Moderator's Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary
GCE in Art and Design

Component 1 Personal Investigation
8AD0/8FA0/8TD0/8TE0/8PY0/8GC0

&

Component 2 Externally Set Assignment
8AD0/8FA0/8TD0/8TE0/8PY0/8GC0

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Introduction

This report is a comprehensive overview of the performance of candidates in the GCE Art and Design Advanced Subsidiary 2017 series and is compiled from observations made nationally and internationally by the whole assessment team.

It is important, therefore, that the practitioners who are delivering this qualification receive copies of it and examination officers in centres relay it immediately to the relevant personnel, as it may help to inform their procedures for the 2018 examination series.

In this specification, Centres can give their candidates the choice of:

- Completing a two year linear A Level, incorporating the AS level and using its work to supplement the A Level submission.

- Taking the stand-alone AS level at the end of the first year and then dropping it or change courses.

- Completing a full Linear A Level and not entering for AS at all (even though they may have started on an AS course).

- Completing an AS in either Year 12 or 13.

- Completing an AS over Year 12 and 13.

- Any combination of the above.

This year several of these approaches were seen, however, it appears that many centres have dropped AS altogether and are simply pursuing a two year A Level. Those that have chosen to do it are maintaining course structures that follow a similar pattern to those they delivered under the legacy specification. That is AS during Year 12 and then A Level in Year 13. There has been some evidence to suggest that the nature of the AS cohort has changed significantly and that the candidates being entered for AS have different motives to those in the past. This is only to be expected, as in the legacy qualification it was mandatory for all candidates to sit the AS qualification as a pre-requisite to A Level. Performance in the qualification this year is comprehensively outlined in the following Principal Moderators reports on their respective components.

As mentioned, each year it must be noted that the observations listed are generic and must not be seen as lists of criticism or praise for individual centres. They have been taken directly from the moderator's reports and collated and edited to avoid duplication. Single issues are not commented on, so the points raised have been made by several individual moderators from different National and International locations. They, therefore, form important trends that only need to be addressed if they are pertinent to your centre.

Feedback from the Principal Moderator's reports is invaluable in providing information for centre staff, to help them adapt and re-structure their course design and assessment strategies, embracing any developments or benefits of centre interpretations and delivery of the qualification.

Here are the observations apposite to each component, as reported by the Principal Moderators responsible for them.

Components 8AD0/01 – 8GC0/01

Component 1

Overview

AS level Personal Investigation, Component 1 is worth 50% of the qualification.

For this coursework component, candidates are required to:

- Generate practical work, ideas and research from sources.
- Explore media and processes, develop and refine ideas and present the outcome(s).
- Work from personal starting points.
- Create supporting studies and personal outcome(s).
- There is no requirement for a personal study at AS level.
- Practical outcome(s) and supporting studies are assessed together and the unit is marked out of 72.

Observations:

- The majority of Centres visited offered broad and balanced courses, often to develop good working practices and develop skills.
- Issues were seen when too tightly structured, formulaic courses were delivered; candidates were less prepared to complete Component 1, launch into Component 2 and generally develop their practical work independently.
- It was a common pattern within centres' approaches, where they treat the unit as a kind of link between GCSE and AS level and almost a mini foundation. This can lead to problems where centres pitch the content of the component at too low a level.
- Occasionally, the structured element of the course extended too far into the time allocated for this first component, which limited the degree to which candidates can explore their own artistic journey once the foundations of their AS work have been laid.
- Centres are sometimes frustrated by the candidates' lack of recording skills and the enrolment of candidates with poor observation skills presents challenges to course leaders.
- References to artists *found* on the internet are widespread and there is an alarming tendency for candidates to work from poor quality secondary images.
- Indiscriminate use of the internet seems to have, in some cases, replaced visits to galleries and exhibitions.
- In a few Centres, contextual references were 'given' to candidates, who made very few additional contributions to the 'prescriptive' starting points.
- 'Formulaic' approaches to researching contextual sources led students to produce a series of responses without succeeding in getting them

- to take ownership of the subsequent ideas, producing predictable outcomes veering towards pastiche.
- In some Centres, it is difficult to find the individual when moderating; moderators finding it difficult to see how some centres had given different marks across the sample, when the work lacked any individuality.
- Moderators are reporting seeing more drawing as recording and photography is being deployed as an additional tool, rather than a replacement.
- Moderators found that there is still more of a focus on copying, as opposed to drawing, from primary sources and the value of expressive mark making is sometimes lost to the process of reproducing a photo-realistic rendering.
- Assessment was seen to indicate that candidates are performing to a similar overall standard, as in previous years.
- Moderators often found that centres are still pitching the marks too high, slightly over the grade boundaries of last year, and often at one or two performance levels above where they should be.
- Coursework themes were, in most cases, appropriate, interesting and challenging. Often, historic ESA themes had been used as starting points to positive ends.
- Courses were constructed in many cases showing a real understanding of the process-based nature of the Specification and always enabled candidates to address the assessment objectives to the best of their ability.
- There is indeed a wide variation in how centres engage their students for this Component. Some centres are now looking keenly at the Edexcel online exemplar material and re-using the featured artists.
- Overall, the number of centres offering the AS has fallen and there are less centres offering AS Photography.
- It was evident that centres valued the use of sketchbooks, or journals, in developing a candidate's ability to generate ideas. Large study sheets and outcomes were also being used effectively.
- Moderators are reporting that they are seeing more digital drawings and digital portfolios, even at AS level and for the Fine Art title.

Components 8AD0/02 – 8GC0/02

Component 2

Overview

Component 2 is worth 50% of the qualification

The theme for Component 2 this year was 'Structures'.

Candidates are required to submit preparatory work and the final outcome(s) for this Component.

The timed period for the completion of the final outcome is 10 hours.

Observations:
- Moderators reported that the theme was well received and was very effective in eliciting a wide range of diverse personal responses.
- It was observed that where students were all given the same artists to explore at the start of the Component, work tended to be more formulaic, despite the possibilities of the exam theme.
- Moderators noted that it was not until students started to develop their ideas for final outcomes that the work became more personal and inventive.
- Some centres direct candidates to analyse the work of countless other artists loosely connected with the theme, moving on to their own work with no further references to any of these.
- Many centres use a 'systematic factory approach', which leads to a narrow range of ideas, materials and processes.
- Moderators reported research consisting of collections of random downloaded photographs – so wide ranging that they lead nowhere.
- Pinterest seems to be more and more popular each year, with very little selection taking place and some candidates even commenting that they have no idea who the artist is on the image they have selected and the analysis consisting of a simple statement, such as 'they like it'.
- It was also noted that candidates continue to rely on secondary imagery for their sources, with very little (if any) development and/or refinement.
- Several moderators observed that there seems to be an unspoken rule that each student has to do a minimum of 3 ideas at great length. Suddenly, the exam is upon them and they end up with no real development – they have no option but to take one of the ideas and reproduce it on a bigger scale.
- Some candidates decide that they don't like any of their ideas and come up with something totally new – such as a photograph loosely connected to the theme that they then copy.
- Stronger students may have a few ideas in mind at the beginning, but then they quickly choose which one is the most suitable and run with it – linking and learning from appropriate artists as they move

- through their development. The final outcome is well considered and builds on skills developed during Component 1.
- Timing is a key factor for this Component. Moderators report a huge discrepancy in the amount of work seen for Component 2. Although more work does not necessarily correlate with higher marks, it usually means that there has been very little time for exploration and development. I have even seen students with 6 or 7 ideas to begin with and a body of work produced for each of these ideas but no indication of review and refinement.
- Elaborate brainstorms still take up huge amounts of time that could be better spent on true analysis of artists and genuine experimentation linked to their personal focus. Some centres encourage their candidates to decorate pages and write the theme title on the top of each page with extensive use of pencil crayon and glitter.
- Moderators have reported that final outcomes have been varied, with many being very large or over ambitious.
- Many candidates were seen to cope with scale and ambition very well, however, those that had not planned or practised large pieces struggled considerably with large pieces, displaying their weaknesses rather than their strengths.

General Assessment Observations

Now that this qualification has notional grade boundaries established by the 2016 series, assessment is returning to a similar pattern as that found in the legacy qualifications. That is that many centres are guided by these notional grade boundaries for their assessments, rather than using the recommended highly effective tools available to them. These tools are the online marked exemplars and the performance calculators.

Centres placing their marks slightly above the notional grade boundaries in the aim of establishing pre-determined grades for their candidates were more frequently adjusted by moderators than those following the proper guidelines and using the assessment tools provided. This is because moderators are now trained using exactly the same tools and exemplars as those publicised. There is now total transparency and those centres that followed the guidelines accurately needed little adjustment. Those that did not still required the moderators to make adjustments, some of these substantial in certain cases. These new tools are now empowering the moderators to apply the National Standards with rigour, fairness and consistency.

It is very reassuring in the early days of this qualification to see those centres who are marking accurately, and moderators who are diligently applying the standards, rewarded with stable and realistic grade boundaries. This was the target of the examining team and is key to maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

Summary

As can be seen from the individual reports above, the Advanced Subsidiary qualification continues to be implemented with enthusiasm and great success. It has immense value in establishing a solid foundation for the full Advanced Level or standing alone as a highly valued qualification in its own right.

Last year, I made the point below and would like to re-iterate it again, as it is sad to see so many portfolios of work abandoned and left at centres at the end of these courses.

One point to note is the importance of the actual body of work is often overlooked in the struggle to achieve a successful grade. However, most of the candidates finish at the end of AS with remarkable portfolios regardless of their results. These portfolios present a valuable insight into the candidate's ability to expand and develop ideas, as well as visually and analytically evaluate the world around them. Presentation of these portfolios at any interview is guaranteed to enhance the chances of the prospective candidates and give insight into their potential. It is important that they recognise the value of these assets and retain them.

The examining teams continue to be impressed by the hard work and endeavour put into these portfolios and it is one of the perks of examining that we witness these annually. Candidates are often their own worst critics and forget that a pass grade at AS or A Level level is a substantial achievement.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:
http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx