



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Art and Design

42012

(Specification 4201)

Unit 2: Externally Set Task

Report on the Examination

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GCSE Art and Design (4201-4207, 4211)

General

This was the first year candidates could enter for both Unit 1 and Unit 2 as a full course award and claim certification for the new specification in all GCSE Art and Design endorsements.

Moderators reported that many centres had taken the opportunities presented by the specification to restructure courses and offer more flexible approaches to teaching and learning. Others had been more cautious, retaining the best practice from legacy course models, sometimes with the addition of workshops and one-off activities, to reflect the individual needs of their own candidates. Overall, whichever approach was taken, it would appear that the specification and its enhanced opportunities have been very well received by schools and colleges.

For Unit 1 there is no prescribed approach to development of work, but for the full course the submission must show the coverage of all four assessment objectives through “more than one extended collection of work, or project”. For some centres the portfolio ethos was actively pursued with teachers encouraging candidates to take a lead role in the selection and organisation of work to be presented for examination. For others, candidates submitted two or three complete projects, as in previous years, with little selection.

Work for this unit may also be produced in the form of one sustained project supported by work generated by other experiences such as visits, workshops, experimental exercises in handling media and engagement with a wide variety of sources from which to develop individual responses. Alternatively, two or more projects of similar or different scope and complexity could fulfil the assessment criteria. Therefore, themes for projects, assignments and briefs were often wide ranging and varied and candidates were able to engage with a wealth of possibilities and developmental opportunities. In many centres, the use of starting points from the previous year’s test paper was common practice.

For Unit 2, the extended preparatory time available for the externally set task, was well received. More time allowed centres to select a delivery approach to suit individual candidates’ needs and working practices. Some centres chose to use the full lead-in time available from early January, allowing candidates the time to explore their ideas and intentions in greater depth. Other centres opted for a shorter preliminary time followed by a much longer period over which the 10-hour supervised sessions were spread to support candidates’ ‘momentum’. The flexibility afforded by the extended preparatory period was deemed to be a major factor in the success of this unit of work.

The externally set task papers for each endorsement were also well received, with many centres welcoming the familiar paper format, which allows candidates the choice between focused questions with suggested sources, or an open-ended starting point. Each paper is designed to ensure candidates have access to a range of different, equally valid, ways to achieve the assessment objectives. Please remember that candidates should be allowed to select their own question from the full range in the paper. Teachers should not pre-select questions on behalf of learners or offer them a narrower range to choose from. AQA regards this as a form of malpractice.

In both units, visually engaging assessment evidence in the form of sketchbooks, ideas books or journals, as well as mounted loose sheets were seen.

Teacher Standardisation Meetings

The meetings not only illustrate standards, but give teachers the opportunity to view a variety of practices in all specification endorsements from both Unit 1 and Unit 2. The generosity of centres in loaning work for training purposes at teacher standardisation meetings is gratefully appreciated.

Attendance at teacher standardisation meetings was deemed essential this year for centres new to the specification. At moderation, those centres that did not send a representative do not appear always to have fully grasped how to evidence the new assessment objectives.

Delegate feedback indicated that fundamental issues such as the administration of paperwork, deadline dates and reminders of the support available were a vital part of the meetings, but that the emphasis on standards and training through the marking of 'live' work is why the AQA teacher standardisation sessions are so highly valued. Understandably the absence of grade boundaries in this first year of full course certification was an issue for many delegates. Presenters endeavoured to allay fears and confirmed that although the raw mark boundary may change, the overall standard will stay the same and be carried forward.

The provision of CDs, for delegates to take away from the meetings, that included a 'visual reminder' of the training and marking sets and associated attainment commentaries was welcomed. This compensated for delegates now being unable to photograph the exhibition for copy-right reasons. Please note, the reminder notes and all other Teacher Resource Bank information are also available through the AQA website.

Administration

Administration was generally good this year, although in a few instances moderators did receive paper work after the 31st May deadline. It is essential that centres send two copies of their Centre Mark Form (CMF) or EDI printout to the moderator. This ensures the moderation sample is selected in good time, and the centre's copy is returned in advance of the agreed moderation date.

Transferring marks on to forms still posed some problems, for example, confusing Unit 1 with Unit 2 when adding marks on the CMF or adding up the marks incorrectly on Candidate Record Forms (CRF). Generally, however, inaccuracies such as these were dealt with by moderators during centre visits.

Please remember, it is a mandatory requirement that CRFs are signed by both the candidate and the teacher responsible for delivering the course of study. This is to signify that the work submitted is solely that of the candidate and is an essential part of centre administration. Thankfully, there were very few instances this year of incomplete forms, although the supporting information boxes (to expand on information about candidates' individual circumstances or to explain the awarding of marks) were rarely used.

Assessment and Moderation

The change to the sample selection process caused some confusion in centres this year. A single sample of candidates' work is now chosen according to the range of marks submitted across Unit 1 and Unit 2 for each endorsement. For this reason, it is much less likely that both units of work of the same candidate will be seen. The selection is also proportionate to the number of units entered for each endorsement. So if a centre enters equal proportions of Unit 1 and Unit 2 for an endorsement, for example, 20 Unit 1 and 20 Unit 2, 15 units will be selected for moderation, 8 for Unit 1 and 7 for Unit 2 or vice versa.

In terms of the accuracy of centre marking, where centres had sent a representative to a teacher standardisation meeting, used the assessment criteria appropriately and with reference to AQA's standards, marking judgements were generally sound. Where this had not been done and where there appeared to be a lack of internal standardisation marking appeared to be erratic. In these cases, the use of marks that were too high or too low in the four-mark band was a common problem. Where teachers had marked to the requirements of the assessment objectives, using the key words of "Develop", "Refine", "Record" and "Present", and the distinguishing characteristics "Just", "Adequate", "Clear" and "Convincing" in the four-mark bands, they were better equipped to differentiate when proposing marks for their own candidates.

Moderation meetings and visits were generally very successful this year, with fewer instances of inadequate provision and/or presentation of samples. Whether submissions are presented in the form of an exhibition or carefully labelled folders, a quiet, undisturbed area is essential if the moderation process is to be effectively conducted.

Assessment Objectives

In both Unit 1 and Unit 2 candidates are required to evidence all four assessment objectives through appropriate means. The document “Interpreting the Assessment Objectives” offers valuable guidance for centres and is available through the AQA website.

Assessment Objective 1

The combination of instructions to “develop ideas” with the wording “informed by contextual and other sources” saw many candidates move beyond the frequently accessed artists typical to previous years’ submissions. The breadth of possibilities under the heading of “sources” has been evidenced through what one senior moderator described as “an eclectic mix of increasingly contemporary and very stimulating practitioners” as well as song lyrics, dance displays, objects and artefacts, cultural gatherings, trips, visits, exhibitions, poems, posters and films. Where candidates had simply downloaded information from the Internet, little evidence of analytical or cultural understanding was seen, and their own work was rarely “informed” as a result.

Assessment Objective 2

In some cases, refinement was simply evidenced through the eventual selection of one version of the same image that had been replicated in a range of media with little consideration of alternative possibilities. In others, candidates had experimented extensively to evidence the creative selection and rejection of a wide range of media in a journey of exploration through a project or series of stand-alone experiences. Digital media was in evidence across all ability ranges, with candidates often using software packages such as ‘Photoshop’ to good effect in considering a range of possibilities. Screen shots were also used by some candidates to effectively demonstrate the manipulation and refinement of ideas.

Assessment Objective 3

Recording in a wide range of both two and three-dimensional media was seen this year, with digital recording used effectively for a variety of purposes, and a balance of primary and secondary sources was noted in the most successful portfolio and test submissions. These included documenting work in progress, design ideas and working drawings, as well as recording through drawing. One moderator reported that “drawing as a recording tool appears to be as strong as ever” whereas another reported that drawing continues to “wither on the vine”. Candidates also evidenced their own insights and opinions through written annotations, with thoughts and reflections complementing associated visual materials. Once again however, the presentation of written information that had simply been downloaded from the internet or copied from books without subsequent development rarely formed evidence for the marking criteria.

Assessment Objective 4

Personal responses were varied, with some showing ambition and creativity as a result of individual journeys of enquiry. Many candidates progressed their ideas through a wide range of projects or client-orientated briefs, often showing sound understanding of process and intention. Encouragingly, fewer examples of pastiche were reported this year. Please remember, an “informed and meaningful response demonstrating analytical and critical understanding” does not have to be seen as a separate outcome, and there was more evidence this year of candidates showing personal responses through collections of related work centred on a particular theme, sketchbook investigations and/or design sheets. Equally some excellent examples of fully resolved outcomes were submitted in a wide range of styles, media and sizes that evidenced the candidates’ abilities to handle materials sensitively and with a clear understanding of their appropriateness, given intended purposes.

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The 2011 question paper starting points were very well received by centres. Teachers felt that questions were accessible, with a good balance between historic, modern and contemporary sources, catering for candidates of all abilities. Centres welcomed the provision of unlimited preparation time, and were keen to exploit this opportunity. However, some moderators reported that the extended time did not always lead to better outcomes. For some centres, a shorter lead-in time was deemed to be more appropriate. The freedom to manage this to suit the needs of their candidates was appreciated by teachers.

Question Paper Starting Points

1. The Everyday

On many occasions responses to this question were informed through reference to the named artists. Still life subject matter was popular and supported by reference to Patrick Caulfield and Paul Cezanne. Other sources that were frequently used included Pop Art still life, Catherine Sullivan (where candidates made photographic assemblages of people in places), the Camden Town School, John Bratby and the Dutch School of painting. Working processes and outcomes were very varied and confident personal responses in a variety of media such as painting, photography, film and sculpture were seen. Sculptural practice was diverse and included some adventurous figurative pieces in relation to people and places featuring reference to works by Alberto Giacometti and Anthony Gormley.

2. Marine Life

This starting point provided a focus for some very vibrant colourful outcomes in a variety of 2 and 3 dimensional media. Ceramics and textile pieces were favoured outcomes for what proved to be the most popular question on the paper. The question suited a range of abilities, and in the best work the recording of ideas from primary sources was often evidenced by visits to aquariums and fish markets. The named artists, Sarah Parker Eaton and Catrin Mostyn Jones were frequently sourced as candidates developed their own fascination with exotic forms and bold vibrant colour.

3. Self Image

This question allowed candidates to explore very personal issues-based outcomes. Photography was frequently used as a tool to record and investigate the portrayal of feelings and emotions, as opposed to simply record observations. Many candidates used related objects to characterise their images in the style of Joseph Cornell and Michael Rothenstein. Although the portraits of Chuck Close had a clear impact within this question, candidates often personalised their creative experiences by moving away from the sources named. Individual interpretation was very strong in both working processes and outcomes as candidates worked through a range of media including photography, assemblage, sculpture and painting.

4. Signs and Symbols

This question was attempted by candidates of all levels of ability. References to youth culture, personal identity, ancient hieroglyphics, street signage, as well as contemporary, historical and cultural symbols, and logos provided popular source materials. The named artist, Microbo, proved to be of great interest and many candidates were keen to explore her working practice. Graffiti art was explored with common references to Banksy making this a very accessible question. Recording was mainly through observations of the artist's work and cultural symbolism, often replicated or translated into candidates' individual ideas within the development process.

5. In Series

This question generated some very thoughtful and impressive responses from high attaining candidates. In some instances time lapse photography was employed to great effect and outcomes were evidenced through photo-montage and 3D photographic presentations. References and sources steered away from the named artists on many occasions, and in the best practice outcomes were very adventurous. Some candidates made reference to William Wegman's photographic series of dogs, and replication of animal imagery was evidenced. This question was most successfully managed by those candidates who fully understood the potential of the starting point.

6. Imprint

Successfully interpreted through ceramics and print making, responses to this question were predominantly seen through ceramic vessels and tiles impressed with patterns and images recorded from traditional Nigerian ceramics, or print making techniques evidenced in relation to the named artist Frank Stella.

7. Contrasts

Responses to this question explored comparative analysis through secondary source themes including young and old; light and dark; old and new; hot and cold and sun and moon. The responses showed that option (a) and (c) were most popular. References to Edward Hopper were made by those responding to option (b). Photographic recording was frequently used in all responses and outcomes and working processes showed slightly less emphasis placed on the study of artists and practitioners.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available at www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html .
The UMS conversion calculator can be found at www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion .