



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**Art and Design – Photography:                    42062  
lens-based and light-based  
media**

**(Specification 4206)**

**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 31<sup>st</sup> 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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There has been an increased uptake for this endorsement and moderators commented on the high standards and creative endeavour evident in the work produced. It was apparent too that interesting classroom practice continues to emerge, supported by well-planned courses of study.

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The paper was received very well, with many centres expressing their appreciation with regard to the accessibility of the suggested sources and the variety of tasks available to candidates of different ability levels.

In general, the increased time available for preparatory work was used and welcomed although some centres reported their preference for legacy arrangements. A number of moderators reported evidence of good research and strong ideas developed from sources that often went beyond the suggestions given within the paper. Good candidate responses saw all assessment objectives addressed equally well with resulting outcomes demonstrating strong exploration skills and creativity. Many moderators noticed the good practice contained in the portfolio was repeated in response to the Externally Set Tasks.

The new title of this endorsement enables a greater variety of approaches and it was encouraging that candidates and centres embraced these opportunities by exploring a range of time based media and installation work.

### Question Paper Starting Points

#### 1. The Everyday

This was a very popular starting point with the work of Martin Parr and William Eggleston featuring strongly. Candidates explored 'reportage' style work that deployed the strong sense of colour found in Parr's work. Some responses took a more experimental route resulting in large scale mixed media work and installations. Other candidates used the subject matter to explore the abstract qualities of everyday objects recorded in close up and using such devices as mirrors to alter their appearance. Others used visual formats from sources such as those found in the repeated imagery of Pop Art as inspiration for displaying and manipulating their photographs.

#### 2. Self Image

This was a popular choice with many candidates who took a wide range of approaches to the starting point. Contextual sources were varied and included works by Cindy Sherman, Peter Blake, Banksy and Robert Rauschenberg in addition to the references suggested. It was notable that some candidates used local photographers and/or artists, some of whom had run Unit 1 focused workshops in their courses of study.

Responses to this starting point caused a number of moderators to comment on the strength of personal response and imagination used within the development of ideas. Photographic ideas were subsequently 'worked into' with paint, embellished with words or lyrics and presented in innovative ways. One moderator reported enthusiastically about a submission presented in book form.

#### 3. Multiple Images

Technical explorations, including a variety of both digital and darkroom procedures, were a feature of responses to this question. Reports suggest that responses were characterised by contrasting levels of performance. At one extreme the developmental process and outcomes were mundane. Responses, lacked depth of research, thought and quality of ideas. At the other thoughtful use of sources, multiple exposure and manipulation techniques produced vibrant and engaging images.

#### 4. Signs and Symbols

This theme produced some interesting approaches with certain candidates using the notion of a personal journey as the basis for the recording of signs and symbols. Some candidates chose sources that contained more personal meanings and associations whilst others chose subject matter for its textural and tonal qualities. This is where some candidates used traditional darkroom procedures to produce what were described by one moderator as ‘beautiful black and white images’.

Unfortunately the same moderator witnessed the disappointing use of downloaded images to produce collage work demonstrating little in the way of understanding, skill or creativity. Others commented on candidates’ work that indiscriminately recorded a variety of signs with little thought given to subsequent developments.

#### 5. Sequence

Within this starting point’s suggestions, there were references to overtly time based sources. It was pleasing, therefore, to hear that a number of centres had entered candidates who successfully used stop frame animation techniques to produce excellent responses to the presented titles. Although some candidates found the challenge of producing a narrative very difficult, others used sources such as Norman McLaren and Keith Arnatt, together with items such as fruit and Lego items, as inspiration for imaginative responses to the title ‘Dream’.

Candidates also used still images in a variety of ways to form a sequence, often to portray change or document an event.

#### 6. Imprint

Although moderators’ reports suggest that this theme was the least popular choice some commented on very interesting work being produced in response to it.

The study of Wolfgang Tilman’s explorations prompted experiments with dyes and water producing the recording of some intriguing images. Similarly, ways were found to allow water droplets and decaying food to produce the imprinted image, and ‘painting with light’ was combined with aspects of Futurism as a source for creative experimentation.

#### 7. Structures

This theme was a popular starting point with the majority of candidates using buildings or natural forms as their source.

Karl Blossfeldt, Georgia O’Keeffe and Andy Goldsworthy were popular reference points for a journey involving closely focused study of details and forms. On occasions, the journey focused on dereliction or growth and this often gave candidates the opportunity to explore and experiment with the technology of the camera.

Some more unusual work evidenced candidates’ use of Joseph Cornell as a stimulus for presenting and organising images and other candidates used fabric as an object of study and to construct delicate and intricate forms.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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