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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**



ART AND DESIGN

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

Grade thresholds taken for Syllabus 9704 (Art and Design) in the November 2005 examination.

	maximum mark available	minimum mark required for grade:		
		A	B	E
Component 1	100	75	67	37
Component 2	100	78	68	38
Component 3	100	80	70	48
Component 4	100	80	72	42

The thresholds (minimum marks) for Grades C and D are normally set by dividing the mark range between the B and the E thresholds into three. For example, if the difference between the B and the E threshold is 24 marks, the C threshold is set 8 marks below the B threshold and the D threshold is set another 8 marks down. If dividing the interval by three results in a fraction of a mark, then the threshold is normally rounded down.

Grade Thresholds are published for all GCE A/AS and IGCSE subjects where a corresponding mark scheme is available.

<p>Paper 9704/01 Controlled Test</p>
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General comments

Each section of the paper was widely used, with slightly more candidates choosing the open-ended themes from **Section A**, the most popular of which was **Question 4, Devastation**. For the specific starting points of **Section B**, the still life arrangement of **Question 7** attracted the largest number of responses for the whole paper. However, **Questions 12 and 13** from the specific design briefs of **Section C** were also very popular. In addition, Graphic Design specialists often developed their ideas from the open-ended starting points. Although some Photography, Printmaking and Three Dimensional work was seen, the majority of submissions were for Painting and Related Media.

Thorough investigation from distinct sources and sustained research from direct observation informed the recording, analysis and development of the most successful work. Personal evaluations were evident in the experimentation with media and processes and the exploration of ideas, leading to a controlled organisation of the relationships of visual elements for the examination pieces. Competent research was invariably apparent in work at the mid-levels of achievement, but the development of ideas was often limited by less concern for Aesthetic Qualities in terms of composition or design structures. The weaker submissions, however, offered minimal research from observation and tended to rely on reproducing existing images from secondary sources.

The majority of Centres ensured that the work was sensibly presented and well labelled before despatch. In some cases, though, the paper or card supplied for mounting exceeded the A1 size limit, defined in the syllabus, causing considerable problems for the scrutiny and handling of the work. Problems also arose when the sheets of work had become stuck together, usually because of the use of acrylic paints or oil varnishes. This can be avoided by sprinkling the work with a thin layer of talcum powder to prevent adhesions.

Comments on specific questions**Section A***Open-ended starting points***Question 1***Inside the machine*

Some excellent responses were seen for which a variety of sustained studies of machine parts had been developed inventively towards abstraction. Several of these employed relief techniques using aluminium, metallic card and wire to create lively surface qualities united by transparent overlays of paint. Many ideas at mid-levels of achievement sought to combine organic and machine forms and some focused on the human body as a machine itself. The less successful work seldom looked further than photographs of engines in car magazines and avoided addressing the concept of *inside*.

Question 2*Radiant*

The theme was very popular with a range of different ideas developed from a variety of sources at all levels of ability. The most successful submissions were based on thorough observation of particular light effects, whether cosmic, natural or artificial, which were often developed towards luminous colour abstractions. Mid-level responses tended to focus on human portraiture, making use of personal photography to capture the smiles of babies, children and loved ones. Sometimes spiritual wisdom in the elderly or religious icons led to sincere personal interpretations. However, many weaker attempts based on secondary sources were seen; some candidates, for example, tried to develop Pop Art images of glamorous people but lacked the necessary skills or understanding to manipulate images beyond slavish copying.

Question 3*Concave **and** Convex*

Although this was a less popular question in this section, several strong interpretations based on thorough observation of the human form were seen. The fact that a model had posed for life studies informed the manipulation of light and shade to convey both of the qualities required by the theme. At mid-levels of achievement objects with transparent or reflective surfaces and natural forms, such as shells or skulls, were competently analysed and recorded, but, although convexities were well controlled, concavities proved to be more challenging. Less able attempts were often predominantly linear and lacked observation of shadows to create form. Some work entirely unrelated to any particular sources, simply offered arbitrary spiral patterns.

Question 4*Devastation*

An awareness of the natural and man-made disasters which dominate world events led to many sincere and expressive responses to this theme. African, Indian and Asian personal experiences were consequently the focus for intense visual communication. Evidence of upheaval in built and coastal environments, population displacement and the spread of viral infections were a frequent source of investigation. Exploration of the affect on human emotions through a focus on faces and figure postures informed some very strong and evocative interpretations. Mid-level responses showed a genuine search and exploration of ideas to achieve competent results. In comparison, weaker work was inevitably limited by offering the usual imagery gleaned from horror comic and fantasy illustrations.

Question 5*Waterfront*

The most successful work was produced by candidates with easy access to ports, harbours, beaches and riversides which encouraged thorough direct observation, leading to painterly interpretations. Some well considered Graphic Design work for posters advertising holiday resorts was also seen. Mid-level responses were usually well informed by personal photography of specific places, but limitations were often apparent in spatial compositions. Many weaker attempts used secondary sources, such as postcards, travel brochures or the Internet; this was all too evident when the same images adopting identical viewpoints were seen in several candidates' work from the same Centres.

Question 6*Ready to go*

A variety of interpretations in the contexts of sports, hobbies, travel, birth, death and preparations for food or social occasions were seen. The better examples gathered enough suitable information to develop interesting compositional or design ideas. At mid-levels of achievement candidates often focused on the objects associated with a particular activity to create some success with still life arrangements of fast food, packed luggage or sports equipment. However, many less able attempts were received which depended on secondary information, particularly when depicting racing events.

Section B*Specific starting points***Question 7**

The still life group of flower stems arranged in a transparent container near an open ornate box overflowing with jewellery attracted a very large number of responses, the majority of which were of a competent to high level of achievement. The most accomplished work integrated the flowers and jewellery within the containers and the surrounding space through subtle rendering of shadows and the use of both transparent and opaque media. The analysis of structures was also sensitive, precise and meticulous. At mid-levels of ability a similar concern for the details of flower heads and jewellery was apparent, but the elliptical and volumetric structures of containers and boxes were less well understood or unrelated to the base plane and surrounding space. The weaker attempts for this question benefited from a focus on direct observation, achieving some merit by sustaining the study of surface qualities, even when the understanding of forms and structures was more limited.

Question 8

The still life group of an arrangement of protective clothing associated with a sport or an activity was less popular than **Question 7**. Several very able submissions were seen for which more abstract compositions had been developed by masking off large scale forms of pads, gloves and helmets while retaining a strong sense of structure and spatial relationships. Mid-level responses were motivated by the opportunity to study a selection of objects relating to personal interests, such as horse riding, motor cycle racing or scuba diving, but work at this level sometimes lost the sense of overall unity by focusing on separate objects in isolation. The fewer less able submissions for this question struggled to analyse forms or structures or render light and shade with colour and tone except in a generalised and repetitive way.

Question 9

The figure study pose of a person seated at a work station using a computer did not attract a large number of responses. The question is usually chosen by those who have coursework experience of direct observation of a model, which has led to outstanding results in previous years. This session the responses were more widely spread throughout the ability range. The best showed an impressive understanding of underlying anatomy which informed analysis of form, space and structure. Preparatory studies were particularly concerned to investigate hand positions in relation to the activity. Mid-level work offered a good sense of the proportions and form of the models but was less successful with the relationships to the surrounding space and the computer keyboard. Weaker submissions simply lacked the confidence to sustain observation, resulting in thin linear descriptions which were developed no further in terms of colour, light and shade or compositional ideas.

Question 10

The question was quite popular in some Centres and it was interesting to note that children's playgrounds contain very similar installations in different regions of the world. These brightly coloured structures were beautifully exploited by the most able candidates who often developed the most advanced abstract interpretations from their observations. Mid-level responses were based on thorough studies but compositional ideas seldom explored beyond a single viewpoint to record the site. Several less able attempts to create patterns from the structures of climbing frames and swings were seen, but the observational information was too weak to inform any potential development.

Question 11

Although few submissions were seen in response to the extract from Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things', all of them were interesting. Some achieved an impressive level of interpretation through intensive studies of particular places, the use of symbolism to transcribe the metaphors or the manipulation of colour and media to suggest the atmospheric nuances invoked by the text. Candidates choosing this question understood that a literal illustration of the extract should be avoided in favour of distinctly personal interpretations.

Section C*Specific design briefs***Question 12**

The menu cover for a seafood restaurant, named 'NEPTUNE'S CAVE', was the most popular question in this section. Several outstanding designs were seen for which extensive direct observation of fish and crustaceans encouraged inventive layout and integration with appropriate letterforms. At mid-levels of achievement, sensitive studies of seafood specimens were less well supported by a similar concern for lettering and sometimes the selection and control of colour or tonal relationships led to indistinct graphic communication. There was also a tendency to crowd too many elements together rather than focus on the most effective solution by developing the design ideas. The less successful designs were limited by inadequate preparatory research which inhibited any evaluations of ideas for layout. Letterforms were poorly defined and lacked integration with seafood images. Some of the weakest attempts offered no solution to the specific design problem by producing examination pieces on an excessively large scale with unrelated elements scattered across the surface.

Question 13

The repeat pattern design, based on the cross-sections of fruits and vegetables for the decoration of a domestic kitchen, was also chosen by large numbers of candidates. Similar to **Question 12**, the quality and thoroughness of observational research was directly linked to the development of the most successful designs. Such work demonstrated a full understanding of the figure-ground relationships of shapes and the positive-negative interlocking of colour and tone. At mid-levels of ability good research led to an appropriate selection and simplification of pattern motifs, but a tendency to be satisfied with one idea, rather than explore different possibilities, often led to more limited final designs which lacked dynamic or rhythmic vitality from linear, tonal and colour enrichments. Less able submissions, however, presented the most basic solutions by repeating images in parallel lines after scant investigations involving little more than tracings of magazine photographs.

Question 14

Only a few candidates submitted work for the fashion design brief but most achieved competent to high levels. The research of traditional regional costumes and styles successfully informed lively ideas which were well presented through sound figure drawing skills and use of materials.

Question 15

The packaging design brief attracted a good range of responses. The better submissions considered how carpenter's tools and the trade name 'GRIPFAST' could work across the three-dimensional planes of the packaging. Final pieces were well presented, showing the opened-out box as a flat design. Some mid-level ideas were competently developed using computer processes, although the consideration of colour and tonal relationships was the usual limitation of the final presentations. Weaker attempts offered images of poorly drawn tools transferred onto already existing packaging designs.

<p>Paper 9704/02 Coursework A</p>

General comments

It is pleasing to note that more Centres now understand the difference in emphasis between the two coursework components.

Although approaches vary enormously, at best there is an understanding that an interest in exploration and experimentation is valued for its own sake. The best courses showed that candidates had experienced a variety of media and processes, and this had provided a body of information from which to develop fresh new ideas. Teachers had appreciated and encouraged the inclusion of evidence of candidates taking risks and making mistakes. It is through such experiences that they develop the ability to evaluate their work in progress.

Many Centres are encouraging candidates to work through two or three projects across different areas of study, e.g. painting, design, sculpture, as a way of introducing a breadth and range of approaches.

The best entries also showed that skills in working from direct observation from first hand sources had not been neglected. Candidates had selected to work from natural forms, shells, plants, etc. still life arrangements. There was evidence of visits to interesting locations in their immediate environment and from which they could make drawings and take photographs. Many had chosen to work directly from the figure and had used family, friends and themselves as sources of first hand study.

Exposure to the work of artists and designers was also seen as an important part of many investigations in the search for new ideas. Visits to museums and galleries had been arranged so that candidates could appreciate the value of seeing works first hand and of motivating an interest for future investigations relevant to Component 4 Related Study.

When all these activities took place then candidates had access to the entire syllabus assessment objectives and evidence of their performance could be accurately rewarded.

Mid-range and weaker entries were much narrower in the range of work produced. An emphasis had been placed on producing finished pieces. Sometimes the same subject had been produced in two or three different media, e.g. paint, pencil, collage. There was very little further research, experimentation, or development.

Far too much work at this level had used secondary images from magazines or the Internet. An emphasis had been placed on technical skills in copying such material. Where references to the work of others or historical sources was used they had too often come solely from books or the Internet. Slavish copying of these works or long biographical notes does little to inform personal exploration or development.

Teacher assessments were very varied. The majority demonstrated a very good understanding of the syllabus requirements and assessment criteria. The syllabus guidelines on what evidence is expected at various mark levels had been consulted and used with sensitivity in marking their candidates' entries. In many cases, no changes were necessary in the moderating by CIE Examiners. However, some changes of 10%, 20% or even more had to be made. On a few occasions Moderators felt that teachers had been too harsh on their candidates and marks were raised.

Where Centres had submitted work from a number or different areas of study and which had been taught and initially marked by different teachers, then establishing a correct order of merit sometimes proved difficult. It is essential in such cases that some internal moderation takes place.

A few Centres are submitting entries which have not been marked.

Syllabus guidelines on organising and presentation of submissions are quite comprehensive and clear. However, some Centres are still ignoring this. Some very large canvases were submitted either rolled or folded. There was some work on metal sheeting, both rusted and new. There were very sharp and ragged edges which should be protected in some way to avoid injury. Some paintings were also sent in frames under glass which inevitably gets broken. This is very dangerous when packages have to be unpacked prior to moderation. Work should be allowed to dry thoroughly before despatch. This is particularly true of thickly applied acrylic, where although apparently surface dry, work will still stick together when under pressure in a heavy parcel. Centres should not underestimate the amount of time spent trying to rescue work of this type and, sadly, the extent to which it can become severely damaged.

Comments on specific areas of study

Painting and Related Media

This was by far the most popular area. The best work could genuinely be rewarded with very high marks since all of the assessment objectives had been understood and addressed with a confidence and maturity.

Sources from direct observation were very common, and this year there were many themes based around the human figure, especially the female form.

There was evidence of research through careful analytical drawings in a wide range of media. Mixed media and collage proved to be very popular and some beautiful experimentation appeared using painting and printmaking techniques, glazes and overlays. The ease and availability of digital photography means that many more candidates are able to collect visual information and also to record still life arrangements from different viewpoints and light sources. Many had also used these images as sources of collage and as starting points for over-painting and drawing.

Mid-range entries were still experimental but there was an emphasis on finished works rather than sheets of visual investigation and experimentation. Sometimes scale presented difficulties as candidates tried to produce much larger final works than their initial preparatory studies. Large scale compositional difficulties were encountered.

Weak entries relied too heavily upon using secondary source material. There was much evidence of attempts at copying from such imagery with little underlying knowledge of the basic language of form, structure, tone, texture, etc. At this level there are still too many examples of whole groups simply entering pieces of work made in response to set class exercises which do little to challenge individual and personal responses.

Printmaking

Some Centres are specialising in this medium and evidence of relief printing, stencil prints, and mono prints were seen. Other Centres are encouraging candidates to incorporate print methods with their experiments with painting and drawing techniques.

There were some excellent examples where mono prints had been used and over-drawn or painted. Similarly with stencil prints which had been employed to broaden the candidates' range of mark making and colour overlays.

There were some very good stencil prints in their own right, showing a very sound knowledge of the use of overlays of colour and image to achieve a rich and varied surface design. This was backed by careful analytical drawings of source imagery.

Less successful entries had gained sound technical skills but lacked attention to aesthetic detail or quality of design.

3D Design and Sculpture

Most entries from this area were supported with photographs of finished pieces and of work in progress. All benefited this year from better quality photographs, with many Centres now submitting images on CD-ROM. These gave views from many angles with a clarity which demonstrated more clearly their special qualities.

Examples were seen using clay modelling, plaster, metal and card construction. There was no carving or casting.

There was one excellent submission of a sheet metal maquette with some excellent working drawings demonstrating a full knowledge of materials and three dimensional awareness gained through personal experimentation and research into the work of other sculptors.

Unfortunately the majority of other entries were far less successful. There was little understanding of three dimensional form, with a failure to control the chosen medium. This was largely due to insufficient exploration in three dimensions, or a lack of visual information from which to develop 3D work. Many examples were simply trying to copy, into 3D, images from secondary illustrations such as birds or animals.

Graphic Design

Not very many Centres are specialising in this area. Of those who do results are very teacher-directed and often limited to the submission of one design project such as the design of a company logo. This was then used within a second project of a package design which was submitted as Component 3. This seemed a good strategy for design students but there must be enough evidence of a range of experimenting, and the chance for individual approaches to be developed in order to allow candidates access to all the assessment objectives.

Some illustration was submitted which was of a competent standard and showed an ability to adopt an experimental approach.

Some evidence of computer-generated material was submitted but with only limited success. There was an over reliance on computer software with little range of personal research or development. The very weakest work simply 'lifted' secondary images with little thought to the integration of lettering and image. Many of the finished results were overcomplicated and muddled.

Photography

About five Centres submitted entries for this area and it is pleasing to note that the standard has improved. The very weak work of previous years which had been severely over-marked by Centres was not seen this year.

There were some outstanding entries achieving results within the highest mark band. Ideas had been thoroughly explored with camera work, showing a very good knowledge of composition and use of lighting to both dramatise and to soften the subject. Further ideas and techniques were explored using a range of darkroom processes. References to other photographers' work also had a positive influence.

Mid-range entries had achieved competent levels of expertise. Good quality photographs were submitted but with limited evidence of exploration of chosen subjects, or of a range of experimental work.

Textile and Fashion Design

Work in fabric was wide-ranging with examples of painted fabric, stencil printed fabric, and silk screen printing to quite a high level of skill. All fabric pieces were colourful and displayed a strong sense of design, although often with very little relevant evidence of study from first hand sources to show development of ideas or themes. It was clear in some cases that the work had been copied from a photograph or magazine illustration.

Fashion illustration was of a competent level of ability in placing designs on figure drawings, but there were very few experiments, colour swatches or an understanding of fabric.

There were one or two submissions with too much emphasis on gaining technical competencies in dress making skills. These were not matched with a design aesthetic or the ability to research source ideas.

<p>Paper 9704/03 Coursework B</p>

General comments

Entries for this component were very varied. There were some excellent submissions demonstrating that candidates had gained much confidence from their work for Component 2. Themes and ideas had been thoroughly researched and an appropriate emphasis had been placed on the resolution of a final piece. Work at this level demonstrated a mature approach with a full knowledge of all of the assessment objectives. Candidates were able to express a personal sense of direction and demonstrate considerable independence and initiative.

Links between the subject chosen for Component 4 (Personal Study) were relevant and the influences of looking at how others have approached their choice of themes and handled media could be clearly seen.

Mid-level work was characterised by limited or poor research. Too much emphasis was placed on producing a number of finished pieces rather than focusing upon an in-depth exploration of a chosen theme before then developing an idea through to a conclusion.

Some candidates' work appeared to be noticeably weaker in some areas than work for Component 2. Their results appeared to be hurried. It was as if this component had been assembled at the last minute in an effort to fulfil the requirements of the syllabus.

Weak submissions displayed a recipe book approach, particularly to the preparatory work. Many pieces appeared to have been done after the final piece, and many candidates seemed to have taken longer over the mounting and presentation than in the production of the work.

Sketchbooks, with a few notable exceptions, were mostly trivial doodles or scrapbooks made up of the residue of the candidate's folder.

As with last year, teachers' marking for this component was generally more realistic. Once again, when the links between this component and Component 4 were clearly established, then marks awarded within the domain of Knowledge and Critical Understanding were much more relevant and accurate. There was an example where both components had been marked together with no distinction between the two. There were also a few Centres who are sending in submissions which are unmarked.

Clear guidelines are given within the syllabus, and in addition there is a CD-ROM available with some excellent exemplar material from all four papers, and at all ability levels.

Comments on specific areas of study*Painting and Related Media*

A wide variety of media was seen, and the best work had used this with confidence and sensitivity towards their subject matter. Many Centres encouraged a mixed-media approach. Surfaces were built up with collage, overprinted with mono print techniques, with further development continuing through drawing and over painting. The best had full control, and resulted in very lively compositions full of textural qualities. Their subject matter had derived from well-observed first hand studies from the landscape, still life, or human figure.

Other very successful entries had taken their own photographs and used computer manipulation techniques to develop ideas which were then carried through into paintings.

Mid-range work displayed plenty of evidence of good technical skills, which was matched by personal ideas; however, the range and depth of research was limited. A lot of work at this level tried to integrate relief techniques into their paintings, unfortunately without much idea as to why, or what they were trying to achieve. Many areas in relief were contradicting any sense of space or depth achieved through the use of conventional perspective.

Weak entries as usual tended to focus on careful copying techniques from secondary illustrations or photographs.

Many seemed to have lost their way and were unable to recognise or build upon their strengths from earlier work completed in Component 2.

Printmaking

Only a few entered for this option but all the results were of a very high standard. Candidates were following well-structured courses which encourage exploration of a range of processes. They were following independent areas of visual imagery which allowed them to explore and develop the potential of the medium into some very personal outcomes.

3D Design and Sculpture

Some of the most original and outstanding work came from this area. A series of beautifully modelled and decorated figurines, developed from research done for Component 4, showed that the nature of the subject had been thoroughly understood and personal ideas had been developed into mature conclusions. There was some equally original work using wire sculpture.

New to this paper were pieces of installation, clearly documented in a series of photographs. One was a totally original life-size reproduction in paper of the painting of Van Gogh's room (which had been the subject of this candidate's Personal Study). A second less successful installation again used a room, this time containing drawings directly on the walls with cut out life-size figures.

Some examples of architectural models were also submitted, but the photographs of the finished pieces were of such poor quality it was difficult to assess the levels of technical competence.

Graphic Design

Very few submissions, with nothing of distinction. Some had used images created for Component 2 and produced a second project integrating these images into package designs. Results here were generally better than for Component 2 as the candidates had been able to build upon earlier skills, although there was little which could be measured in the domain of Personal Qualities.

Photography

The general level of competence of entries ranged from good to outstanding. With this component there is more evidence of digital imagery and the use of colour, but candidates were aware of the need to demonstrate the development of their thinking associated with processes and software used.

There were some innovated and exciting final prints which went beyond the standard 8 x 10 format.

Most submissions provided sketchbooks or working notebooks, where reference to the work of other photographers, critical thinking and development of their own ideas were fully recorded and evaluated.

Textile and Fashion Design

Very few entries in this area. One Centre submitted work in batik with some excellent and ambitious work on a large scale. Their preparatory studies had also largely been done through batik, some with more success than others. However, this approach did allow all candidates to become involved in a process which instilled a sense of confidence which could be clearly measured in the work.

There was some very mediocre work using simple stencil prints on fabric with little exploration and no development.

<p>Paper 9704/04 Related Study</p>
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General comments

The Examiners noted some effective improvements in this paper this session, mainly at the mid-levels of achievement. The use of the Outline Proposal Forms to identify sources for first-hand investigation in relation to specific coursework themes helped to clarify and motivate intentions. More importantly, it was the guidance of teachers who encouraged a focus on selected works and relevant comparisons which clearly contributed to this progress.

However, some misunderstandings of the purpose of the component still persist. Many studies revealed that in certain Centres the candidates were instructed to submit a predominantly written paper, rather than an investigation which organises and presents an integration of both visual and written material. Some candidates, for example, believe that the study must be at least 3500 words in length to meet the demands of the syllabus, when the actual requirement is that it should not *exceed* this limit. It is perfectly possible, therefore, for a successful submission to consist of anything between 500 and 3500 words, providing it has an introduction, a conclusion and a bibliography. The Examiners feel that if candidates were made more aware of the potential for practical analyses of works they would develop a greater depth of investigation into the contexts, styles, themes and processes that interest them.

If teachers could aim to encourage more approaches in this direction their candidates would not be tempted to bolster their presentations with so much material from secondary sources. Lengthy biographies, chronological lists, questionnaires and unrelated or generalised European History of Art regurgitations attract very few marks. Candidates need to be made aware of the Assessment Objectives so that they can discuss with their teachers the best way to meet them, according to their abilities and personal interests. The study should be fostered and developed throughout the course in relation to practical experiences. If it is treated simply as a 'write-up' at the end of the course few of the aims and objectives can be achieved beyond a basic level. In the better submissions, for example, this component is often seen as the driving force behind the development of coursework and the Controlled Test.

Comments on various levels of achievement

A sustained interest and independent judgements supported by thoroughly planned visual presentation characterised the best submissions. First-hand investigations at specific sites, galleries, exhibitions and the studios of local practitioners informed the analysis of carefully chosen works in relation to coursework experiences. Comparisons made with mainstream or international examples researched from books or the Internet were always relevant to the theme of the investigation, leading to confident personal evaluations. Such studies invariably made use of double page spreads, employing both sides of the page, for exciting layout of a variety of illustrations, diagrams, practical analyses and photographic records of coursework integrated with the text, notations headings, titles and quotes.

While a competent ability to sustain research was generally apparent at the mid-levels of achievement, less concern for the structure, sequence, coherence and presentation of the studies was evident. Analyses of works often proceeded in separate self contained sections and rarely rose above descriptions or offered critical judgements in direct relation to coursework. Although substantial texts were produced, usually with IT processes in an A4 format, the notation of illustrative material was frequently neglected, leading to confusion in communicating to the Examiner about what was being referred to. A genuine interest in the chosen themes was discernible but candidates were inhibited from rising to a higher level of achievement by a reluctance to engage in practical studies of the works focused on. Misunderstandings were also apparent about identifying first hand experience of works in distinction to the use of secondary sources from books or the Internet.

At the lower levels of achievement, the work consisted of generalised studies of practitioners who had only tenuous links with each other or the candidates' own coursework. Consequently, extensive biographies of European artists or designers were regurgitated and the evidence of first hand investigation reduced to interviews with local practitioners, also focusing on their lives rather than on their work and influences. The selection and organisation of visual and written material tended to lack any sequential coherence. While most submissions at this level were literally thin, others were heavily bolstered with additional padding to give the impression of sustained effort, but when scrutinised were found to be equally sparse in content. Some candidates resorted to the practice of repeating the same information and illustrations, to cover up their lack of research. Lists cataloguing works and chronological date charts downloaded from the Internet often formed the greater part of the presentation. It was not unusual to find the same sources reproduced in studies by several candidates meant to be investigating completely different themes. Very little had been gained in terms of developing an awareness of visual art and personal evaluations in relation to coursework experiences were hard to find.