook tool

and proved to be particularly useful in obtaining source materials. Drawings and colour studies often included analytical work that was detailed, considered and closely observed. They also included drawings that were vigorous, loose and expressive. Some studies were small, fine and delicate whilst others were of a much larger scale. Initial ideas and alternative ideas for compositions or layouts were often recorded in thumbnail sketches. Contact prints, printouts of computer generated materials and textile samplers also provided evidence of recording observations and ideas. Students provided evidence of reflecting on their work and progress both visually and in written materials. Some of the least successful students provided large amounts of collected images and annotations added little to understanding.

AO4

In AS, many students focused on developing their technical skills and established a good working practice that enabled them to successfully develop their ideas. The development of a personal visual language was much more evident in A2 work. Confidence and maturity was also evident in much of the A2 work. Critical understanding was clear in the choices and decisions made by students and they were able to successfully realise their intentions. Many students realised their intentions at various stages and produced a rich diversity of responses. Many students made some connections between different elements of their work as it progressed. In the least successful work, little attempt was made to link the written element to the practical work.

Externally Set Assignment

This unit was well managed by most schools and colleges that are familiar with the time-scale and requirements of the Externally Set Assignment. Most students produced effective personal work that ranged from small detailed illustrations to large scale installations that were both ambitious and challenging. Research was usually thorough and included links to both contemporary and traditional artists and designers which were used successfully to inform the development of ideas.

Hanging Forms

There was a variety of accomplished work seen which included imagery based on objects and the human figure. Starting points varied from washing lines and water droplets to suspended objects, which resulted in extremely diverse investigations, in both two and three dimensions. Intriguing photographic work influenced by Sam Taylor Wood and Lissy Elle was produced from innovative and well devised photo shoots. Dramatic paintings of hanging natural forms were inspired by Sanchez Cotan. Well-constructed mixed media work was a feature of many responses inspired by Annette Messenger. The work of Jorge Pardo inspired hanging light units that cleverly combined sculpture with interior design.

Mysterious Interiors

This starting point prompted onsite explorations of derelict buildings, cellars and caves, and provided ample opportunity for first hand recording, mainly through photography. Experimentation with mixed media led to well-constructed miniature environments inspired by Joseph Cornell. Some powerful and emotive work based on asylums and prison camps was created along with installations involving darkened environments and the use of light and projections. Images of disturbing interiors were produced, informed by the photographs of Evelina Kremsdorf and the paintings of Andre Govia.

Science Fiction

Many responses were heavily influenced by films such as 'Alien', 'Avatar' and 'The Matrix'. The study of armour often resulted in fantastic costumes that incorporated the innovative use of unusual materials. Digital manipulation of photographs to create surreal imagery featured strongly in many submissions. These were often developed into sculpture which utilised recycled materials such as discarded computer components and circuit boards. However,

outcomes were sometimes badly constructed. Some investigations began with looking at the work of H R Giger, but failed to move forward and resulted in predictable outcomes. In less successful work, students often focused on comic books, but the graphic work produced was often superficial and technically weak.

Contemporary Issues

This starting point stimulated thought-provoking and challenging work which was very personal. Some students that had experienced the riots of 2011 responded with meaningful work. The theme of drugs and alcohol were popular topics and bullying, gender issues, child labour and violence in the home, also featured strongly. Many students' own beliefs, fears and prejudices formed the basis for mature work which was notable for its depth of sincerity and openness. Outcomes included graphic images and photographs inspired by Barbara Kruger which were combined with other media to create powerful images. Some extremely sensitive work was seen based on the mental confusion of people suffering from dementia.

Paper and Card

Exploration and experimentation with paper and card, using folding, cutting and shaping techniques, demonstrated high levels of craft skills. Delicate work inspired by the architectural forms of Ingrid Siliakus and the geometric patterns of Matt Shlian were produced and a good understanding of the properties of the material was evident. Sculptural work exploring abstract, geometric structures was informed by the work of Richard Sweeney. Innovative clothing designs by Susan Stockwell. Some pop-up designs were carefully executed, showing a clear understanding of working mechanisms. Other work involved modelling in paper maché inspired by Louise Lapper. Card was also used in relief to create collagraphs for printmaking.

Responding to the Landscape

Students often produced digital images of gently rolling meadows or dramatic mountains. It was a pleasure to see some *plein air* studies inspired by the work of Kurt Jackson. Outcomes were mainly representational renderings of landscapes showing skilful handling of media. Work based on the textural qualities of landscapes resulted in heavily embroidered surfaces inspired by Gilda Baron. Some innovative installations used projections and sounds recorded in the countryside.

The Fourth Plinth

Some students had made worthwhile site visits to Trafalgar Square to assess the surroundings and research sculptures on the other three plinths. Some meaningful and sensitive outcomes were produced based on the female form which was influenced by the work of Jenny Saville and reminiscent of Mark Quinn's 'Alison Lapper'. Other responses included work informed by Antony Gormley's standing figures and the stylised, elongated figures produced by Giacometti.

Mayan Art

Many responses lacked evidence of development and research tended to be repetitive and failed to explore the subject matter in any real depth. This resulted in outcomes which simply replicated imagery researched. Some examples of sculpture were seen and well crafted fabric wall hangings using bold colour and dynamic geometric designs were also evident.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available at www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion