

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE Art & Design
(2AD01- 2GC01)
GCSE Art & Design Short Course
(3FA01-3GC01)

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Introduction

This report reviews the 2013 series of GCSE Art & Design 2AD01-2GC01/3FA01-3GC01 examinations.

The Edexcel GCSE specification aims to provide, for all centres, a framework (appropriate and accessible to a range of levels of candidates' experience and ability) which encourages an adventurous and enquiring approach to art and design.

The GCSE specification forms part of an educational continuum. GCSE builds on art practice at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.

GCSE candidates should be able to

- develop practical artistic skills and abilities
- demonstrate an understanding of past and contemporary art and design practice
- produce a personal response that embraces a range of ideas
- reflect on their work and on the works of others.

Reports obtained from moderators in 2013, informed by the necessary initial dialogue they held with teachers in centres at the start of their visit, together with the subsequent study of candidates' work, have supplied evidence of the success of the 2013 series. In 2013 centres, once again, offered encouraging courses for their candidates.

Moderators recognised that many centres built on sound and good quality practice to produce suitable courses of study.

Undoubtedly, those teachers who

- examined the specification carefully and thoroughly
- attended national training programme events or requested centre based training offered by Edexcel
- scrutinised the wealth of informative support documents available on the Edexcel website

- sought clarification via the Edexcel Subject Advisor or Ask the Expert scheme

found they were well placed to bring together suitable courses of study sustained by time-honoured good practice.

Centres that had not considered the specification meticulously, or taken advantage of the support outlined above, may not have fully understood some aspects. It is certainly worth urging centres to visit the Edexcel website and obtain, for careful and thorough study, the GCSE Art and Design Controlled Assessment Teacher Support Book.

Successful courses of study encouraged candidates to complete visual research using primary and secondary sources and record observations, experiences and ideas in varied, appropriate and accomplished ways. Good quality candidate submissions showed an ability to observe, select and interpret, with discrimination, imagination and understanding. Above all, moderators noted that in successful centres, where candidates undoubtedly flourished, teachers stressed, to their credit, the value of working from first hand experience.

Many noteworthy submissions showed undeniable evidence that candidates had achieved striking growth in the development of ideas and realised quality outcomes as a result of fully exploring and reviewing a range of possible solutions and then suitably modifying their work as it progressed. The importance and value of a creative visual journey, informed by critical and cultural contexts, is acknowledged by successful centres to be crucial.

Centres evidently valued the importance of the personal intention, the final outcome, for GCSE artists. To their credit many centres showed they recognised that an intelligible visual account of the creative journey was necessary. At the same time, however, centres appreciated that extraordinarily large volumes of evidence were not a requirement and, as a result, enabled their candidates to allocate sufficient time to carry out convincing final statements.

It is worth emphasising that although it may be unnecessary to present every single piece of work for assessment and moderation, it is nonetheless in every candidate's best interest to select sufficient convincing evidence to reflect their finest performance and therefore plausibly corroborate teacher-examiner assessment decisions. A number of moderators were concerned, therefore, that flawed interpretation of controlled assessment had led a few centres to omit the presentation of some candidate work (notably good quality evidence selected from year 10) for moderation. Support for a thorough understanding of controlled assessment is obtainable from the GCSE Art and Design Controlled Assessment Teacher Support Book available from the Edexcel website.

In 2013, as in previous years, many candidates showed they understood how to use a range of materials, processes and techniques, including information technology, to increase their knowledge and application of visual language.

The degree to which candidates knew about and understood a variety of work from current practice, past practice and different cultures and demonstrated an appreciation of continuity and change in art, craft and design was undeniably evident in the 2013 series. Centres recommended that candidates made critical and contextual references. In some cases centres were, to their credit, encouraging candidates to move further toward investigating and analysing contextual encounters primarily through the use of visual language and therefore resisting the propensity to submit extensive amounts of written text. As pointed out in all recent reports, movement away from dissertation (a lengthy and formal written treatment) and toward annotation (a short explanatory or critical note added to visual evidence) is welcomed.

As usual, it is worth acknowledging in particular those GCSE candidates awarded the highest mark available. Candidates of such high quality, time after time, provided teachers and moderators with chances to see astonishing outcomes that revealed extraordinary ability, understanding, imagination and originality.

Candidate work from 2013 GCSE Art and Design



Administration and Moderation

The Centre Guidance (CG) document is updated each year taking account of lessons from the previous year. The Centre Guidance is available to centres on the Edexcel website. Unquestionably, where centres read it very carefully and in detail, assessment and moderation processes were accomplished straightforwardly and efficiently.

Moderators provide, for centres, a feedback report (E9) available via Edexcel Online. Centres ought to scrutinize the feedback report in detail and react appropriately to its contents for support in achieving sound assessment decisions and, as a result, a satisfactory moderation outcome.

An Assessment Guidance Grid (AGG) and an Authentication Form must be completed accurately for each candidate and made available for moderators when they visit the centre. Centres found it very useful that the Centre Guidance, Assessment Guidance Grid and Authentication Form are all available on the Edexcel website. Many centres photocopied the AGG and the Authentication Form 'back to back' and this helped to decrease paperwork for centres.

Candidate marks may be submitted to Edexcel using the OPTEMS forms provided or by direct input online. Moderators have commented again this year that where centre marks had been submitted online there was a welcome chance for them to prepare for the moderation visit. It is certainly worth reminding centres of the need for scrupulous accuracy in transferring teacher examiner assessment marks from the Assessment Guidance Grid to the Optems or direct online input.

Moderators reported that the majority of centres presented candidates' work for moderation in the form of an exhibition. Candidates' hard work and dedication certainly justified the celebration offered by an exhibition for others to enjoy. The use of an exhibition to present work undoubtedly provided an essential opportunity for candidates to organise outcomes logically and selectively to 'tell the story' of their achievements persuasively

for both the teacher assessor and the moderator. Some centres with a large number of entries were, of course, at the mercy of constraints of space and unable to display candidates' work as an exhibition and, therefore, submitted the work in folders. Candidates who had been encouraged to organise their folder to disclose their achievements intelligibly helped sustain the logic of teacher examiner assessment decisions.

All moderators welcomed centres' readiness to provide a separate order of merit for each unit (Personal Portfolio and the Externally Set Assignment) for the moderation visit. Furthermore, it was always helpful where centres had made a clear distinction between the work offered for the Personal Portfolio sample and the Externally Set Assignment (ESA) sample. Many centres took great care in placing unobtrusive labels with a candidate's work to make it easily identifiable. Helpful maps enabled moderators to locate each candidate's work easily. The time and care that many heads of department took to describe and explain in some detail, for moderators, the approach taken in their centre toward course design and delivery, assessment and internal standardisation measures was always appreciated.

It is essential that centres mark their candidates' work using the assessment guidance available on the website together with the assessment guidance grid. Centres that followed this practice showed a progressively more rigorous understanding of suitable mark levels. Where the assessment guidance was used carefully to arrive at assessment decisions teacher examiners achieved sound and precise internal marking and persuasive standardisation across all of the endorsements, disciplines and teaching groups. It is worth reminding centres that teacher-examiners award marks. In the interests of marking accurately centres should scrupulously avoid any temptation to make grade assumptions as a guide to assessing the evidence found in a candidate's body of work.

The moderation sample is a computer generated random selection of candidates. Nonetheless, centres are reminded that the work of all candidates must be readily available for the moderation visit. The work of

the highest and of the lowest candidate, for the Personal Portfolio unit and for the ESA unit, must be presented with the selected sample.

It is worth repeating and emphasising, as in previous reports, the importance of accurate internal standardisation. Where this has not taken place within the centre it may result in significant changes to the overall centre marks affecting all endorsements. Centres must take care to scrupulously internally standardise, otherwise candidates' final marks may be compromised. A secure merit order (within an endorsement or across endorsements where a centre has candidates for more than one endorsement) is clearly very helpful to centres in their quest for consistent internal standardisation. Furthermore, a persuasively secure merit order encompassing the total candidate entry for each unit and with the sample identified within it is of particular value insofar as it may provide, for the moderator, persuasive evidence and support for a centre's successful and accurate internal standardisation.

It is crucial for centres to note that adherence to assessment guidance must function consistently for both the Personal Portfolio and the ESA. Although the amount of work presented for the two components may be different, the assessment guidance requirements remain constant.

Candidates performing at the lower levels of attainment normally showed simple ideas considered from uncomplicated starting points. Development was informed by simple research and evaluation of a modest range of sources. Minimal exploration of resources and processes and hesitant experiment and refinement underpinned the literal development of ideas. Weak technical control hampered the potential of personal work and research showed elementary connections to intentions. Deliberate responses led to adequate straightforward realisation of intentions. The simple beginnings in the work of lower performing candidates led to superficial understanding. Connections with the work of others were restricted, more often than not, to the surface appearance of artefacts.

In the work of better candidates ideas provided some reasonable starting points for noticeable development. Work was progressed using sufficient skill and was based on adequate research. Evaluation and analysis showed a degree of straightforward understanding and a clear-cut appreciation of creative concerns and qualities. Appropriate, somewhat predictable, selection and experimentation showed, unlike weaker candidates, that chances to adapt and refine through resources and processes were obviously taken up. Discernible focus underpinned relevant selection and the recording of sufficient information from sources and growing technical control supported and communicated intentions. Work was technically sound and intentions were appropriately realised and showed credible individual connections with the work of others and a growing appreciation of some interesting aspects of artefacts.

At the higher levels of candidate performance ideas were supported by a thorough journey of perceptive, sustained investigation. Independent and sensitive understanding was underpinned by the skilful use of material from which to develop ideas at length through thoughtful exploration. Here a rich resource bank was used to support in-depth review and comprehensive experimentation resulting in evident development. A wide-ranging appreciation of the potential of the materials, techniques and processes was unmistakable. Persuasive and personally selected concerns, perceptive engagement with ideas and convincing technical proficiency were commonly found in higher performing candidates. The potential of materials, techniques and processes was credibly recognised and secure technical command ensured intentions were completely realised. Personal outcomes revealed some visually exciting qualities and appropriate connections signalled the ambition to understand artefacts beyond their surface qualities.

It is vital that centres secure a realistic grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent attainment in the national context for GCSE Art and Design. Edexcel not only makes available exemplar material on its website but also training for centres designed to promote a sound appreciation of standards within the national context.

Strengths:

- Complete candidate submissions
- Adherence to assessment and moderation processes set out in the CG
- Accurate and complete AGG, Optems and Authentication Forms
- A sound order of merit
- Personal Portfolio and ESA clearly identified with a map to enable moderators to find candidates' work
- An informative dialogue with a head of department or centre representative that details the centre's approach toward course design and delivery, assessment and internal standardisation procedures
- Precise use of assessment guidance and a first-rate grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent attainment in the national context for GCSE Art and Design to arrive at secure assessment decisions
- Credible internal standardisation for Personal Portfolio and ESA within and across all endorsements and teaching groups.

Weaknesses

- Incomplete candidate submissions
- Failure to adhere to CG assessment and moderation processes
- Inaccurate and incomplete AGG, Optems and Authentication Forms
- An unconvincing order of merit
- Personal Portfolio and ESA submissions that were not clearly identified
- The lack of an informative discussion with a head of department covering the centre's approach toward course design and delivery, assessment and internal standardisation procedures
- Inaccurate use of the assessment guidance and a poor grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent attainment in the national context for GCSE Art & Design to arrive at secure assessment decisions
- Unconvincing internal standardisation for the Personal Portfolio and ESA within and across all endorsements and teaching groups.

Candidate work from 2013 GCSE Art and Design



Unit 1 Personal Portfolio

For Unit 1 (Personal Portfolio) of the Edexcel GCSE Art and Design (2AD01-2GC01/3FA01-3GC01) candidates complete a body of work.

Unit 1 covers work produced from activities, theme(s) or projects. A personal portfolio is defined as a body of practical research and development, applicable to the chosen endorsement, leading to one or more outcomes or to a variety of resolutions.

Unit 1: Personal Portfolio in Art and Design (together with Unit 2: Externally Set Assignment in Art and Design) would normally provide evidence of two years' full-time study at Key Stage 4. Each unit must contain supporting studies and personal response(s).

For the Full Course Personal Portfolio unit evidence of working in at least two disciplines should be presented for assessment. For the Short Course Personal Portfolio unit evidence of working in at least one discipline should be presented for assessment.

Centres can devise the content of Unit 1 and plan, select and develop their own theme or themes/projects appropriate to their candidates and resources. The work for Unit 1 may be separate in focus or interconnected. Candidates should be encouraged to develop their personal ideas. Supporting studies should demonstrate the candidate thinking through the development of their ideas. Centres should ensure the authenticity of work submitted for assessment.

In 2013 the majority of centres continued their determination to use informed judgment to interpret the notion of a unit as best fitted their own art education setting. Some centres structured their course so that the combined constituent elements for the Personal Portfolio unit evidenced different approaches. One ingredient of the course with the overarching theme of, for example, 'Natural Forms' might be primarily experimental and essentially concerned with developing and securing skills through exploring

materials and techniques. Other elements would emphasise the opportunity to explore and pursue individual ideas generated from a theme such as 'A Sense of Place' and, therefore, inspire exciting and noticeably diverse candidate outcomes.

Centres frequently made sure that the flexibility of their preferred Personal Portfolio theme, or themes, allowed each candidate to make personal and well-informed responses. Moderators reported that centres employed a range of Personal Portfolio themes including, to name but a few, Autobiography, Collections, Food and, Decay.

Course management in successful centres clearly embraced the interests of a wide range of abilities. As in previous years, moderators noted that, more often than not, they encountered courses that promoted high expectations in relation to practical skills, effectively developed self confidence, made sure that outcomes reflected the true level of a candidate's ability and enabled the successful communication of creative intentions.

Once again in 2013, Unit 1, on the whole, proved to be the strongest component of each candidate's submissions. Many centres had created sympathetic, carefully designed and thought-provoking schemes of work and wide-ranging teaching programmes to provide candidates, across the ability range, with opportunities to bring forward convincing evidence of their achievement in all the assessment objectives. Candidates gained most from carefully prepared courses that made available a framework that made it possible for them not only to develop their knowledgeable analysis and understanding of artists' work that served the growth of rationally focused ideas and individual outcomes, but also to extend their grasp of processes, methods for research and a route to secure the persuasive use of media. Many centres with powerful inventive approaches clearly engaged candidates in individual and relevant concerns. Personal work of quality arose where centres had, in addition to a structured framework, also successfully provided opportunities for candidates to discover their own routes to investigate and develop individual responses using varied scale, media and technical processes. Talented candidates given free control may,

undoubtedly, produce convincing work of high quality. As noted in previous reports, the work of successful candidates across the ability range was encouraged best within a structured, although non-prescriptive framework, where there were generous opportunities to investigate and extend independent and individual responses.

Moderators noted again, in 2013, that in some centres the same themes had been rather overused without any substantial modification over the years. It was pleasing, nonetheless, that moderators also reported a number of teachers had taken time to assess, modify and grow their former course design for the benefit of candidates.

Centres frequently made use of themes from a previous Externally Set Assignment (ESA) in their programmes. Where centres took patent individual ownership of a past ESA theme and developed and built on it as a starting point suitable for their setting, successful candidate outcomes were often met.

In 2013 there was persuasive evidence of centres building on the good practice of carefully incorporating contextual encounters and references within Personal Portfolio projects. Used as a starting point for assignments, evocative meetings with the wider context through educational visits or artists in residence, for example, often resulted in many candidates securing genuine insight into a range of creative practices. Candidates' sound judgements and responses enabled them to go on to demonstrate the value of their understanding of contextual issues for developing ideas underpinning individual and personal outcomes.

Moderators encountered striking instances of candidates resisting the temptation to simply replicate or transcribe the work of a practitioner. Conspicuous examples of candidates going beyond straightforward attempts to duplicate were met. For example, some candidates, having discovered an exciting painter, rather than unambiguously copying examples using paint, had gone on to make their own direct personal interpretations inspired by that encounter which, on occasion, made remarkable and indeed

exciting practical use of different media and ways of working. It was notable, therefore, that successful courses explicitly encouraged candidates to show that the essential purpose of a contextual encounter was to use it as a springboard for individual creative endeavour rather than as a starting point for a straightforward and, from time to time, rather sterile studio exercise.

Once again in 2013, moderators have drawn attention to how visits to galleries, museums and other places of visual interest really did help inspire and enthuse many candidates and inform the development of their personal work.

Many centres showed a growing confidence in supporting candidates in their quest to research, react, respond and reflect. Visual analysis and evaluation was, to many centres' credit, found in candidates' work but disappointingly there remained, perhaps, an overwhelming predisposition in some centres to stress writing at the expense of visual analysis and evaluation accompanied by brief annotated explanation. Moderators reported they sometimes encountered, as in previous years, predominantly amongst weaker candidates, a weakness for offering large volumes of text simply copied from a website as evidence of contextual research, analysis and response. Furthermore, moderators pointed out, perhaps again most notably for weaker candidates, there was a tendency to over-reward overtly biographical evidence which revealed little in the way of contextual understanding or significance for the progress and achievement of personal candidate outcomes. Art and Design is essentially a visual subject and a visual response through the use of visual language should be encouraged.

Centres, generally speaking, ensured that candidates gave the review, refinement and modification of their work as it progressed ample attention to support the production of the finest outcomes. Many candidates, having generated exciting ideas from a contextual encounter and information gathering or from a visual research starting point, convincingly developed the potential of individual themes through resolute experimentation and investigation. It was encouraging to hear, from moderators, that many

centres helped candidates to make the most of well founded and meaningful development and therefore thwart any inclination to make rapid, uninformed and puzzling leaps to the final outcome. However, once again in 2013, in some cases to the clear disadvantage of the quality of final statements, a thorough process of review, refine and modify was treated to some extent superficially and ideas could, therefore, be secured too early. Where candidates moved straight from conception to the realisation of final statements the result could often be inadequate in quality. Reviewing, refining and modifying offer important opportunities for candidates to not only refine skills but also decide on fitting media and discover the best focus for realisation. The proficient use of ICT provided another helpful development. Moderators reported that some candidates not only manipulated images, but also thoroughly developed ideas using ICT techniques in advance of producing compelling final statements. A range of materials and ways of working was frequently offered to candidates. However, moderators noted they encountered examples where confidence and expertise in using materials and ways of working may undoubtedly have been compromised by insufficiency in the quality, intensity and depth of the developmental process leading up to realisation.

In 2013, as in previous years, many candidates showed that they understood the importance of ample visual research by recording first-hand observations utilising a diversity of media, materials and processes. Candidates clearly gained in centres that structured courses to thoroughly endorse the judicious collection of information and recording of observations from a range of primary and secondary sources. Many centres supported candidates in the perceptive and intelligent use of digital photography to assemble visual evidence of first hand experiences (evidence that might previously have been found entirely second-hand) and use this successfully to sustain themes. It should be stressed that where centres encouraged a wide range of first hand research and opposed the extensive use of secondary sources, candidates achieved genuine individual progress not only in respect of increasing technical proficiency but also in the ability to completely develop the potential of engaging personal themes. Moderators reported persuasive examples of good practice where the innovative

although, importantly, not exclusive use of digital photography actively supported first hand visual research. Where candidates had carried out first hand research in several different ways, on the whole, the quality of the complete body of visual source material was enhanced. The intelligent, selective and focused use of photography for gathering observations was again praised, by moderators, particularly in settings where this mode of visual research was one of a number of techniques employed by candidates. It should again be noted that visual research of quality, using photography as an investigative tool, usually came about in centres where the importance of composition, angle of view, lighting, shutter speed and technical know-how had been tackled successfully with candidates and, as a result, moved them away from the straightforward snapshot. Many centres clearly encouraged their candidates to recognise that the range, depth and quality of primary and secondary research ultimately had a direct positive impact on the merit of final outcomes.

It should be stressed that centres must take care not to over-reward, notably in the work of weaker candidates, the evidence, offered by photography (particularly in art and design, fine art, textiles and three-dimensional design) for attainment in visual research. Working in GCSE art and design undoubtedly encourages candidates to explore a wide range of appropriate relevant materials and ways of working. Centres should urge candidates to investigate the plethora of available opportunities to discover and indeed present convincingly, in their body of work, their expertise in realising visual equivalents in recording observations, experiences and ideas. Moderators commented that where candidates presented a significant volume of digital photographs, to the almost total exclusion of evidence from first-hand resources that exploited the special characteristics of other media, some centre assessment decisions could not be persuasively sustained. Sadly, again in the 2013 series, moderators reported a dispiriting predilection for a number of candidates to rely entirely on inferior secondary sources.

A growing number of centres secured a well established understanding of assessment criteria. Chiefly, when all of the assessment objectives were seen to be mutually supporting in the manner in which they underpin the work presented for the Personal Portfolio unit, candidates performed at their best across the whole mark range. As noted in previous reports, where assessment objectives appeared to have been tackled as a series of discrete tasks, moderators reported that candidates may not have reached their full potential.

It is worth emphasising, again this year, that the assessment objectives are interrelated and that they may be approached in any order in Personal Portfolio and, indeed, ESA activities. It is perhaps self-evident that project themes might begin with definite research activities from first hand sources. However, projects could equally launch very effectively, for some candidates, from working experimentally with materials or, indeed, grow from personal responses to contextual starting points.

Supporting studies essentially serve to provide evidence of the candidate's 'journey' and have the potential, as do final statements, to reveal the quality of research, contextual encounters, visual analysis, review, refinement, selection, exploration, development and realisation. Supporting studies could evidence a candidate's progress and development of ideas using some or all of the following

- work journals
- sketchbooks
- notebooks
- worksheets
- design sheets
- different scale rough studies
- samples
- swatches
- test pieces
- maquettes
- digital material

Moderators noted that many candidates focused their supporting studies on well-considered and relevant contextual encounters, applicable visual information capture, a careful process of review, refinement and, commendably, personal, imaginative and perceptive development of ideas and final outcomes. However, reports from moderators have highlighted, in some centres a tendency to over-reward final statements. In some cases, outcomes did not sustain centre assessment decisions insofar as sufficient convincing evidence, of the sound use and understanding of the potential of materials to realise intentions, was not compellingly discernible. Indeed, moderators reported in 2013 an unmistakable general tendency for centres to somewhat over-reward in their assessment decisions for candidates' work for the Personal Portfolio. It is clearly very important, in an effort to counteract leniency, that assessment decisions are firmly established using the assessment guidance available and convincingly substantiated by sufficient credible evidence.

Strengths:

- Well-structured and flexible courses that provided candidates, across the ability range, with sound visual language skills
- Courses that made available to candidates chances to show their grasp of a number of processes and methods for research, the use of a range of media, analysis of artists' work and development of ideas
- Courses that highlighted the function and importance of visual research and the use of primary sources such as first-hand observational studies and visits to galleries and museums
- Work in which apposite contextual study was meaningfully linked to the focus of projects and development of ideas
- Supporting studies that were individual, enlivened and informative, expressing thoughts, ideas, experimentation, contextual links and showing review, refinement and development.
- Courses which stressed and promoted the production of ambitious and imaginative final outcomes using a variety of media and scale
- Secure understanding of the inter-relationship of the assessment objectives and sound appreciation of the need for sufficient, credible and appropriate evidence of a candidate's level of achievement

Weaknesses:

- Courses that betrayed a lack of structure or were excessively prescriptive and that did not provide candidates across the ability range with a secure foundation of visual language and skills
- Courses that did little to move candidates away from over-reliance on copying from second hand sources with little or no creative purpose
- Unselective photographic recording of the entirely 'snapshot' variety
- Disproportionate written evidence for analysis and evaluation
- Contextual evidence that was comprised principally of unrelated biographical studies of artists copied from texts or the internet
- Shallow responses that were the result of scarce review and refinement
- Weak understanding of the inter-relationship of the assessment objectives and poor appreciation of the need for sufficient, credible and appropriate evidence of a candidate's level of achievement

Candidate work from 2013 GCSE Art and Design





Unit 2 Externally Set Assignment

The Externally Set Assignment (ESA) theme in 2013, 'Force', received a positive response from the majority of centres. The ESA theme was found to be accessible to candidates. Moderators reported many centres commented the theme had proved to be sufficiently broad and therefore inspirational insofar as it allowed candidates to use their personal experiences and interests in the formation and development of their ideas. Once again, in 2013, the format of the ESA question paper met with widespread approval. It was judged to be well set out with visually stimulating colour photographs of suitable images, pertinent contextual references and supportive sub sections.

The reaction of centres to the range of suggested artists and contextual references in the ESA was, predominantly, positive. It was certainly pleasing to hear again in 2013 that moderators noted candidates did not rely exclusively on the suggestions offered in the ESA. Many candidates, to their credit, carried out applicable individual research centred on other contemporary practitioners and cultural references relevant to their personal interpretations of the theme.

Many candidates clearly engaged with the theme in an imaginative way to develop individual and often very personal solutions. The work submitted for the ESA certainly showed a determination, on the part of large numbers of candidates, to illustrate their understanding and appreciation of the potential of the theme for a personal response. The theme brought forth an assortment of individual responses ranging, as expected, from the cautious and somewhat literal to the refreshingly unforeseen. Candidates' responses were, more often than not, fostered where centres used the guidance and suggestions contained within the examination paper as a way of encouraging a deeper level of personal engagement with the theme.

Unfortunately, as in 2012, some candidates spent a disproportionate amount of time exploring a large number of starting points at a surface level. Disappointingly, some candidates undertook unnecessarily, at the

outset, to work systematically through several suggestions outlined in the ESA question paper. This approach, predictably, could lead to a hindrance for a candidate seeking a personal focus and hence too little time being available for thoroughly reviewing, refining, modifying and developing not only ideas but also realisation skills before the production of individual final statements. Centres and candidates should understand that the theme in no way seeks to limit outcomes. Candidates should regard the theme, and the suggestions given in the paper, as encouragement to select and explore the best direction in which to go, for them personally, to achieve their finest individual responses.

The ESA theme provoked diverse responses. Moderators reported that some candidates developed ideas that engaged with challenging emotional and social issues. The abstraction of objects was a common thread and that focus provided candidates with valuable opportunities to begin with an observational starting point (for example the close observation of gears, machinery and the effects of force on man-made objects). Elsewhere, candidates worked on the forces of nature, emotions, conflict and, of course, the physical exertions observed in sporting activities and dance. Moderators noted repeatedly that informative references to the work of a wide range of creative practitioners featured in the development of candidates' submissions.

Quality responses were unquestionably the result of the way in which centres supported candidates in their organisation of the preparatory period with carefully planned and imaginative activities. Where teachers worked with their candidates throughout the formative stages, rather than leaving them to their own devices, a high quality approach helped them to resist a superficial response to the theme. Some centres, for example, commenced the ESA by introducing candidates to the work of a range of artists. Elsewhere centres opened the preparatory period with opportunities to carry out appropriate first hand visual research. Without doubt, thoughtful preparatory period activities, developed by teachers with candidates, really supported attempts to go deeper into the theme and develop personal responses underpinned by the experience gained through Personal Portfolio

projects. Where candidates built on strengths and experiences gained through the development of their Personal Portfolio unit, they adopted a secure and reliable approach to realising credible supporting evidence that documented their journey through visual research, experimentation, development of ideas and, purposeful encounters with artists and cultures. The finest ESA work had undeniably grown from the high standard of best practice Personal Portfolio unit experiences. Opportunities, during the GCSE course, for candidates to experience a 'mock examination' framework (similar to the one they would be required to adhere to in the ESA) plainly supported the management of their work for Unit 2 to produce preparation and outcomes of quality.

It should be emphasised, therefore, that candidates frequently gained from a dependable, supportive structure and judicious guidance during the preparation period and, as a result, achieved their most successful, independent and inventive results. The ESA is part of the whole GCSE course. Centres are reminded that, although a candidate's work must be unaided during the ten hour period of sustained focus, supportive advice and guidance should be available throughout the preparatory period. Weaker candidates in particular, without doubt, profit from guidance at the initial stages of the ESA to support them in identifying an appropriate personal focus and pathway for their studies. Moderators noted that centres with supportive preparatory frameworks helped those candidates for whom time management is a difficulty to work methodically and successfully to produce sufficient credible evidence for the assessment objectives.

Once again, in 2013, the need to review, refine and modify work in progress was not always well met in the ESA. Candidates, on occasion, did not allocate an adequate amount of time to meaningful research, exploration of ideas and thorough development before producing their final realisation. Results would undoubtedly have been better, for some candidates, if the closing days of the preparatory period had been used more effectively. Selecting and 'fine tuning' the very best development of an idea and

simultaneously sharpening technical skills frequently underpinned the production of final outcomes of the best quality.

Centres implemented a range of approaches to give all their candidates the opportunity to follow a focused journey of discovery. Stronger candidates made self-directed choices when investigating work by other artists and they offered their research and analysis in well-informed ways that established evocative links with their own practice. Many candidates fully appreciated the process in which they were engaged by collecting, recording and presenting information with high levels of skill. In many cases a range of media, materials and techniques was used to consider ideas and develop responses.

Some centres launched the preparatory period very successfully for their candidates from a contextual stance by encouraging them to investigate starting points inspired by the examination paper, independent study or a gallery visit. Elsewhere, engaging outcomes began with a methodical period of visual research from first hand sources. Visual research obtained through a candidate's own photography was certainly powerful where it was discriminating, well thought-out and purposeful, rather than indiscriminately captured with little evidence of sensitivity or consideration.

Once again, it should be emphasised that centres must take care not to over-reward the evidence offered by photography (notably in art and design, fine art, textiles and three-dimensional design) for attainment in visual research. Working in art and design undoubtedly raises the value of investigating an array of suitable pertinent materials and ways of working. Centres should recommend that candidates explore practically the many opportunities available to discover, develop and indeed show, in their body of work, their skill in realising visual equivalents in recording observations, experiences and ideas.

Moderators reported, in 2013, a disappointing fondness, for some candidates, to rely exclusively on mediocre secondary sources. Moderators also commented that where candidates presented a substantial volume of

digital photographs to the almost total absence of evidence from first-hand resources that exploited the special characteristics of other media, some centre assessment decisions could not be convincingly sustained.

Contextual sources for the ESA encompassed a mixture of artists, photographers and designers. Some centres and candidates limited their exploration of contextual sources to those provided in the ESA paper. Centres should be aware that the contextual references provided with the theme are offered just as suggestions and candidates should certainly be encouraged to look beyond them to identify beneficial avenues for themselves. It is worth emphasising again that for the ESA, as for the Personal Portfolio unit, writing is only one of many ways through which candidates' thoughts, observations, evaluations and analyses might be captured and revealed. Critical and contextual responses may be presented advantageously primarily in visual terms. Extensive written documentation is certainly not a requirement.

Moderators reported, in the 2013 series, there was a noticeable clear tendency, in a number of centres to over-reward in the assessment of candidates' work for the ESA. Clearly, assessment guidance must function consistently for both the Personal Portfolio and ESA units. Although the quantity of work presented for the ESA may differ from that offered in the Personal Portfolio unit the assessment guidance requirements remain constant. As noted already in this report, it is crucial, in an effort to counter leniency that ESA assessment decisions not only draw on the assessment guidance available but are also compellingly substantiated by sufficient credible evidence.

Strengths:

- A well planned, centre devised and teacher led programme for preparatory studies that enabled candidates to achieve sound, compelling and well-crafted, imaginative personal responses
- Suitable and evocative contextual encounters and analysis often supported at first hand through gallery or museum visits
- Comprehensive first hand observation and research, including (but not exclusively) that obtained from the proficient use of a candidate's own photography, to support the development of outcomes
- Ample, focused, meaningful and sustained preparatory work that continued the development of ideas
- Persuasive application of media and techniques that enabled a high standard of realisation of imaginative ideas and intentions
- Accurate centre marking corroborated by convincing evidence

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient support and guidance given to encourage candidates' time management during their developmental journey resulting in too little time for essential review, refinement and modification
- Safe and literal interpretation of the theme that constrained candidates
- The pursuit of a disproportionate number of 'starter' exercises designed to cover the assessment objectives but which discouraged individual choice, failed to engage candidates and frequently consumed precious development time
- Overwhelming reliance on secondary sources or unrelated primary sources
- Meagre command of materials and techniques that ultimately reduced the quality of realisation of imaginative ideas and intentions
- Imprecise centre marking decisions based on insufficient credible evidence

Candidate work from 2013 GCSE Art and Design



Summary

Many centres showed they have developed confidence in their knowledge and understanding of the specification and the demands it makes on both teachers and candidates. Generally speaking centres have built on established good practice to develop suitable courses of study.

First-rate teaching, thorough and appropriate Personal Portfolio and ESA arrangements, the application of a considered approach to the coverage of assessment objectives and fitting resourcing made sure that many candidates performed to the best of their ability in both components of the GCSE examination. As in 2012, candidates who achieved first class results did so because centres provided helpful support that emphasised recording visually from first hand experiences to sustain assessment decisions. Noteworthy contextual encounters provided candidates with encouragement for individual and personal outcomes. Sustained, careful and discerning research, visual analysis, thorough development of ideas and the sharpening of technical skills, more often than not, resulted in high quality work.

Centres are reminded that careful scrutiny of the specification, the range of support available on the Edexcel website, scrupulous study of the GCSE Art and Design Controlled Assessment Teacher Support Book, taking part in the training offered by Edexcel and the help available via Edexcel's Subject Advisor for Art and Design and the Ask the Expert scheme, all provide routes to developing accurate understanding of the specification and assessment.

As in 2012, there remains the need for maintaining a suitable balance, between the volume of supporting studies and preparatory work and adequate opportunity to develop the realisation of final outcomes. Some candidates may, for example, perhaps spend a disproportionate amount of time and effort, during their course, on journal based work. This means that a large quantity of some candidates' work is restricted in terms of both scale and media and their artistic growth may therefore be, to some extent,

reduced. It is worth remembering that the development of a candidate's creative visual journey continues and undoubtedly may well be improved during the production of final personal portfolio and ESA outcomes.

It is worth reminding centres that, as noted earlier in this report, extraordinarily large volumes of evidence are not a requirement. It may, after very careful and thorough consideration, be deemed unnecessary to present every single piece of candidate work for assessment and moderation. Astute and well-judged selection from the complete body of work produced by a candidate can undoubtedly tell the story of a creative journey in a compelling way. It is nonetheless in every candidate's best interest to be absolutely sure that a sufficient quantity of convincing quality evidence is offered for assessment to plausibly and undeniably uphold teacher-examiner assessment decisions.

It would, no doubt, be helpful to underline once again that the Edexcel GCSE Art and Design specification calls for visual responses from candidates. Extensive written notes may well, to some degree, support a number of candidates' submissions, but large amounts of text are, without doubt, not a requirement of the specification. It is worth repeating that movement away from dissertation (a lengthy and formal written treatment) and toward annotation (a short explanatory or critical note added to visual evidence) is welcomed. All assessment objectives, right through the entire mark range, may be persuasively evidenced primarily through a visual response. Candidates can, and indeed do, reveal visually compelling evidence of their technical skill, creative reflection, independent working, aptitude for problem solving, evaluative ability, powers of sequential thinking and creative practice. Visual research, visual reaction, visual response and visual reflection are always appropriate in GCSE art.

Ultimately, it must be said that centres are to be commended once again for the encouraging ways in which, through the provision of sound courses, they confronted the challenge of supporting their candidates in achieving remarkable personal creative successes in the 2013 series.

Strengths:

- Precise assessment using the available guidance and a secure grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent attainment in the national context for GCSE Art and Design to arrive at credible mark decisions
- Reliable active centre support for the moderation processes set out in the Centre Guidance
- Well-structured, non-prescriptive and flexible courses that provided candidates across the ability range with a secure foundation of visual language skills and best practice time-management support for the process of development of both their Personal Portfolio and ESA outcomes.

Weaknesses

- Inaccurate assessment resulting from a failure to make use of the available assessment guidance and a weak appreciation of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent attainment in the national context for GCSE Art and Design.
- Unsatisfactory application of the requirements for moderation visits set out in the Centre Guidance
- Courses that either lacked a coherent structure or were very prescriptive and that did not provide candidates across the ability range with a secure foundation of visual language skills and best practice time-management support for the process of development of both their Personal Portfolio and ESA outcomes.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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Welsh Assembly Government

