



# **General Certificate of Secondary Education**

## **Art and Design**

**3201-3206, 3211**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2008 examination – June series*

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*Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.*

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

### **General**

Moderators reported that the 2008 series of GCSE Art and Design had once again been a very successful one with positive experiences for candidates of all abilities noted. Work seen across the endorsements evidenced individuality and variety, with seamless coverage of assessment objectives featuring prominently in many submissions. The majority of candidates had followed well devised courses.

In this, the sixth year of the examination, moderators again assessed work from candidates across the whole ability range from a wide variety of centres. Many submissions evidenced genuine engagement with and enjoyment of the learning experiences offered.

It remains the case that the majority of centres enter candidates for the Unendorsed option, with Fine Art continuing to be very popular. Many candidates also benefit from courses in Graphic Design, Textiles, 3D Design and Photography, particularly when they are supported by subject specialists and can make use of appropriate specialist facilities.

Teacher Standardisation meetings were again very well received and provide vital exemplification of established AQA standards. It was reported that internal assessment was broadly in line with AQA standards, but there were still cases of under-marking of candidates at the lower end of the mark scheme and evidence of over-marking of candidates at the upper end of the mark scheme.

With a few exceptions, administration procedures were carried out efficiently and in good time by centres. Centres invariably prepared well for moderators' visits and many took a great deal of time and trouble to exhibit or display work in folders in an easily accessible manner for the purpose of moderation. Documentation was on hand for the moderator's arrival and a warm welcome was given.

Digitally based practice continues to feature more prominently in submissions, at times with great effect, both as a stimulating tool for candidates and as an effective means of initial recording of ideas and observations. The use of the Internet as a research vehicle and means by which to resource ideas continues to grow and proved to be a very successful tool for many candidates, when accompanied by thorough personal evaluation of images accessed and appropriate acknowledgement of sources.

### **Coursework**

It was noted this year that the majority of candidates sampled had completed two main units of coursework rather than three or four, with teachers continuing to work hard to offer well structured assignments, sometimes born out of past Controlled Test papers or good practice seen at Standardisation meetings. Some centres still successfully encourage candidates to produce more than two units, often as a result of the need to break down work into smaller, more focused areas for less able candidates, but also in order to extend the most able candidates by broadening their experiences of media and techniques.

Moderators reported that coursework activities had continued to build on previous good practice, with centres opening up their courses to encompass a far greater range of innovative examples in the breadth of media, materials and working practices seen. This was evident across all endorsements and was testimony to the dedication of teachers in providing their

candidates with the best possible experiences that they can offer. In contrast, though, some centres continue to restrict these experiences by simply re-presenting the same assignments year on year.

Some of the best units observed originated from visits to galleries and museums, or engagement with artists in residence, with candidates being able to engage with exciting and enriching contemporary and historical art, craft and design practices. Others stemmed from design briefs based on specific themes aimed at engaging the candidates in all of the assessment objectives. This in turn encouraged structured study and a balance between research and investigation, exploration of materials and techniques, and the development of skills towards a securely realised personal response.

Sketchbooks, journals and visual diaries continue to feature as important and positive elements in the submissions of many candidates and may be viewed as major outcomes in their own right. One moderator reported that they can be seen as “both a candidate’s souvenir of their teenage artistic experience and a lesson in how one might record experiences throughout life”. For some, however, sketchbooks continue to be little more than a scrapbook of unrelated cut-out magazine images that neither inform nor enhance the journey of the work in progress.

“Digital cameras are everywhere” reported one moderator, illustrating a trend that they are being used more widely in the process of GCSE Art and Design than ever before. At times this is to excellent effect. Candidates are recording with immediacy and where careful selection and manipulation of imagery has taken place, results confirm the value of the digital camera. For example, it has proved invaluable in some options for recording the process of a technique in progress or transient subject matter. However, some candidates have used digital cameras as their only means of “recording” and this may not always fulfil assessment requirements.

### **Controlled Test**

Moderators generally reported that all Controlled Test question papers had been received enthusiastically by centres, with the overall opinion that “there was something for everyone”, regardless of ability. There was also a feeling in some centres that this year’s questions were more wide ranging and accessible than ever before and that they related particularly well to young people. Named practitioners continue to be a point of discussion, with the majority of centres praising their inclusion and welcoming the diversity on offer. In general, centres continue to appreciate the familiarity of the format and the range of alternatives offered by each endorsement.

In one instance, though, there was criticism of the level of language employed and its suitability for less able candidates. However, centres do receive the papers in advance of the test period so that teachers can prepare candidates for the challenges and opportunities presented. Some teachers choose to write “assignments” in support of the questions to assist less able candidates with their choices, and others give guidance on suitable choices to ensure that all candidates are well catered for. Some centres restrict candidate choices, but it is not in the spirit of the examination to deny candidates access to the full range of questions on offer.

Very few centres raised a concern about the suitability and appropriateness of some work of one or two of the artists referenced in some of the controlled test papers. AQA takes very seriously its responsibility towards this and is very aware of the problems that might arise as a result. However, many centres inform us that they believe that the benefits from having artists referenced in the papers far outweigh any potential disadvantage of not doing so. They have indicated to moderators that they believe they share with AQA this responsibility in doing all that

we can jointly to see that no candidate is put in the position of seeing work that is unsuitable or upsetting to them. AQA is committed to doing everything it can to achieve this.

Successful Controlled Test submissions shared some common characteristics. They invariably built effectively upon sound coursework foundations where candidates had been well taught and familiarised with all the requirements of the assessment objectives. In consequence, they had been able to work to their strengths and approach their choice of question with confidence and purpose. Preparatory work evidenced an understanding of the need to develop ideas in response to clearly considered starting points, through confident evaluations and a sustained review of work in progress with refinements positively informed by engagement with the work of others. Many candidates met the demands with vigour and excitement, and responses were imaginative, wide ranging and personal.

For others, it proved to be a difficult challenge, where a lack of independence in personal study made the demands of specified time for preparatory work and ten hours of unaided work hard to cope with. As a consequence, moderators reported that some candidates faced the Controlled Test with little or no support work or referenced ideas from which to produce their own personal responses and as a result did not always fulfil all four assessment objectives.

The continued thematic approach across the endorsements is welcomed by centres that enter candidates in more than one area since this makes resourcing of questions more effective.

## **Administration**

Comments in moderators' reports ranged from "excellent" to "serious errors" in the administration processes this year. Some centres completed and sent accurate paperwork to the relevant addresses in good time. There were cases, though, of centres where the Centre Mark Forms sent to AQA and to the moderator differed significantly from the marks recorded on the Candidate Record Forms attached to coursework and test samples. Other problems arose from centres not sending their marks off early enough for them to arrive by the deadline of May 31<sup>st</sup> which delayed their receipt of the chosen sample. (It is important to remember to send the top copy of the Centre Mark form to AQA and the pink and yellow copies to the moderator for this sampling to take place. The yellow copy is then returned to the centre with the sample indicated). There were very few instances this year of unsigned Candidate Record Forms and Centre Declaration sheets were almost all completed and signed in preparation for the moderator's arrival.

Coursework advisors, allocated to each centre, are on hand to assist with advice and course related queries. They can be contacted by telephone or e-mail, and AQA will forward advisor details to any centres that do not have this information.

## **Teacher Standardisation Meetings**

This year's round of Teacher Standardisation Meetings was again met with appreciation from all those in attendance. The quality of samples exemplifying Coursework and Controlled Test marks were reported to be very effective and the variety of work presented was "highly acclaimed" by one of the teachers who viewed it, allowing her to "accurately pitch" marks in her own centre with reference to the associated Reminder Notes. Where discrepancies between AQA established standards and internal judgements were identified, it was often as a result of the centre's non-attendance at Teacher Standardisation for a number of years. Teacher Standardisation meetings will take place in the spring term of 2009 and information will be published on the Event Booking page of the AQA website.

## **Assessment and Moderation**

The accuracy of internal assessment this year reflected a number of factors such as: attendance at Teacher Standardisation; effective internal standardisation and cross moderation between the teachers involved, familiarity with the assessment objectives and associated marking criteria and awareness of potential differences between the candidate's Coursework and Controlled Test performances.

Some moderators reported excellent practice, with centres closely in line with AQA standards and all assessment procedures carried out with integrity and fairness for all candidates. In contrast, though, there was evidence of inaccuracies due to lenient marking. In such cases, the centre was deemed to have been overly influenced by Coursework performance when assessing the Controlled Test response with discrepancies noted between marks proposed and the statements of attainment represented in the Assessment Criteria. On other occasions centres were inclined to undervalue the work of candidates in the lower mark ranges and overvalue the work of candidates in the middle to high ranges.

Moderation visits and area meetings highlighted evidence of excellent presentational practice that celebrated the achievements of all the candidates sampled. Moderators were met with courtesy and teachers were helpful in explaining their particular courses, circumstances and related issues. Moderators appreciate the amount of hard work that teachers put into the marking and internal standardisation necessary prior to the submission of marks, much of which is carried out at evenings and weekends without time allocated during the school day.

Work was generally very well labelled, easily accessible and efficiently organised to allow for effective and thorough moderation to take place and in most cases a quiet, uninterrupted environment was provided. In a few instances, moderators reported that they were provided with an unsuitable area in which to moderate, where work was inaccessible and that were disturbed by noise and interruptions. Centres should ensure that work is displayed in an area which is free from disruption.

## **Assessment Objectives**

The opportunity to evidence each Assessment Objective in a wide variety of ways and to recognise their interrelated nature appears to be generally understood and positively exploited. However, whilst it is certainly not a requirement, most centres, choose to address the objectives in a broadly linear sequence.

### **Assessment Objective 1**

The variety of methods employed by candidates to record observations, experiences and ideas appears extensive. Moderators have noted drawing from direct observation, collected secondary imagery, mind maps, annotated sketches, documentation of gallery visits and photography. Without exception, moderators reported an increased use of digital cameras in the recording of observations this year. As with quick sketches, the validity of point and click photography has its place as a means of recording transient images and chance encounters with subject matter. However, centres should ensure that digital techniques are purposefully employed and their application by the candidate evidence coverage of the assessment objective at the level of attainment indicated in the marks awarded. Good quality selected images showing an understanding of considered composition, lighting, technique and purpose have

been credited as outstanding methods of recording appropriate to intentions, but multiple unselected images badly reproduced on poor quality paper, or kept in inaccessible files on computers, have not. Centres should also ensure that they make provisions to “back-up” candidates files held electronically as moderators did report that work had been lost due to corrupt files etc. As with the use of secondary sources, appropriateness to intentions was seen as paramount when making judgements in respect of value and attainment. Encouragingly, many centres view drawing for different purposes and needs as a highly valued aspect of their courses of study.

## **Assessment Objective 2**

Moderators have reported that candidates who have been able to directly engage with art work through gallery, museum or artist in residence experiences, had shown greater ability to analyse and evaluate work with increased understanding of context. Best practice was evidenced in those examples where there was a clear integration of practical and critical studies. There were clear links in certain instances between profitable engagement with two- and three-dimensional art, design and crafted artefacts and confident use of media and the development of personal ideas. Instances of trials of similar techniques and media brought candidates closer to their chosen references, in responding to their own work and that of others. For some, the inclusion of annotation alongside selected imagery displayed clear understanding that underpinned the evidence for assessment. With little exception, candidates used downloaded images and information from a variety of search engines. Where these were used well they showed careful selection and an understanding of their relevance. Where they were simply pages of downloaded notes and images they lacked the links required to fulfil all but the simplest of responses to the assessment criteria.

Marking in many instances was very close to the standards exemplified at Teacher Standardisation, and moderators reported that many centres had encouraged candidates to select their own references from a given list relating to their coursework assignments. This in turn led to candidates researching and responding to the work and ideas of contemporary artists, craftspeople and designers, and producing inspiring and exciting responses reflecting issues of current concern. It was apparent that candidates who had been encouraged to demonstrate independence in their choice of Controlled Test starting point frequently went beyond the suggested references to positive and productive effect.

## **Assessment Objective 3**

Exciting examples of innovative experimentation with media and techniques were seen in the majority of centres where candidates had a genuine engagement with courses and assignments. Links with practitioners from various areas of the art world gave some candidates excellent opportunities to try out techniques and processes through workshops and residencies, leading to an understanding of how to progress ideas successfully. In many samples seen this year, the development and exploration of ideas benefited from effective use of ICT image manipulation where there was good scope for modification and refinement. This was particularly evident in Controlled Test work.

Moderators reported that in some centres development, review, modification and refinement needed to be balanced with the use of a range of different media for marks to be awarded in the highest categories. For a number of candidates, simply presenting one photocopied idea in different colour-ways or showing evidence of the handling of a range of unrelated or inappropriate media did not adequately fulfil the criteria.

Exploration and experimentation was seen at its best when candidates approached this area with a specific aim to fulfil their “journey of discovery”. This was often evidenced in sketchbooks, where candidates accompanied their work with thorough analysis and judgements explaining choices made. Experiments in colour, composition, media and possible outcomes were also shown through design sheets and mood boards. Scaled models, maquettes and materials trials in a range of appropriate media were favoured by some, with digital recording used to document the progress of development stages particularly in three-dimensional design. Digital media was used to good effect in investigation and development, showing links with contemporary practitioners when developing ideas.

#### **Assessment Objective 4**

Moderators saw a wide variety of personal responses including large scale paintings and canvases, mixed media constructions, installations, sculptures, ceramics, wall hangings, photography, intricate design work and the use of ‘Powerpoint’ to create very personal animation outcomes. By linking work effectively to the artists researched, rather than merely producing reproductions of the work of others, rich and thoughtful connections were established in many of the responses seen.

Securely realised outcomes exhibited an identifiable journey through the assessment objectives, reflecting the balance between research and investigation, exploration of materials and techniques and the development of skills. One-off, unrelated outcomes were less in evidence this year, as were obvious pastiches of the work of others. However, in some instances it was difficult to see explicit connections between preparatory studies, development work and the final piece.

References to the Japanese art of Manga, Anime and other related works featured more prominently this year. As a result, some moderators found difficulties in distinguishing between candidate’s original interpretations and those that were simply copies of existing imagery. This was also reported to be the case in some Photography submissions where moderators needed clarification from teaching staff to separate researched images that had not been accurately acknowledged from candidate’s own digital outcomes. It is important that centres are able to authenticate each candidate’s work with confidence and that candidates also confirm ownership of their work. Similarly, work submitted entirely in electronic form must be easily accessible and carefully labelled to avoid any confusion at the time of moderation.

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