

GCSE

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

Summer 2008

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the 2008 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, that encourages an adventurous and enquiring approach to art and design.

The specification is intended to form part of an educational continuum that 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 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 own work and on the works of others.

Reports received from moderators, informed by the valuable initial discussions that they held with teachers in centres at the start of their visit, and the subsequent scrutiny of candidates' work, has provided evidence of the success of the 2008 series. Centres continued providing supportive courses that encouraged candidates to undertake visual research using primary and secondary sources and record observations, experiences and ideas in varied and appropriate ways. Candidates frequently showed their ability to observe, select and interpret with imagination and understanding. It is particularly satisfying to note that moderators recognised, in most centres, the emphasis placed on working from first hand experience.

As in the 2007 series, candidates submitted persuasive evidence that they had 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 a creative visual journey, informed by critical and cultural contexts is embedded throughout the specification and, without doubt, was understood by centres to be fundamental. At the same time, it is clear, from moderators' reports that centres fully acknowledged the importance of the personal outcome, the final destination, for GCSE artists. Centres showed that they recognised that the documentation of the journey was necessary but, to their credit, many appreciated that large volumes of evidence were not a requirement and, in so doing, enabled candidates to devote the time necessary to do extremely well in their final statements. It is worth stressing again this year 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 reported that candidates showed that they understood and used 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 knew about and understood a range of work from contemporary practice, past practice and different cultures and demonstrated an understanding of continuity and change in art, craft and design was certainly encouraging in the 2008 series. Centres usually urged candidates to make critical and

contextual references. In some cases centres were, 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. As pointed out in the 2007 report, progress away from dissertation (a lengthy and formal written treatment) and toward annotation (a short explanatory or critical note added to visual evidence) should be encouraged.

It is worth noting again this year, that a number of candidates awarded the highest mark available were performing beyond GCSE level. Candidates of such high calibre characteristically provided teachers and moderators with opportunities to see outstanding outcomes that evidenced 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. Centres that read the ICE carefully ensured that assessment and moderation processes were completed successfully.

An Assessment Matrix Mark Sheet (AMMS) must be completed for each candidate and made available for moderators when they visit the centre. Centres found it invaluable that the current version of the ICE and AMMS is available on the Edexcel website. Many centres photocopied the AMMS and the authentication forms back to back and this helped to reduce paperwork for centres.

Moderators reported that most centres presented candidates' work for moderation in an exhibition format. Candidates' hard work and commitment deserved the celebration offered by an exhibition that was enjoyed by others. The use of an exhibition to present work provided 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. Some centres with a large number of entries were 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 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 welcomed the support centres demonstrated 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 took in setting out in detail, for moderators, the approach taken in their centre toward course design and delivery, assessment and internal standardisation procedures was universally appreciated.

Centres must mark and moderate their candidates' work, using the taxonomy. Centres that followed this practice assiduously demonstrated an accurate understanding of appropriate mark levels. Furthermore, by using the taxonomy effectively to arrive at assessment decisions, teacher assessors achieved secure and accurate internal marking and standardisation across all of the disciplines.

The moderation 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. Moderators noted that a secure order of merit provided convincing evidence and support 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.

Strengths:

- Adherence to assessment and moderation processes set out in the ICE
- Accurately and complete AMMS and authentication forms
- A secure order of merit
- Coursework and ESA clearly identified with a map to enable moderators to locate candidates' work
- An informative dialogue with a head of department that set out in detail the centre's approach toward course design and delivery, assessment and internal standardisation procedures
- Accurate use of the taxonomy and a good grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent in the national context for GCSE Art & Design to arrive at secure assessment decisions
- Compelling internal standardisation across all disciplines.

Weaknesses

- Failure to adhere to assessment and moderation processes set out in the ICE
- Inaccurate and incomplete AMMS and authentication forms
- A doubtful order of merit
- Coursework and ESA that were not clearly identified
- The absence of an informative dialogue with a head of department covering the centre's approach toward course design and delivery, assessment and internal standardisation procedures
- Inaccurate use of the taxonomy and a weak grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent in the national context for GCSE Art & Design to arrive at secure assessment decisions
- Unconvincing internal standardisation across all disciplines.

Coursework

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

In 2008, 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 personal and well-informed responses.

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 convincing evidence of their achievements in all the assessment objectives. Moderators reported that candidates gained most from carefully 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 ideas and outcomes. Personal work of quality arose where centres had, in addition to a structured framework, effectively provided opportunities for candidates to find their own pathways to investigate and develop individual responses using varied scale, media and technical processes. Moderators have reported that, strong candidates given free reign, undoubtedly, produced persuasive work of high quality. However, moderators noted that the work of successful candidates across the ability range was nurtured best within a structured, albeit non-prescriptive framework, where there were ample opportunities to investigate and develop independent and personal responses.

Candidates showed, increasingly in the 2008 series, that they understood 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 was commonly welcomed by moderators. Visual research of quality, using photography as an investigative tool, came about in centres where the significance of composition, angle

of view, lighting, shutter speed and so on had been tackled effectively with candidates and, as a result, moved them away from the production of the undemanding snapshot. Centres clearly inspired their candidates to recognise that the scope, depth and quality of primary and secondary research had a direct impact on the excellence of final outcomes. There remained, in the 2008 series, a tendency for some candidates to rely on secondary sources. However, moderators reported that the immediacy and growing availability of inexpensive digital photography had given many candidates chances to collect first-hand research that might thus far have been found second-hand. For example, where a candidate needed visual research concerned with bicycles, images had been captured digitally within the centre's environment rather than from catalogues or magazines. Moderators reported again this year that, disappointingly, they saw many examples of found images simply being copied by candidates. Quality work was achieved where centres had sustained candidates' attempts to concentrate on using their research for personally creative development rather than merely being content to re-present or replicate the material.

Moderators reported growing evidence of sound and appropriate contextual research by candidates, from primary and secondary sources, that was convincing in the way that it stimulated and informed the development of personal ventures. 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, unfortunately, there remained an overpowering propensity in some centres to emphasise writing at the expense of visual analysis and evaluation accompanied by brief annotation. There was, as in previous years, for the most part amongst weaker candidates, a penchant 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 should 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 still treated superficially and ideas were formed too early. Where candidates moved straight from conception to

the realisation of final statements the result could be disappointing in quality. Moderators reported that reviewing, refining and modifying offered valuable opportunities for candidates to refine skills, select appropriate media and identify the best focus for realisation. A range of materials was normally 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 secured a well established understanding of appropriate assessment criteria. Above all, when all of the assessment objectives were 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 appeared to have been addressed as a series of unrelated tasks, moderators reported 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 perhaps 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 or scale. 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 emphasised the purpose and value of visual research and promoted the use of primary sources such as first-hand observational studies and independent or organised study visits to galleries and museums
- Courses that offered candidates opportunities to work with an artist in residence and in workshop settings
- Work in which appropriate contextual study was meaningfully linked to the focus of projects through articulate visual and verbal description, annotation and analysis
- Journals that were personal, enlivened and informative, expressing thoughts, ideas, experimentation, contextual links and showing review, refinement and development.
- Courses which emphasised and promoted the production of ambitious and imaginative final outcomes and that supported candidates in using a variety of media and scale
- Secure understanding of the inter-relationship of the assessment objectives and appreciation of appropriate evidence of candidates' level of achievement

Weaknesses:

- Courses that either lacked structure or were overly prescriptive and inflexible and that did not provide candidates across the ability range with a secure foundation of visual language, technical and material handling 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 exclusively 'snapshot' variety
- Excessive emphasis on written evidence for analysis and evaluation
- Contextual evidence that was 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 that were incomplete, disorganised and the result of insufficient in-depth review, refinement and modification
- Weak understanding of the inter-relationship of the assessment objectives and appreciation of appropriate evidence of candidates' level of achievement

Externally Set Assignment

Centres and candidates responded positively to 'Barriers', the theme for the Externally Set Assignment (ESA) in 2008.

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, discussing the theme with moderators, regarded the theme as an accessible, sound and suitably open-ended starting point for all candidates. The theme encouraged an array of individual responses ranging from the conventional to the refreshingly personal.

Candidates found plenty of inspiration in the theme and many steered clear from literal interpretations and this gave rise to personal and interesting outcomes.

Quality work came about where 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 finest ESA work had undoubtedly grown from the high calibre of best practice coursework experiences.

It was clear that candidates invariably gained from a reliable, supportive structure and logically guided direction during the eight-week preparation period and, therefore, achieved 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. Moderators recognised that in many centres a well constructed and time-managed preparatory period had been offered to candidates. Centres with supportive preparatory frameworks assisted, in particular, candidates for whom time management is an issue, in working systematically and effectively to produce evidence for the assessment objectives and this, in turn, helped 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 not enough time on sustained research, investigation, exploration and development before reaching a final outcome. Indeed, as reported last year, 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 underpinned the production of final outcomes of the finest quality. There was still a tendency, as in 2007, for some candidates to spend an inordinate amount of time exploring a large number of starting points at a surface level. For example, working systematically through many, or all, of the suggestions outlined in the ESA question paper inevitably led to a delay in a candidate identifying a focus and hence insufficient time was available for thoroughly reviewing, refining, modifying and developing realisation skills in advance of the production of final statements.

Centres adopted a range of approaches to give all their candidates the chance to embark on a focused journey. Stronger candidates made independent choices when investigating work by other artists and they offered their research and analysis in knowledgeable 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 tenaciously and with high levels of aptitude. 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 forceful where it was clearly discriminating, well thought-out and purposeful rather than randomly captured with little evidence of sensitivity or consideration. Elsewhere, some centres launched the preparatory period for their candidates from a contextual stance by encouraging them to investigate starting points inspired by an organised or independent gallery visit.

The theme provided sufficient openings for candidates to present an assortment of subjects, styles and media. Literal outcomes were derived from road signs, walls, gates and fences. Natural forms such as flowers, fruit, vegetables, shells and seedpods provided candidates with some credible starting points for their responses. References to the human form were popular and brought forward work derived from masks, scarves, clothing and the world of fashion. Food and drink wrappings and the work of pop artists made numerous appearances again this year. Candidates were also prepared to explore the possibilities for abstract and intensely individual responses. Candidates who steered clear of literal interpretations selected highly personal starting points concerned with emotional barriers and political themes. Potent and individual work was produced from journeys of discovery that motivated engagingly idiosyncratic associations.

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

Strengths:

- A scrupulously structured, centre devised and teacher led programme for preparatory studies that enabled candidates to achieve coherent, persuasive and well-crafted, imaginative individual responses
- Appropriate and evocative contextual encounters and analysis often supported at first hand through gallery or museum visits
- Conscientious first hand observation and research, including that obtained from the skilled use of a candidate's own film and digital photography, to support the development of outcomes
- Ample, purposeful, meaningful and sustained preparatory work that continued the development of ideas
- Convincingly authoritative application of media and techniques that enabled the high calibre realisation of imaginative ideas and intentions
- Accurate centre marking

Weaknesses:

- Inadequate support and guidance given to sustain candidates time management throughout their developmental journey resulting in too little time for essential review, refinement and modification
- Safe and literal interpretations of the theme that constrained candidates
- The pursuit of a substantial number of '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
- Meager command of materials and techniques that, in the end, reduced the quality of realisation of imaginative ideas and intentions
- Inaccurate centre marking

Summary

A large and growing number of centres showed that they have developed an increasing confidence with the specification and the demands it makes of both teachers and candidates.

High quality of teaching, thorough suitable coursework arrangements, the application of a scrupulous approach to the coverage of assessment objectives and appropriate resourcing ensured that candidates performed 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. Beneficial help and support invariably stressed recording visually from first hand experiences. Significant contextual encounters provided candidates with inspiration for individual and personal outcomes. Centres in which candidates performed well promoted, as a matter of course, an enjoyment of creative processes and enthusiasm for the use of media. Careful and selective research, visual analysis, thorough development of ideas and technical skills was more often than not sustained 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 or scale. The journal certainly provides important evidence of a candidate's journey and this is at its most convincing where it bears the hallmarks of selectivity, visual research, analysis, review, refinement and modification and, of course, the search for technical control.

It is worth raising, as in previous years, 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 lingers, in the 2008 series, a propensity for some candidates to spend an excessive amount of time and effort, during their course, on journal based work. Predictably this means that for some candidates, a large amount of their work is limited in terms of both scale and media and their artistic growth may, therefore, be somewhat inhibited. The development of a candidate's creative visual journey continues and, no doubt, may

well be improved through the particular opportunities made available in producing final outcomes.

There should be no apology for repeating the notion that the Edexcel GCSE Art and Design Specification calls for visual responses from candidates. Protracted annotations may well support some candidates' submissions, but large amounts of written text are, without doubt, not a requirement of the specification. All assessment objectives, right through the entire mark range, may be persuasively evidenced through a 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. Visual research, reaction, response and reflection is surely compellingly appropriate in GCSE art.

Finally, centres are to be commended, as in 2007, for the positive ways in which, through the provision of secure courses, they rose to the challenge of assisting and sustaining their candidates in accomplishing significant achievements in 2008.

Strengths:

- Accurate assessment using the taxonomy with a secure grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent in the national context for GCSE Art & Design to arrive at sound assessment decisions
- Convincing active centre support for all the moderation processes set out in the ICE
- 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 coursework and ESA outcomes

Weaknesses

- Inaccurate assessment resulting from a failure to use the taxonomy and a weak appreciation of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Competent, Confident and Fluent in the national context for GCSE Art & Design.
- Inadequate application of the moderation processes set out in the ICE
- Courses that either lacked structure or were overly prescriptive and inflexible 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 coursework and ESA outcomes.

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	82	66	51	40	29	19	9
Lower Limit	97	83	67	52	41	30	20	10	0

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