



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Art and Design – Fine Art 42022

(Specification 4202)

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.

Fine Art 4202

Teachers of the Fine Art endorsement continued to offer creative opportunities in a wide range of materials, skills, processes and approaches reflecting the needs of a broad spectrum of candidates’ backgrounds and abilities. Some moderators reported that centres previously submitting work for the

legacy 'Unendorsed' course had transferred to the Fine Art course this year. Very little 3D work was seen, but where it was there were some exciting responses to the externally set tasks that incorporated the use of ceramics, natural forms and found objects.

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The question paper with its familiar format was well received this year. Centres felt it provided candidate of all abilities with appropriate choices and there was enough breadth on the paper to suit most of the courses taught. It also provided scope for every candidate to achieve across all the assessment objectives.

Some higher attaining candidates, given twelve weeks preparation time for the externally set task, benefitted greatly as they were able to go into far more depth with their studies. This was particularly evident in AO1 where longer research time had allowed them to find sources that were personal and relevant to intentions. Coverage of AO2 requirements also improved, as the extended time allowed candidates to experiment with media and refine their ideas more thoroughly. This in turn resulted in stronger personal responses. However, lower attaining candidates sometimes lost momentum where extended preparation time was given and in consequence they did not utilise their time effectively. Centres were also concerned that candidates spent less time on their Portfolio work as a result of longer time devoted to the externally set task, with some expressing the view that they may return to a shorter preparatory period, possibly six weeks, next year.

Question Paper Starting Points

1. The Everyday

This was a popular question in many centres, with candidates using either digital photographs or observational studies of their local environment or own homes. All three choices were tackled, although (b) 'urban life' was the most frequently addressed, with the named source, Charles Ginner, referenced by candidates who based their work on local street scenes. However, many candidates chose their own sources, with artists such as Edward Hopper, Rauschenberg and various Pop Artists providing inspiration. Banksy, together with other graffiti artists, were also very popular sources, particularly among the lower ability candidates, although they were rarely able to develop their ideas and responses beyond the predictable. Some responded to (a) 'people at work', with many using first hand experiences of a variety of working environments, including workshops, shops and cafes. Some candidates had researched images of rural life, with one using Chris Chapman's photographs of Dartmoor farm workers as the basis for a very personal photographic study of rural life, culminating in a beautifully presented installation using paintings based on these images.

Photographers Martin Parr and Richard Billingham were used extensively as sources for (c) 'the domestic', with many taking digital photographs of friends and families in a variety of domestic contexts. Others took photographs or made first hand studies of collections of domestic items with references to various artists, such as Cezanne, Patrick Caulfield, Michael Craig-Martin and Janet Fish. Where candidates had researched their chosen artists fully and then supported their work with first hand studies the results were very strong. For example, one candidate's tongue-in-cheek interpretation of 1950's-style imagery of women in aprons, baking equipment, cakes and pastries called "The Icing on the Cake" proved to be especially engaging.

2. Self-image

The accessibility of artist references, informed by experience gained from portrait projects in Unit 1, together with the opportunities for first hand observation, made this an extremely popular question across all ability ranges. Digital photography was used extensively to record images of faces, often using mirrors or self-timers to capture self portraits. Many were then used as the basis for further drawings and paintings, some showing digital manipulation through Photoshop filters.

Many were influenced by images of celebrities and fashion models, with weaker candidates compiling scrapbooks of magazine images, which were rarely used effectively in the development of personal

responses. Some candidates produced issues-based work, with themes of eating disorders and physical disability noted. These were mostly informed by internet sources, although some engaged with the work of Jenny Saville for inspiration. One candidate had used the disturbing images of anorexia by Ivonne Thein as the basis for her own series of photographs of herself wearing a body suit that she had covered in words to describe her self-image. The photographs of Cindy Sherman were also frequently researched, which resulted in candidates experimenting with make-up, costume and context, to produce some very personal statements. Portraiture skills were evident in one candidate who focussed on the issue of glamour, and based paintings on work by de Lempicka.

A variety responses were seen ranging from copied photographs to high quality studies of personal objects representing the individual, with one resulting in an impressive painting of bottles of nail varnish in the style of Audrey Flack. Another candidate had used Gillian Wearing's ideas and slogans to represent how people see themselves.

3. Found Materials

Few candidates attempted this question, but some high attaining candidates produced exciting and very personal outcomes, such as self-portraits made in found materials and mini landscapes constructed and photographed. Tony Cragg seemed to be the most accessible artist, but few successful attempts resulted. Some candidates simply put together a still-life of "found" objects, whilst others used collage techniques and assemblage, some influenced by the named artists or by Arcimboldo, with varying degrees of success. One candidate who had researched the work of David Kemp, explored a range of very exciting and original responses to rubbish found on the beach to create a large scale installation, which included a full sized rowing boat.

4. Signs and Symbols

This was a popular choice in some centres, appealing largely to less able candidates, many of whom carried out quite thorough research, often into Aboriginal art or Egyptian hieroglyphics, but few appeared able to use this to develop original ideas or produce convincing personal responses. In some of these cases the route from Egyptian wall-painting led to graffiti-style imagery. References to road signs were also frequently seen, in some cases treated in an Aboriginal art dot technique. One candidate used road signs to produce a successful response to the work of Michael Brennand-Wood. It comprised a base of layered pieces of maps, road symbols made from wood attached above and strings stretching between. It was both well planned and sequentially developed and showed real understanding of Michael Brennand-Wood's work.

Many centres used signs and symbols from other cultures, drawing upon African, Chinese or American Indian sources. Some good results were achieved through the effective development of pattern based outcomes in a number of submissions and in another instance tattoo inspired comic book style outcomes were noted.

5. Words and Music

The opportunity for candidates to relate their responses to personal interests and experiences made this question extremely popular in many centres. Very few were seen to respond to poems, stories or plays, as suggested in (a). The majority of candidates responded to (b), using the lyrics of favourite songs as inspiration, as well as pieces of music, some of which had been written or composed by candidates. Almost all used the named source, Kandinsky, as their main reference, with some extremely thorough and thoughtful research into his ideas and approaches to composition evidenced. More able candidates produced a well documented journey, punctuated by exciting experimental work, resolved into sophisticated personal responses. Candidates whose responses integrated images and text did not always consider the text as part of the success of the mark making, and the design of the typography was often ignored in both research and the personal responses. Sometimes work took on a more graphic quality, and in some centres this resulted in designs for CD covers being produced. In one centre candidates had produced digital sketchbooks on Moviemaker, with the music, to show the development of their projects through to the final pieces. Less able candidates responded more literally to the question and in some instances merely copied images of singers with words coming out of their mouths.

6. Imprint

Few candidates responded to this question, but it was popular in centres where there was a tradition of printmaking. In one of these a candidate had researched the prints of Kathe Kollwitz, and also into frottage textures, leaf veins, mazes and the work of Richard Long and Kandinsky. The candidate had made some well observed first hand studies of grooves in wood and tree bark, that were subsequently transformed into in a lino print of an expressionistic face.

Another candidate had been inspired by studies of different local bridges to produce some very effective printmaking work in response to Japanese woodblock prints. The candidate had also painted, drawn and collaged into the prints, which created added depth and surface interest. Only one example was seen of 'land art' inspired by Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy.

7. Structures

Overall, this was a very popular question, with many teachers commenting on the accessibility of sources, in some cases welcoming the fact that there are no named artists in the question as this gave candidates the freedom to choose sources relevant to their ideas.

- (a) There were few examples seen where candidates had chosen their own interpretation of the theme, but some of these were very successful. In one centre candidates had created complex and well executed installations from a range of objects in empty classrooms. Mixtures of personal, borrowed, found or recycled objects made for interesting and very individual combinations. Elsewhere, successful work was seen developed from an exploration of the work of Michael Brennand Wood. Here the research and preparation material developed through collage, drawing and photography into designs for some excellent three dimensional outcomes. In one centre all candidates had responded to this section with a variety of sculptural work in clay or mod-roc, all of which were highly decorated with surface texture and painted designs.
- (b) Responses to this suggestion were undoubtedly the most commonly seen. They ranged from photographic and observational drawings of architecture based on school buildings or buildings in the locality, to scrapbooks containing imagery of famous buildings such as the Eiffel Tower, Sagrada Familia and the Statue of Liberty, frequently downloaded from the internet or cut out of magazines. Other candidates responded to structures such as old and derelict buildings, electricity pylons, scaffolding, stairs, rooftops and bridges. Architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright and David Chipperfield, Constructivists, such as Rodchenko, as well as the Cubists, were frequently well-researched by candidates as sources for ideas. However, few of these ideas materialised into anything other than two dimensional responses, which mostly took the form of drawings, paintings and photographs.

The work of Georgia O'Keeffe, Karl Blossfeldt and Ernst Haeckel frequently informed responses to this choice, which was popular in some centres as it allowed candidates of all abilities to respond in a meaningful way. Many candidates looked at the work of their chosen artists as inspiration and developed work in two and three dimensions. The responses were often literal, but allowed candidates to develop their work in a range of media. One response seen had beautifully rendered studies of flower and plant studies in water colour, oil and pencil crayon. The candidate had also taken photographs which showed an understanding of structures in nature. These were refined into a mixed media collage using a range of materials selected from processes evident in the preparatory work. In another centre butterflies and their patterns informed some lively mixed media textiles-based work.

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 .