

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCSE

GCSE Art & Design (1027-1032 / 3027-3032)

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the 2007 series of GCSE Art & Design 1027-1032/3027 - 3032 examinations.

The Edexcel GCSE specification aims to provide all centres with 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 specification is intended to form part of an educational continuum which progresses from Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum offers opportunities for pupils to

- develop their creativity and imagination through visual, tactile and sensory experiences
- develop practical, technical and critical skills and use visual and tactile language to communicate their ideas, feelings and meanings
- learn to make value judgements and aesthetic and practical decisions, becoming actively involved in shaping environments
- explore ideas and meanings in the work of artists, craftspeople and designers and learn about the diverse roles and functions of art, craft and design in the contemporary world and in different times and cultures.

GCSE builds on art practice carried out at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.
GCSE candidates should

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

The 2007 series, from the reports received from moderators, was undoubtedly successful. Centres continue to provide courses that support and encourage candidates in undertaking visual research using primary and secondary sources and recording observations, experiences and ideas in varied and appropriate ways. Candidates frequently show their ability to observe, select and interpret with imagination and understanding. It is rewarding to see the emphasis that most centres place on working from first hand experience.

Candidates submit convincing evidence that they have developed and realised their ideas and outcomes as a result of exploring and reviewing possible solutions and modifying work appropriately. The value and relevance of the creative visual journey, informed by critical and cultural contexts is embedded throughout the specification and, without doubt, is understood by centres to be essential. At the same time, it is clear, from moderators' reports that centres fully acknowledge the importance of the personal outcome, the final destination, for GCSE artists. Centres recognise that the documentation of the journey is necessary but, to their credit, many appreciate that large volumes of evidence are not a requirement and, in so doing, enable candidates to devote the time necessary to excel in their final statements. It is worth stressing that it is unnecessary to present every single piece of work that candidates produce over two years for assessment and moderation. Indeed, it is surely in every candidate's greatest interest, that only work that reflects the best of their performance is presented for moderation.

Moderators report that candidates show that they understand and draw on a range of materials, processes and techniques, including information technology, in developing their appreciation and use of visual language.

The degree to which many candidates know and understand a range of work, from contemporary practice, past practice and different cultures and are able to demonstrate an understanding of continuity and change in art, craft and design is certainly encouraging. Centres usually urge candidates to make critical and contextual references. In some cases centres are, quite rightly, seeking to move their candidates further toward evidencing contextual encounters primarily through the use of visual language and resisting the temptation to submit large volumes of written text. Progress away from dissertation (a lengthy and formal written treatment) and toward annotation (a short explanatory or critical note added to visual evidence) is certainly to be encouraged.

It is worth noting that a number of candidates awarded the highest mark available are performing beyond GCSE level. Candidates of such high calibre routinely provide teacher assessors and moderators with the opportunity to see outstanding outcomes that evidence supreme skills, understanding, imagination and creativity.

Administration and Moderation

The Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (ICE) document is updated each year, taking on board lessons learnt from the preceding year. The ICE is made available to centres on the Edexcel website and must be read carefully to ensure that assessment and moderation processes can be completed successfully.

An Assessment Matrix Mark Sheet (AMMS) must be completed for each candidate and made available for moderators when they visit the centre. The current version of the AMMS is available on the Edexcel website. Many centres photocopy the AMMS and the authentication forms back to back and this helps to reduce paperwork for centres.

Moderators report that most centres present candidates' work for moderation in an exhibition format. Candidates' hard work and commitment deserve the celebration offered by an exhibition which can be enjoyed by others. The use of an exhibition to present work provides a valuable opportunity for candidates to arrange outcomes coherently and selectively to 'tell the story' of their achievements convincingly for both the teacher assessor and the moderator. Clearly some very large centres are at the mercy of constraints of space and are unable to display candidates' work as an exhibition and, therefore, submit the work in folders. Candidates who had been encouraged to select, edit and organise their folder to reveal their achievements comprehensibly supported the clarity of teacher assessor and moderator judgements. Moderators have reported that they particularly welcome the support centres demonstrate through their willingness to provide an order of merit for the moderation visit. Moderators have reflected that it was always helpful where centres had made a clear distinction between the coursework sample and the Externally Set Assignment. Many centres labelled work clearly in order to make it easily identifiable and provided helpful maps indicating the location of each candidate's work. The time and care that heads of department often take in setting out, for moderators, the approach taken in their centre toward course design and delivery, assessment and standardisation procedures is warmly welcomed by moderators.

Centres must mark and moderate their candidates' work, using the taxonomy. Centres that follow this practice demonstrate an accurate understanding of appropriate mark levels. Furthermore, by using the taxonomy, teacher assessors achieve secure and accurate internal marking and standardisation across all of the disciplines.

The sample is a computer generated random selection of candidates. Centres have a responsibility to ensure that the highest and the lowest candidate for each unit is presented with the selected sample.

It is worth reiterating the importance of internal standardisation. Where this has not taken place within the centre, it may result in substantial changes to the overall centre marks and will affect all endorsements. Centres must internally standardise, otherwise candidates' final marks may be compromised. A secure order of merit is essential for effective and accurate internal standardisation.

It is important for centres to note that taxonomy criteria must operate consistently for both the coursework and ESA components. Whilst the volume of work offered for the two components may differ, the taxonomy requirements remain constant.

It is imperative that centres secure a convincing grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent in the national context for GCSE Art & Design. Edexcel makes available to centres a supportive annual programme of INSET to promote a coherent understanding of standards within the national context.

Coursework

The Full Course GCSE 1027-1032 requires two units of coursework. The Short Course GCSE 3027-3032 requires one unit of coursework.

In 2007, centres continued using their judgment to interpret the concept of a unit as best fitted their own setting. Centres often ensured that their chosen unit themes were sufficiently flexible to allow each candidate to make a personal and well-informed response.

Coursework components, for the most part, proved to be the strongest element of each candidate's submissions. Most centres had constructed broad and sound courses to provide candidates, across the ability range, with opportunities to bring forward persuasive evidence of their achievements in all the assessment objectives. It was clear that candidates gained most from structured courses that made available a framework that enabled them to develop their grasp of processes and methods for research, the use of media, analysis of artists' work and the development of coherently focused individual ideas and outcomes.

The work of strong candidates given free reign can, undoubtedly, be persuasive and of high quality. However, the work of successful candidates across the ability range, seen in centres by moderators this year, was clearly nurtured best within a structured, albeit non-prescriptive framework, where there were ample opportunities to investigate and develop independent and personal responses.

Candidates show more and more, in their work, that they understand the importance of visual research by recording first-hand observations utilising a variety of media, materials and processes. Emphasis on the intelligent, selective and focused use of digital and film photography for gathering observations is to be welcomed. Indeed, centres clearly inspire their candidates to recognise that the scope, depth and quality of primary and secondary research has a direct impact on the excellence of final outcomes. Nonetheless, there remains a tendency for some candidates to rely on secondary sources. Moderators continue to report, with some disappointment, that they see many examples of found images simply being copied by candidates.

Moderators report growing evidence of sound and appropriate contextual research by candidates, from primary and secondary sources that are persuasive in the way that they stimulate and inform the development of personal endeavour. Centres show a growing confidence in supporting candidates in their quest to analyse and evaluate visually. Unfortunately, there remains an overwhelming tendency in some centres to emphasise writing at the expense of visual analysis and evaluation accompanied by brief annotation. It is dispiriting to note that there remains, particularly amongst weaker candidates, an overwhelming tendency to offer large volumes of text simply reproduced from a web site as evidence of contextual research, analysis and response. Art and Design is fundamentally a visual subject and a visual response through the use of visual language is to be encouraged.

Many centres ensured that their candidates gave the review, refinement and modification of their work as it progresses sufficient attention to support the production of the best outcome. In some cases however, to the detriment of final statements, the process of review, refine and modify was treated superficially and ideas were formed too early. Where candidates moved straight from conception to realisation final statements could be disappointing in quality.

Reviewing, refining and modifying clearly offers opportunities for candidates to refine skills, select appropriate media and identify the best focus for realisation. A range of materials is customarily offered to candidates but confidence and expertise in using them may be compromised by a shortfall in the process leading up to realisation.

A growing number of centres have secured a well established understanding of appropriate assessment criteria. Above all, when all of the assessment objectives are seen to be inter-dependent in the manner in which they underpin coursework, candidates performed at their best across the whole mark range. Where assessment objectives appear to have been addressed as a series of unrelated tasks, moderators report that candidates may not have reached their full potential.

It is worth emphasising that the assessment objectives are indeed inter-related and that they may be approached in any order in coursework activities. It is self-evident that project themes might begin with defined research activities from first hand sources. However, projects could equally launch very successfully, for some candidates, from working experimentally with materials or, indeed, evolve from responses to contextual starting points.

It is worth reminding centres that the work journal does not have a prescribed format. It may take the form, for example, of work

- presented as a set of boards
- organised within a flip-file
- offered in a sketch book.

The journal serves to provide evidence of the candidate's 'journey'. A well organised and selective journal has the potential, as do final statements, to show the quality of a candidate's research, contextual encounters, visual analysis, review, refinement and selection, exploration and development and, of course, realisation.

Strengths:

- Well-structured, non-prescriptive and flexible courses which provided candidates across the ability range with a secure foundation of visual language skills
- Courses that provided candidates with opportunities to learn and show their grasp of processes and methods for research (including digital photography and ICT), the use of a range of media, analysis of artists' work and, the development of individual and personal ideas and outcomes
- Courses that emphasise the purpose and value of visual research
- Courses that promote the use of primary sources such as first-hand observational studies and independent or organised study visits to galleries and museums
- Courses that offer candidates opportunities to work with an artist in residence
- Work in which appropriate contextual study is meaningfully linked to the focus of projects through articulate visual and verbal description, annotation and analysis
- Journals which are personal, enlivened and informative, expressing thoughts, ideas, experimentation, contextual links and showing review, refinement and development.

- Courses which emphasise and promote the production of ambitious and imaginative final outcomes and that support candidates in using a variety of media and scale
- Secure understanding of the assessment objectives and appreciation of appropriate evidence of candidates' level of achievement leading to accurate centre marking accompanied by convincing internal standardisation

Weaknesses:

- Courses that either lack structure or are overly prescriptive and inflexible
- Courses that do not provide candidates across the ability range with a secure foundation of visual language, technical and material handling skills
- Courses that do little to move candidates away from over-reliance on copying from second hand sources with little or no creative purpose
- Photographic recording that is exclusively unselective of the 'snapshot' variety
- Excessive emphasis on written evidence for analysis and evaluation
- Contextual evidence that is comprised primarily of unconnected biographical studies of artists copied from texts or unedited downloads from the internet with little indication of visual analysis
- Superficial responses which are incomplete, disorganised and the result of insufficient in-depth review, refinement and modification
- Inadequate appreciation of standards, inaccurate independent marking and ineffective or non-existent internal standardisation

Externally Set Assignment

Centres and candidates responded positively to 'Wraps', the theme for the Externally Set Assignment (ESA) in 2007.

The work submitted for the ESA revealed a commitment on the part of candidates to demonstrate their understanding and appreciation of the potential of the theme for their personal outcomes. Most centres regarded the theme as an accessible, sound and sufficiently open-ended starting point for all candidates. The theme encouraged an array of individual responses ranging from the predictable to the refreshingly idiosyncratic. Candidates found plenty of inspiration in the theme.

The ESA theme lent itself to work in three-dimensions some of which was innovative and exciting. Many candidates steered clear from literal representations of the theme and this led to personal and interesting outcomes.

Many candidates had built on the strengths and experiences gained in their coursework and adopted a secure and convincing approach to their work for the ESA. The best ESA work emerged from quality coursework experiences.

It was clear that candidates invariably benefit from a reliable, supportive structure and logically guided direction during the eight-week preparation period to achieve their most successful, independent and innovative outcomes. 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 timed test, helpful advice and guidance should be available throughout the preparatory period. Weaker candidates in particular benefit from guidance at the initial stages of the ESA to support them in identifying an appropriate personal focus and direction for their studies. A well constructed and managed preparatory period that supports candidates in working systematically to produce evidence for each of the assessment objectives helps them to perform to the best of their ability in the timed test.

Moderators reported that review, refine and modify was not always well met in the ESA. Time constraints sometimes caused candidates to spend insufficient time on sustained research, investigation, exploration and development before reaching a final outcome. Indeed, there were examples where candidates' work would have been enhanced 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 honing technical skills invariably underpins the production of final outcomes of the finest quality. A tendency remained this year for some candidates to spend an inordinate amount of time exploring a large number of starting points at a surface level. Inevitably this led to insufficient time being available for thoroughly reviewing, refining, modifying and developing realisation skills in advance of the production of final statements.

Centres adopted a number of approaches to give all their candidates the opportunity to embark on a focused journey. Stronger candidates made independent choices when investigating work by other artists and they presented their research and analysis in an informed way that established meaningful connections with their own practice. It was clear again this year that many candidates fully appreciated the process in which they were engaged by collecting, recording and presenting information purposefully and with high levels of competency. In many cases a wide range of media, materials and techniques were used to explore ideas and develop responses.

Some successful outcomes began with an intensive period of visual research from first hand sources using drawing and also photography. Visual research obtained through a candidate's own photography was certainly compelling where it was clearly selective, carefully considered and purposeful rather than randomly captured with little evidence of discernment or thought. Elsewhere, some centres launched the preparatory period for their candidates from a contextual stance by encouraging them to investigate starting points inspired by a gallery visit.

The theme provided an opportunity for candidates to present a variety of subjects, styles and media. Naturalistic, indeed literal, outcomes derived from wrapped natural forms such as flowers, fruit and vegetables were nonetheless persuasive. References to the human form were popular and brought forward work derived from mummification and the world of fashion. Product wrappings and the work of Christo and pop artists made frequent appearances. Candidates were also alert to the potential of the theme to inspire them to produce abstract and intensely personal responses. Indeed, candidates who selected highly personal starting points, sometimes remarkably tangential to the theme, produced very powerful and individual work as a result of journeys of discovery that provoked distinctive connections.

Contextual sources for the ESA encompassed an array of artists, photographers and designers. It is worth emphasising again that for the ESA, as for coursework, writing is only one of many effective ways through which candidates' thoughts, observations, evaluations and analyses might be captured and presented. Critical and contextual responses may be presented very successfully visually. Lengthy written documentation is not a requirement.

Strengths:

- A thoroughly structured, centre devised and teacher led programme for preparatory studies that enabled candidates to achieve coherent, persuasive and well-crafted, imaginative individual responses
- Support for candidates' first hand contextual encounters through gallery or museum visits
- Scrupulous first hand observation and research to support the development of candidates' work
- Compelling use of a candidate's own film and digital photography to resource outcomes
- Substantial, purposeful and meaningful preparatory work which sustained a candidate's developmental journey
- Appropriate and evocative contextual encounters and analysis
- Sequential development of ideas that served to refine thinking, choice and realisation of the final outcome
- Accurate centre marking and secure standardisation

Weaknesses:

- Inadequate support and guidance given to sustain candidates at the start of their developmental journey
- Safe and literal interpretations of the theme that constrained candidates

- Imposition of a large number of defined 'starter' exercises designed to cover the assessment objectives but which frustrated individual choice, failed to engage candidates and often consumed valuable development time
- Overwhelming reliance on secondary sources or unrelated primary sources
- Ineffective management of the preparatory period resulting in time for essential review, refinement and modification being in short supply
- Poor command of materials that ultimately diminished the quality of realisation of imaginative ideas and intentions
- Inaccurate centre marking and inadequate centre standardisation

Summary

A large and growing number of centres show that they are developing an increasing confidence with the specification and the demands it makes of both teachers and candidates.

The high quality of teaching, sound coursework structure, the application of a rigorous approach to the coverage of assessment objectives and appropriate resourcing has ensured that candidates perform to the best of their ability in both components of the GCSE examination. Without doubt, many candidates achieved excellent results because centres provided constructive help and support. Constructive help and support invariably emphasised recording visually from first hand experiences and the value of contextual encounters as a catalyst for individual and personal outcomes. Centres in which candidates performed well customarily promoted an enjoyment and enthusiasm for the use of materials and media. Careful selection, visual analysis, thorough development of ideas and technical skills was more often than not nurtured in order to bring about high quality work.

It is worth repeating for centres, in this summary, that the work journal has no prescribed format. The journal certainly provides substantial evidence of a candidate's journey and this is at its most persuasive where it bears the hallmarks of selectivity, visual research and analysis, review, refinement and modification and, of course, the search for technical control.

It is worth raising, as in 2006, a note of caution. The need for maintaining an appropriate balance, between the volume of preparatory work in journals and opportunities to develop and realise final outcomes, remains essential. There remains a tendency for some candidates to spend an inordinate amount of time and effort, during their course, on journal based work. Inevitably this means that for some candidates, a substantial amount of their work is limited in terms of both scale and media and their artistic progress may, therefore, be somewhat inhibited. The development of a candidate's creative visual journey continues and can surely be enhanced through the particular opportunities made available in realising final outcomes.

There should be no apology for reiterating the notion that the Edexcel GCSE Art and Design Specification calls for visual responses from candidates. Clearly, protracted annotations may well support some candidates' submissions, but large amounts of written text are most definitely not a requirement of the specification. All assessment objectives, right through the entire mark range, may be persuasively evidenced with a purely visual response. Candidates can, and indeed do, show clearly through the use of visual language, their technical skill, creative reflection, independent working, aptitude for problem solving, evaluative ability, powers of sequential thinking and creative practice.

Finally, centres are to be commended for the positive ways in which, through the provision of secure courses, they have risen to the challenge of assisting and sustaining their candidates in accomplishing significant achievements in 2007.

Statistics

Awarding is based on work scrutinised falling within A, C and F grades. All other grades are calculated mathematically to fall equidistant between the selected marks.

The boundary shown below applies for all endorsements (1027-1032 / 3027-3032).

Paper No	Max mark	Weighting	A	C	F
01 - Coursework	80	60%	66	40	15
02 - Timed Test	80	40%	66	43	17

Once weighting has been applied the raw mark given for A, C and F for Paper 01 - Coursework and Paper 02 - Timed Test, are added together to become a subject mark out of 100. The subject mark boundary shown below applies for all endorsements (1027-1032 / 3027-3032). **The subject mark is not the UMS mark.**

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Upper Limit	100	96	81	66	51	40	29	19	9
Lower Limit	97	83	67	52	41	30	20	10	0

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Telephone 01623 467467

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