

ART AND DESIGN

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

<p>Paper 9704/01 Controlled Test</p>
--

General comments

Most candidates chose their questions well, which enabled them to develop the strongest aspects of their work in terms of personal interest and the motivation to research and develop ideas. Questions from **Sections A** and **B** were equally popular but there were fewer responses for the specific design briefs of **Section C**. While approximately two thirds of the entries achieved competent to high levels, over 10% of the work seen was of an excellent standard. Thorough preparatory work invariably preceded such success, with the most able candidates developing a rich variety of ideas from primary research and resolving their examination work with confidence during the 15 hour time limit.

In the lower range of achievement, acceptable for an AS or A level pass, personal qualities were often inhibited by limited research from first hand sources or a dependency on secondary sources such as magazine images. While there was some evidence of experimentation with media, poor analysis of such explorations led to many uncertainties in the development of ideas and intentions. This was most apparent in the organisation and control of the relationships of visual elements such as line, shape, form, space, colour, tone and texture. Consequently, a lack of confidence to make critical judgements and personal evaluations was evident in the work for the 15 hour Controlled Test as it progressed. However, the weakest work received was generally lacking in intentions or the ability to research and develop visual ideas in any systematic or ordered way. Such work usually consisted of several disconnected copies, one of which had been chosen for repetition for the examination piece.

Some serious problems were caused for the Board's Administrators and Examiners when the work for Component 1 had been despatched in the same parcels as Components 2 and 3, Coursework. Sometimes work for the Controlled Test was presented without any identification or labelling, making it impossible to know which question had been answered or which candidate to award the marks to. Centres are asked to check that such vital information is present on labels attached to each sheet of every candidates' work. Under no circumstances should the work for Component 1 be included with coursework when sent to the Board; Centres must note and adhere to the different deadlines for the receipt of each component.

Comments on specific questions

Section A (Open-ended starting points)

Question 1

Stacks: the most imaginative approaches focused on appropriate research from building sites, depots, markets and stores with the most interesting ideas developed towards abstraction. Less successful attempts took a conventional still life approach usually observed from domestic items.

Question 2

Irregular forms: a wide variety of source material was evident in research from natural forms. The best work focused on the question aiming for strong compositional formalisations and photography specialists interpreted the theme particularly well. Weaker submissions were vague in intention and often confused symmetry with irregularity.

Question 3

Weathered: the most popular question in this section with work seen throughout the ability range. There were many expressive depictions of elderly people or crumbling buildings, the best of which exploited surface textures and colour to create a strong sense of mood and atmosphere.

Question 4

Personal possessions: also a popular question but chosen mostly by those of weaker ability to illustrate unrelated assortments of fashionable commodities. Some more interesting attempts offered social, economic or political interpretations.

Question 5

Tubular: the least undertaken question in this section but often well researched from first hand observation leading to inventive abstractions and formalisations. Weaker responses tended to extract and repeat a formula.

Question 6

Ground work: most interpretations achieved competent to high standards by focusing on figures in particular landscape settings. Some of the best work seen was more concerned with town or city activity such as building sites or roadworks.

Section B (Specific starting points)

Question 7

The still life question involving an arrangement of fruits in bowls was the most popular choice in this section. While most candidates demonstrated a competent ability to analyse the relationships of form and space, only a few outstanding attempts were seen where personal and aesthetic qualities had been exhaustively explored in the preliminary work. In weaker submissions the groups were poorly arranged, spatial relationships were inconsistent and the use of tone, colour, pattern or texture were very generalised.

Question 8

The still life question on the theme of laundry in the process of being ironed attracted the fewest responses in this section. Some serious attempts were seen but weaker candidates tended towards figurative depictions based more on memory than observational research.

Question 9

Most of the work received for the human figure option was of a good standard. Many excellent studies were also seen where a confident analysis of form and structure and manipulation of media led to final pieces of great unity and expressive power. In weaker work the figure and plant tended to be treated separately or large areas of unrelated space were included.

Question 10

The environmental question of a view looking up or down a stairwell attracted a good number of candidates of all levels of ability. In the best work interesting geometrical abstractions were developed from thorough explorations of the structured patterns of steps, rails and banisters and, in particular, cast shadows. Personal photography was well used by many candidates to research a variety of sources for paintings. There were also a few excellent submissions by Photography specialists.

Question 11

The second most popular question in this section concerned interpretations from the poem 'Face' by Jane Evans. Some of the most outstanding work chose to juxtapose part of the text with well developed imagery. Many good and competent interpretations were received which focused on selected parts of face and hands often presented through interesting formats. The few less able responses seen were limited by poor observation and understanding of the underlying facial structures evoked by the poem.

Section C (Specific design briefs)

Question 12

The poster design for a Festival of Dance was the most popular choice for design specialists. The best work resulted from selective developments from well organised first hand sources; clear and simplified imagery was integrated with appropriate lettering or typography in a refined manner; computer processes were used with expertise to manipulate and organise ideas. Weaker designs, however, usually attempted to include too much imagery and diverse letter forms which led to muddled communication, or the use of colour and media led to illegibility and a lack of visual impact.

Question 13

The repeat pattern question was the next most popular choice in this section. Thorough research from specific museum artefacts, followed by varied explorations of pattern developments led to the most successful results. Weaker attempts were inhibited by limited research, usually copied from secondary sources, which was then literally repeated with little understanding of the potential for exploring linear rhythms, geometric shapes or colour and tone counterchanges.

Question 14

Although chosen by a smaller number of candidates, the costume design question inspired some outstanding submissions. As with other questions the depth and quality of initial research from fish and reptiles fostered the development of lively ideas. Less strong attempts were much more concerned with making actual costumes rather than designing them so, consequently, the necessary first hand study to motivate recording, analysis and development was neglected.

Question 15

The few candidates choosing the packaging design brief developed their ideas well through computer processes. With the exception of one very able submission, however, there was little evidence of first hand investigation as most of the work depended on images scanned from trade magazines. This inhibited personal judgements for stimulating development and usually led to bland or repetitive results.

Paper 9704/02

Coursework A

General comments

Candidates are expected to submit a coursework project for this component in one area of study. They should have pursued a field of study of their choice, of research, development and realisation in depth. In this Component the assessment of the work places more emphasis on the development of ideas and the uses of processes rather than the resolution of the final coursework project. One project and up to four sheets of supporting work should have been submitted.

Taken on the whole the best work sent did show that candidates' individual responses and supporting work had been selective and did show research and recording, development and critical evaluation. Candidates had included source material and evidence of personal ideas and the development of solutions. They had experimented with a variety of media and processes and showed a knowledge of historical, contemporary and cultural influences. But for many it was the recipe as before with only a few drawings leading to the finished piece or, worse still, one piece of unresearched work done about three times in the same way.

Marking was required to be undertaken in the Centre. The Mark Scheme falls under four category headings which are: Personal Qualities to be seen in the work; Manipulative and Analytical Skills; Aesthetic Qualities; and the Knowledge and Critical Understanding of the work in hand. The marking for the most part had been done with sincerity and diligence. Most Teachers had been generous with their marks, particularly with the middle range and less able candidates. These marks had to be scaled down in recognition of The Board's noted standards of achievement. Some Centres had felt unable to undertake the marking and thus the assessment was done by the Examining Moderator.

It is vitally important that Coursework A should not be muddled with Coursework B and should be sent in for moderation separately on the dates required and before the work submitted for Components 1 and 4. It is also wise not to over-mount or over-pack the work so that it can be easily and readily available for inspection. All of the Components must be labelled clearly with the candidates name, Centre number and individual number.

In all areas of possible study the very best work was that which was fully conversant with the requirements of the Syllabus. Whether Painting, Graphics or Pottery, it proved vitally important that thought had been given to a sensible choice of subject matter in the first instance. It was then important that the candidate had cultivated the required skills necessary for the task so that there was no disappointment in the sensitive expression of the ideas. This coursework component is an ideal vehicle for the exploration of processes and the development of individual qualities in the work. Many had seized these opportunities and in preparatory work had experimented with a number of ways of carrying out a process. Some had then the means to tackle a final piece with the confidence born of their experiences. The best work in all areas was well composed and skilfully produced and presented. It is always good to see when candidates choose to work within their own cultural surroundings.

Of course the standard and award of marks can only be governed by the candidates' knowledge of their subject and the skills they have acquired. Thus it is that there must be middle grades in the submissions and unfortunately at the bottom are those who have not studied well or are less able. Here it is often the case that candidates had made poor choices in their subject matter which had clouded the issue from the very early stages. There are also those candidates who rely so much on merely copying unsuitable photographs or the work of other people. This can so often result in lifeless figure drawings and paintings, and stilted compositions. When Computers are used for design work it is so important that the ideas are the candidate's own and that as much first hand copy as possible is fed in. It is difficult to award marks for work which is almost entirely computer programmed and second hand.

Candidates had submitted work in the areas of Painting and Related Media, Textiles, Ceramics, Sculpture, Graphic Design, Fashion Design, Print Making and Photography.

By far the largest area of study was Painting and Related Media. Here there were still life paintings which had been beautifully composed, initially explored in a number of techniques and finally carried out in watercolour. There were well explored landscapes and well composed figure compositions in a variety of media. There were sensitive portrait and full figure life studies. The weaker work seemed to have little theme or thought given to it, drawing standards were slight and the presentation untidy. Some candidates had resorted to the most elementary collage and simply glued down magazine cutouts.

Textile Design did not constitute a large catchment of study and was often linked with Fashion Design. Textiles were presented by using block or screen printing or tie and dye techniques. When well done the samples of work could show careful planning, a keen observation of shapes, a thoughtful combination of rich colours and careful technical execution. The weaker work was largely of random printing and scruffy technique and textural quality. Tie dye exponents often went for quick and easy results with little quality in the planning. The best work could show intricate designing and vibrant colouring. Some candidates had offered their own printed fabric designs to compliment their fashion designing. The best work here was imaginative and could show intricately designed accessories. Poorer work was sparse in ideas, showed little skill in the model drawing and was crudely presented.

Ceramic and Sculpture pieces were on the whole well designed and showed skill in execution. Candidates had experimented with a number of ideas and techniques and besides the planning and developmental studies had shown historic and cultural context in sketch form. Some candidates had shown final pieces in photographic presentation which overcame transportation problems when dealing with large and heavy submissions.

There were few examples of Print Making other than in the context of Textile Design. Some candidates had made pictorial compositions in one colour using lino block printing but few had explored this craft in any depth.

Graphic Design could be thoughtful and very well tuned. There were packaging designs, posters, menu and logo designs. In the best entries much thought had been given to the well balanced composition of shapes and colours and the candidates in one Centre had offered a large selection of realistic three dimensional mock-ups. Computer generated designs, when there was the maximum of personal input could be exceptional in quality of finish. Alas, only too often they show so very little of a candidate's own artistry and are not even well balanced in composition in the final outcome.

Some candidates chose to submit photography but only a few had explored its possibilities in any depth. The weakest were the usual poorly composed snaps. However, some had delved pleasingly into character portraiture, some into atmospheric landscapes whilst others had been influenced into making successful serial and montage compositions.

Paper 9704/03

Coursework B

General comments

The Syllabus asks for one project from one study area of the prescribed curriculum to be studied. The work should not overlap the study area of that offered for Component 2 (Coursework A) but may be related or an extension of it. The intention of this Component is to allow candidates to pursue a field of study in research, development and realisation in depth. Unlike Component 2, as much emphasis is placed on the resolution of the final piece as on the development of ideas and the use of processes. The work is marked in the candidate's Centre and the comments here relate to the samples of work sent for moderation.

One of the major obstacles in the moderation of the coursework for this component was that often it had been sent in the same folder as the Component 2 course work, had not been properly labelled and was indistinguishable. The two Components must be despatched individually and the studies should be markedly different.

In some cases the next stumbling block was that there were several projects submitted in the folder with no clear indication as to which was the main one.

Often the drawings and paintings had been so heavily and complicatedly mounted that they were difficult to handle or see properly. It sometimes happened that pieces of work bore no indication as to who had done them! Candidates often do an injustice to themselves by sending unedited folders of work. Part of the examination is for a candidate to show critical judgement - it does not help to submit every scrap of work much, of which is far below their best standard.

It is the Moderator's job to get the work into the right mark and grade category appropriate to the candidates achievement and ability. It is difficult to do this if there is a bunching of marks for several and sometimes all of the candidates when their individual achievements have not been sufficiently defined. Mostly the marking in the Centre had been carried out with care but it was noticeable that often candidates had been generously treated and marks had to be scaled down considerably. Just occasionally a Centre's marking was severe and the marks had to be scaled up. Mostly Centres had recognised their best candidates but it was the middle and lower grades where more than deserved marks had been issued.

There was much good work to be seen showing that candidates had clearly understood what was required of them in the terms of the Syllabus. It was obvious that many had followed a good course of study and were able to settle for sensible themes and projects. Sadly a few candidates did not seem to know what to do or had any idea about the possible standards they might achieve. This work was upsettingly out of context in this level of study.

Candidates had offered work which covered most of the areas of possible study and the following remarks are directed specifically to these options.

Comments on specific projects

Painting and related media

This was by far the most favoured area of study and work was offered in all the variety of media possible. Many Centres have a fine tradition in such areas as landscape, figure composition, portrait and still life painting. There were some lively representations of fiestas, some well constructed streetscapes and some sensitively formed and finely coloured portraits. Of course the best work was always accompanied with strong preparatory studies and meticulously researched reference. Sketchbooks were relevant and copious. Sometimes mixed media was used eloquently but candidates need to have had experience and guidance when working this way or they would be well advised to leave it alone.

The work of the middle grade candidates usually is marked by an obvious lack of experience. Here the drawing and colour skills are not strong and there is a lack of ability to compose, balance and structure their work. The work has not much individual quality and is laboured.

At the lower end of the scale there is work which may just pass and then that which is without much thought or knowledge of the subject. Here there is very limited experience and minimal effort. Basic drawing and painting skills are sparse and a candidate may not have elected to choose interesting themes or has overestimated the possibilities of the subject they have elected to work from. At this end of the scale back up work has little standard and is often badly presented. The sketchbook will have very little to show and what there is can be mostly inappropriate and irrelevant.

Textiles and print making

There was not a large entry under this heading. Woven textiles were not seen and only a few examples of embroidery. The area of study favoured was in colouring and printing on material and occasionally the relating of these designs to fashion designing. The methods favoured were tie dye work, batik and silk screen printing which were sometimes used in combination. There was no work of a high standard. It seemed that not a lot of time had been spent in the structured planning of it. Tie dye work can be intricately complex but most submitted appeared very casual and without design structure. More complex patterns were sometimes printed on top of tie dye. These tended to be done at random and appeared very unbalanced and often quite messy. Occasionally the saving grace could be pleasingly chosen colours. Some more structured batik designs had been done on silk. These were quite sensitively drawn in subtle colour but the arrangement and choice of shapes were not always successful.

Some fashion designs were imaginative in ideas but these would have been better presented if there had been more skill put into the drawing of the models.

There were a few block prints and a number of candidates had offered etching. These were mainly single colour and not at all adventurous.

Sculpture

At the top end of the scale were a few most beautifully modelled pieces. These had, after careful research and copious developmental drawings and photographs, been modelled in clay and then cast in plaster before finally being presented as bronzes (painted fibre glass). These were quite large and had been moulded with exquisite care and attention to form and proportion. They were proportionally accurate and sculpturally sensitive.

At the lowest end there was rather weak terra cotta relief work. These were masks created without the help of much research or observational study and hardly qualified as Advanced Level submissions.

Graphic design

Most of the graphic design work submitted was computer generated. There is no reason why this should not be so. It is however important that the ideas and basic artistic skills will be the candidate's own work and not closely based on bought programmes. Unfortunately much of the work was and had to be marked down accordingly. It is very obvious when the individual qualities of the candidate surface and, with the especial qualities of computer work and its polished finish, the work is first rate and qualifies to be published. Some skilful three dimensional mock-ups of packets and tins which were the results of much planning and research exhibited the well balanced arrangement and management of shapes and colours.

Much of the supporting work submitted by the weaker candidates lacked ideas and designing skills. It was not surprising that the final designs held so little promise.

Some poster work, book jackets and menu covers in time honoured gouache colour were thoughtful and nicely executed. Here the lettering has to be well balanced, sensitively proportioned and skilfully painted. Some was, but some of the designs were not well thought through and could be crude in colour and careless in the application of artistry.

Photography

The best work was achieved when candidates had pursued a theme. Those used were: The human face, Landscape (particularly that which included trees), Buildings and general townscape, Junk yards and Machinery.

The most successful pictures showed that candidates had a good basic knowledge of their cameras and other equipment and could process their work with ease and understanding of how to make the prints into enlargements, use colour and generally deal with image modification.

Mostly candidates rode a middle course and, although getting a good way beyond snaps, few achieved much more than technical quality. Imaginative responses were scarce although many were able to produce well balanced pictures with due consideration to tone, texture, shape and the use of light to enhance form. Character and atmosphere were qualities which eluded most. Some candidates gave evidence that they had studied historical aspects of photography and were able to make use of this in their own productions.

Paper 9704/04

Related Study

General comments

Response to this component was very varied, both in choice of subject matter and in methods of presentation. Centres' perceptions of the syllabus interpretation of this component also varied enormously.

A few Centres had a clear understanding of how this component should grow naturally from references to contemporary or historical practice experienced during the development of coursework. However it was also evident that many entries were unclear about their intentions and were misguided in their approach.

The submission of the Outline Proposal Form will help candidates to identify their sources and clarify their intentions. It was unfortunate that very few studies included such forms. Proposal forms should be considered essential to the assessment, as CIE Moderators can respond to these by offering constructive advice, give guidance to vague intentions or suggest alternative strategies if the topic is inappropriate. Of equal concern were cases where this advice had been given but had been totally ignored particularly when suggesting that candidates should focus their analysis on just a few specific examples.

Care should also be taken in structuring submissions. Many are using Information Technology skills very effectively to integrate text and image; in using titles and subtitles and through notation of all illustrations. Equally some studies were lacking in a title, introduction or a conclusion. Some were so poorly labelled it was difficult to identify individual candidates or in a few cases whether the work actually was for Component 4.

The choice of subject matter generally allowed most candidates to gain access to first hand study, or first hand involvement with the topic. Particularly popular was the study of a local artist or crafts person. This certainly allowed direct contact with the chosen subject and the best of these entries were full of personal responses to what had been seen. These studies were very enthusiastic and investigations had been sustained throughout. Intelligent, relevant observations were in abundance and articulate comparisons with historical examples or work from other cultures had been made. At this level, good use of the candidates' own photographs was made as were their own experiments into techniques gained from researching the working methods of their chosen subjects.

In weaker work, candidates had become too involved in lengthy biographies of chosen artists or historical analogy. Any works chosen lacked a personal critical analysis and focused upon brief descriptions. Many candidates had included copies of interviews made. Most were treated as a substitute for developing their own analysis or insights. Interviews are best used as source material and not an end in themselves.

The study of local buildings or architecture was also very popular and again provided a good source of first hand research. The best, once again were highly articulate and very informative. Candidates had managed to relate what they had studied in their own environment to mainstream architectural movements, both from the past and more contemporary sources. Again good use had been made of candidates' own photographs and there were lots of careful studies of architectural features drawn in detail from first hand observation.

Less able candidates, whilst clearly expressing enthusiasm from their visits were unable to be selective or to make judgements over any visual aspects of their chosen buildings. These submissions read very much like a guide book in which every detail was described but without any personal reaction or analysis. There were also some very weak entries in which it was obvious that most of the information had simply been copied straight from a printed guide, complete with cut out or photocopied illustrations.

Many candidates had chosen to focus their research on studying craft techniques or certain processes. At their best these provided strong links with practical coursework, and the visual presentation of the studies was very often highly imaginative, inventive and full of practical examples done by the candidates, showing clear evidence that much had been learnt from such an engagement. Visits had been made to workshops or factories and much had been gained.

Weaker submissions tended to read like a technical manual with little or no reference to any visual or aesthetic analysis or evaluation.

The quality of illustrations was often unsatisfactory with an over-reliance on photocopied material cut and pasted on the page.

There were many examples of studies of "famous names" from the European nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or of major art movements. The best of these were well informed by visits made to major galleries or exhibitions; often during candidates' own holiday time or as a result of organised school visits. The benefits of such visits were quite clear as most submissions were full of personal views and reactions to what had been seen, expressed in an articulate and well focused manner.

Unfortunately these were very few in number. Most entries using this choice of subject tended to be unfocused and full of biographical or historical information gained from books or directly lifted from the internet.

Illustrative content varied enormously with lots of very poor digital reproductions when the actual photograph would have been better. There were many copies of famous paintings, some extremely skilful in reproducing the artist's style. This practical approach to looking at the work of other artists is perfectly acceptable, but it can be superficial if it does not go beyond the copying stage. There were seldom researches into the context of the artwork, meanings, reasons, background, comparisons, and candidates' personal reaction beyond liking or disliking.

This component is of equal weighting to the other more practical components of this examination but it does demand different skills from candidates. Whatever their respective levels of ability submissions should show evidence of being able to meet all the assessment objectives. Teachers should read carefully both the syllabus and the training booklet, particularly 'Advice to Teachers' on this component. Both the syllabus and booklet contain examples of proposal forms and Centres should adopt the use of these as well as structuring time during the course for the monitoring of candidates' research and progress throughout their study.