



**General Certificate of Secondary Education**

**Art and Design**

**3201-3206, 3211**

**Report on the Examination**

*2007 examination – June series*

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## **GCSE Art and Design (3201-3206, 3211)**

### **General**

Moderators reported that 2007 has been a good year, with many candidates producing exciting and innovative work, having followed well structured and well delivered courses. Candidates varied from the least able to the highly talented. Many centres catered for the full ability range, while others dealt with candidates in difficult or challenging circumstances. As in previous years the majority of centres entered candidates for the Unendorsed examination, but Fine Art continued to be very popular and a good number of centres offered other endorsements. Entries for Graphic Design, Textiles and Photography in particular, continued to grow. Interestingly, the majority of new Photography courses offered candidates the opportunity to work in both traditional wet-process photography as well as digital, with some centres setting up new darkrooms, despite the trend towards new media practice. Where centres chose to offer a course in a specialised area, some particularly impressive in-depth responses from candidates were seen.

Standardisation Meetings were praised by teachers for their effectiveness, as was the display of candidates' work that exemplified national standards for both centres and moderators. The meetings offered real help and guidance to teachers on ways of working, coverage of requirements, attainment and standards. Many teachers were interested in the notes and sketchbooks that supported the displays, demonstrating approaches to the assessment objectives in a cohesive form. Reminder Notes (photographs of the work, with commentaries, published on the AQA Website) from previous years were also used by teachers to clarify standards.

In this the fifth year of the examination, moderators noted evidence of candidates' achievements across the whole ability range. It is clear that the majority of teachers are now extremely familiar with the specification's requirements, including the assessment objectives. Most centres enable candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding when addressing the assessment objectives in both components of the examination. Internal assessments were, in the main, broadly in line with AQA standards and only in a minority of cases did moderators recommend adjustments to centres' proposed marks.

Most centres carried out administrative procedures thoroughly and on time, including meeting the deadline for submission of Centre Mark Forms to both AQA and the moderator, careful presentation and labelling of candidates' work, and presentation of the required documentation on the day of moderation. As a result moderators frequently reported on the pleasure of arranging and carrying out visits to centres, where they were warmly welcomed.

The use of ICT, particularly digital photography, increased again this year. Candidates of all abilities used digital photography increasingly as an invaluable tool for recording first-hand experiences. The internet was also used extensively by many candidates in their research into the work of other artists. However, as in previous years, candidates needed to be very focused and selective in their searches, as well as demonstrating that they had understood the context of the information they had gathered. Merely downloading printed copies of this information into their work does not help candidates to assimilate those aspects that may inform their own developments. Where candidates used this kind of research successfully, using annotation and other forms of investigation to explore the work of others fully, their own work was enriched and expanded.

## **Coursework**

Many moderators commented on the rich variety of materials, techniques and processes used, with candidates working in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional media. From the evidence seen, teachers had clearly aimed to enable their candidates to achieve their full potential. Digital photography was seen as an invaluable tool for gathering first-hand experiences, although this was sometimes at the expense of drawing. There was considerable evidence of the use of programs such as Adobe Photoshop in the manipulations being applied to these images. It was felt by some moderators that there was a danger of this becoming too mechanistic and predictable, at the expense of more individual and creative thinking.

Sketchbooks were used extensively in some centres, while in others candidates submitted work on individual sheets. Primary source drawings featured effectively in the strongest courses of study. Observations, collections of ideas, research, opinions and developmental sketches were seen, alongside digital imagery and the use of new technologies, to trial samples and colour ways. There was a good balance between the use of digital photography as a method of instant recording and the use of sketching/drawing and mind maps as starting points. More centres also tried less linear approaches and used critical references as starting points or materials based work and built assignments for Coursework around these.

Some centres used tried and tested ways of working, with most candidates from these centres appearing to have little scope for personal exploration and response. Moderators reported that where centres set the same Coursework themes every year, predictable and rather dull outcomes emerged. Consequently, much of the work looked the same and it was difficult to reward originality or diversity. Other moderators reported that it was sometimes difficult to assess work where each page of a set of sketchbooks was identically laid out, coloured and formatted.

The increasing trend towards submitting only two units of Coursework continued this year, although some candidates submitted three or four units. Centres that built on Entry Level Certificate submissions from the previous year added to them and did the Controlled Test to conclude the course. The quality of presentation was generally high, although moderators reported instances of un-mounted and disorganised sheets of work being submitted. Many centres that were visited had clearly taken great care in the display and presentation of their candidates' work.

Many centres had used the starting points on previous Controlled Test question papers as the basis for some of their Coursework. Each unit usually addressed all the assessment objectives and many were exciting, imaginative and exploratory, allowing candidates to investigate sources, artists, cultures, materials and methods with a growing understanding of the creative process and their own ability. Much research was contained in sketchbooks, some of which were wonderful records of a journey of discovery, while others were little more than scrap books of magazine cut-outs.

## **Controlled Test**

Moderators commented that the question papers had been well received by the majority of centres, but that there was some criticism of the accessibility of a few of the named artists. The questions on Classical Art and Russian Art were the least popular on all question papers. Surprisingly, the question on Recycling was also unpopular in many centres, despite the topicality of the theme. As in previous years submissions tended to reflect the understanding that candidates displayed in their Coursework. Where they had followed a well-structured course that enabled them to explore a range of media and responses, candidates were often

able to produce very imaginative and personal outcomes. More formulaic responses were seen in centres that tended to restrict candidates' freedom in their Coursework.

One centre had directed all candidates to answer one particular question only. Preparatory studies were almost identical and the only real difference in the work was the ability of the candidates to come up with an abstract design and to use colour effectively. However, many centres encouraged candidates to work in the true spirit of the examination by preparing them well and allowing them to make their own choices from the Controlled Test paper.

Some centres used engaging contemporary references from local exhibitions, and candidates often responded with great personal success. Innovative and personal interpretations were made of Controlled Test questions in all the endorsements. In most centres Controlled Test work reflected the knowledge, skills and understanding that had been gained during the candidates' course of study. Work carried out during the four weeks of preparatory time had clearly informed final pieces produced in the subsequent supervised ten hours of the examination, in which candidates had to work independently. However, a small number of moderators noted cases where the quality of work carried out by candidates during the four weeks preparatory time had been so poor as to leave them with insufficient confidence to do work independently during the ten hours of supervised time.

## **Administration**

Overall, most moderators reported improved administration, but there were some centres where this was not the case. Some centres did not send the correct Centre Mark Forms or copies of the Area Moderation Mark Sheet to moderators. Teachers must ensure that separate Candidate Record Forms are completed and signed by candidates for both Coursework and the Controlled Test. Coursework Advisers are available via telephone or e-mail for centres to contact for advice. Centres have been advised of their Coursework Adviser but can contact the AQA Art Department if they do not have the details.

## **Area Moderation Meetings**

Area Moderation Meetings were highly praised, with teachers finding them hard work but a good opportunity to meet colleagues and a valuable form of INSET. A considerable variety of work was presented by different centres at these meetings with clear evidence of well-structured courses, which were suited to the demands of the specification. Some very lively debate ensued in some meetings, with discussions taking place about the assessment objectives and the marking criteria. Work was presented in a mixture of sketchbooks and mounted sheets. Meetings were held in good venues with plenty of space. Information and an application form for Area Moderation Meetings are sent to all centres in the autumn term with the Examinations Update. No response results in a visit from a moderator, so centres need to be proactive if they wish to be involved in an Area Moderation Meeting.

## **Teacher Standardisation Meetings**

Teachers reported that the sets of work presented at this year's Standardisation Meetings were the best examples of work seen so far at these meetings. Marking continued to be more accurate because of teachers' attendance at the meetings and their understanding of the assessment objectives has grown. Problems with centre marking could often be explained by non-representation at a meeting. Teacher Standardisation Meetings will take place in the spring term of 2008 and information will be published on the Event Booking page of the AQA Website.

## **Assessment and Moderation**

Teacher Standardisation Meetings have clearly helped teachers to gain a good understanding of the assessment objectives. In many centres the marking was generally accurate, although in some cases centres tended to under mark their lowest achieving candidates. In others the Controlled Test was over marked, despite inadequate evidence to justify the marks, suggesting that the teachers were influenced by what they knew these candidates could achieve based on their Coursework. There were no major problems reported with regard to teacher assessment, with the exception of occasional evidence of a lack of internal standardisation. Teachers worked very hard to ensure fairness for all their candidates and they welcomed moderators into their centres, making the process as smooth as possible. Work, whether placed in folders or mounted for display, has generally been presented clearly. There were a few exceptions, with work too high on wall displays, or the wrong names on samples, but this was easily rectified. Moderators commented on the considerable pressure teachers felt to achieve high grades. In some centres this led to slightly generous marking. A number of schools found marking and internal standardisation difficult, with no non-contact time for marking or standardisation. However, centres do need to be commended for the commitment of Art staff. Many gave hours of after school time to run extra sessions and to mark work. In many centres art teachers commented that they taught the most difficult candidates in the centre, but delivered some of the best A\* – C grades.

## **Assessment Objectives**

In the best courses the specification was used as a framework in which candidates' own creative needs were met. Similarly, the assessment objectives were interpreted in such a way as to provide flexibility and encourage individual responses. Although the assessment objectives were generally applied accurately, there were examples of over marking of AO1 and AO3, in particular, noted by moderators. As already mentioned, the use of digital photography as a recording device for AO1 has become very widespread, but some teachers did not distinguish between the good and the mediocre images when awarding marks for this type of work. A few teachers were over influenced by quantity rather than quality when candidates used drawing, in some cases awarding marks in the top mark bands for work that demonstrated very limited recording skills. Similarly with AO3, if a candidate had explored a wide range of media they were sometimes awarded much higher marks than were justified, even where there was little or no evidence of development or reviewing and modifying. However, in many centres the quality of investigation, development and exploration was of a high standard and the marks awarded were fully justified. The lowest attaining candidates in a few centres were sometimes given zero marks for assessment objectives, when evidence suggested that some marks could have been awarded.

## **Assessment Objective 1**

Many centres retained a strong emphasis on good drawing skills at the core of their teaching, where candidates had often produced superb observation work that made it easy for them to achieve high marks in AO1. However, as already noted, there has been continued growth in the use of digital photography as a method for recording observations, often at the expense of conventional drawing. It was clear from reports by moderators that these digital images were often over marked, with centres frequently giving more value to mediocre photography than was justified by the evidence. Where centres had under marked this assessment objective it was often as a result of failing to take account of other kinds of recording that candidates may use, many of which are less easy to identify than observational drawing.

Some candidates used too much secondary source material. This often amounted to sheet after sheet of cut out images from magazines that were frequently not relevant to the work at hand. Originality and personal expression in the final piece often suffered because of this approach. On the other hand, some excellent recording and analysis, using a variety of techniques, was seen this year. Higher attaining candidates provided clear evidence of first-hand recording.

## **Assessment Objective 2**

An improvement in the overall response to this objective was noted this year. Candidates often chose less obvious artists whose work truly related to their own to study. Gallery visits were also encouraged as a way of addressing the objective; there was evidence of visits to museums including Tate Britain, Tate Modern, The British Museum and galleries in New York. The growing use of artists in residence encouraged more individuality in outcomes. Higher attaining candidates often made good use of annotation to explain their thinking and visual analysis.

Less able candidates relied on numerous downloaded images which did not always provide evidence of understanding of the work of others or establish relevant links with personal themes. Some candidates just included one or more photocopied examples of artists' work, with biographical facts, printed out from the internet or copied from books. It is vital that a distinction is made between simply downloading and re-presenting visual and written information and actual developmental practice.

Some excellent work was seen where critical studies were clearly integrated into projects. There seemed to be a more fluid use of AO2 with candidates using the opportunity to establish connections rather than adding on references. The best work included studies of brushwork, composition, symbolism and style with thoughtful comments and suggestions on how to use themes within personal projects. Much of the marking in this objective was either accurate or fairly close to the standard. The work used in the Teacher Standardisation exhibition this year demonstrated the range of approaches that could be used to satisfy this assessment objective, ranging from the purely visual to extensive written annotations. Where candidates adopt a visual approach, possibly through the use of copies of selected areas of an artist's work, or a visual exploration that uses a similar approach to their chosen artist, the evidence must be clear and explicit. Written analysis and evaluation needs to be in the candidate's own words, demonstrating their understanding of the context. All too often, candidates downloaded material from the internet and used it in their preparatory work without any evidence of this understanding.

This assessment objective covers a much wider range of material than just the work of other artists. Candidates' analysis and evaluation of their own work is equally valuable and is sometimes overlooked in the marking process.

## **Assessment Objective 3**

Where candidates were encouraged to explore ideas and to investigate a wide range of media and processes, this assessment objective was relatively straightforward to apply. In some instances, however, moderators noted a tendency for centres to award marks for the quantity and range of exploration as opposed to its quality. The wording of the assessment criteria grid is quite clear about how to differentiate between these, with its use of key words such as "minimal understanding" through to "discriminating use of media".

Candidates have been encouraged to use a variety of strategies, such as sketchbooks and developmental sheets, to present their work for this assessment objective. While it was usually

clear where the candidate had satisfied the first part of the assessment objective, it was often much more difficult to see evidence of the review, modification and refining, and this aspect was often over marked on the basis of inadequate evidence. Some candidates documented these stages, particularly of three-dimensional work, in the development of final outcomes using digital photography, which helped to provide some of this evidence.

Much work was exciting, with candidates having been given the opportunity to explore different media and processes. In some centres this tied in with the work of visiting artists, such as a potter, printmaker or textile artist, providing the opportunity to discover new materials. Able candidates provided ample evidence of the review and modification of ideas, designs and intentions. Teachers were familiar with the variety of approaches to this assessment objective and encouraged candidates accordingly. Digital imagery was again used to explore colour options and to manipulate arrangements. It was pleasing to see so many candidates taking their Photoshop generated images back into painting and recording the stages of development. Scanning and manipulating personal drawings and paintings was much more valuable to a number of candidates than the manipulation of a single photograph.

Several moderators commented that some candidates provided an excessive amount of written review and modification. While in some cases this helped candidates to work out how to extend themes it should not be used as a substitute for visual study and investigation. A number of moderators also remarked that media was restricted in some cases due to limited resources. Some excellent and truly innovative experimentation could be seen in the best candidates' work. Lower attaining candidates usually offered only token evidence of media work, which bore little relation to the development of the final piece. However, there were many candidates who vigorously explored materials and thoroughly reviewed and modified their work.

#### **Assessment Objective 4**

Some highly original and personal final pieces were seen – mainly in the mid to high mark ranges. A number of candidates produced copies of artists' work with a few minor changes. In some cases it was difficult to recognise a relationship between preparatory studies and final outcomes. Moderators saw a wide variety of outcomes ranging from large-scale paintings on canvas and board, through to sculpture, photography and animation. The majority of candidates clearly demonstrated a personal response, but the issue of "making informed connections with the work of others" was more difficult to identify in some work. Lower attaining candidates often resorted to a pastiche of their chosen artist, or made little or no attempt to make any connection. However, where candidates had thoroughly explored the work of other artists in their preparatory studies, there was often clear evidence of the journey they had followed, and the connections could be seen either in the final work itself or in the way it had evolved.

Moderators saw some really exciting personal responses on a variety of themes and scales. There was clear enthusiasm and much good practice with candidates engaged in creative learning and artistic self expression. On occasion technical skills increased the impact of final pieces and some interesting links were established with the work of others. In several instances challenging themes were explored and a number of candidates used their art work to positively re-visit difficult experiences or to respond to personal concerns. Moderators reported that even in the lower mark bands there were examples of worthy study with personal outcomes resulting from well taught courses.



Please see the separate Reports on each of the GCSE Art and Design endorsements for more detailed information:

GCSE Art and Design (Unendorsed) Coursework 3201/C  
GCSE Art and Design (Unendorsed) Controlled Test 3201/T

GCSE Art and Design (Fine Art) Coursework 3202/C  
GCSE Art and Design (Fine Art) Controlled Test 3202/T

GCSE Art and Design (Graphic Design) Coursework 3203/C  
GCSE Art and Design (Graphic Design) Controlled Test 3203/T

GCSE Art and Design (Textiles) Coursework 3204/C  
GCSE Art and Design (Textiles) Controlled Test 3204/T

GCSE Art and Design (Three-Dimensional Design) Coursework 3205/C  
GCSE Art and Design (Three-Dimensional Design) Controlled Test 3205/T

GCSE Art and Design (Photography) Coursework 3206/C  
GCSE Art and Design (Photography) Controlled Test 3206/T

GCSE Art and Design (Short Course) 3211