

A student's guide to the GCSE in

ART & DESIGN

What is GCSE Art & Design all about?

It's about having an adventurous and enquiring approach to art and design and developing the skills to express it. You will develop an understanding of past and contemporary art and design and be able to produce a personal response embracing a range of ideas.

The skills you will develop doing GCSE Art will be varied. Among them, you will develop a working knowledge of the materials, practices and technology of art and design. You will develop the skills to investigate, analyse and experiment using art, craft and design. You will develop your imaginative powers and the skills to express your ideas, feelings and meanings. You will also develop an understanding of the language and conventions of art and design and an understanding of the place of art, craft and design in history and in society. The specific skills you will develop will vary depending on the area of study you choose – for example graphic design, photography, film, textiles or fine art. However, whether you see yourself as a painter, fashion designer, film-maker or sculptor, the same basic rules and skills of art, craft and design apply.

How does it follow on from what I have learned before?

The GCSE in Art & Design follows on from what you have been doing at Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9). The emphasis in this GCSE is on the process of developing both ideas and work. Central to this is the work journal – similar to a sketchbook.

There is no formal requirement that you should have studied art and design before, but if you are interested in art, craft or design and if you have an aptitude for the subject – if you are creative, or 'good at drawing' – you may have the basic skills to succeed.

How is the course structured?

The GCSE in Art & Design contains two Papers – Paper 1 is Coursework and Paper 2 is the Externally Set Assignment – the timed test. For the Full Course, you will have to complete two units of coursework; for the Short Course, you will have to complete one unit of coursework. For both qualifications, you will also have to complete the Externally Set Assignment.

What about exams?

To complete your GCSE, you will have to take Paper 2: Externally Set Assignment. This will take the form of a broad theme – for example, it could be something like ‘Journeys’ or ‘Time’. The Externally Set Paper will also contain some suggestions for possible starting points and directions or areas of study, to help you develop your response and to give you ideas regarding your research. You will then have eight weeks in which to prepare for the timed test. During this time, you should explore the theme in your work journal and in preparatory studies – you can discuss it with your teacher – and prepare your response in your chosen specialism.

At the end of this period, you will sit a 10 hour timed examination, during which you will produce your final piece(s) of work. Your preparatory and developmental work, along with your final piece, will then be submitted for assessment.

What about coursework?

Your coursework, in your work journals and elsewhere, should include research, supporting studies and work showing the development of your ideas, leading to one or more outcomes – usually finished pieces of work. Your teacher will set you assignments and tasks.

What other skills might I develop?

In this course, you will cover the study of art, craft and design and acquire the ability to investigate, analyse and experiment. You will also develop practical skills to express ideas and use visual language. This course will therefore enable you to develop skills which will be essential to you whatever you go on to do afterwards.

The other skills you can develop during this course will be skills in communication, information technology, improving own learning and performance, working with others and problem solving.

What could I do next with a GCSE in Art & Design?

There are many things you can go on to do with a GCSE in art and design. If you are unsure about what to do next, the best thing to do is to speak to your art teacher who will know about the choices on offer.

You could go on to take an AS or A level in Art & Design, or a Vocational A level in Art & Design or a related subject. If you know the area of art, craft or design you want to specialise in, you could study for a National Certificate or National Diploma in Art & Design.

You may wish to do a GCSE in Art & Design for its own sake, perhaps to form the basis of a future interest. Or you might wish to go into a job where it is useful to have had experience of art, craft and design, or where you will need to use some of the skills developed during this course. These might include careers in such fields as advertising, marketing, design, architecture, publishing and the media.

Whichever you choose, the study of Art can help you develop transferable skills which you can take into any career or job.