

# **OCR Report to Centres**

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**June 2012**

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, OCR Nationals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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#### OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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## Art and Design

OCR GCSE in Art and Design: J160

OCR GCSE in Art and Design: Fine Art J161

OCR GCSE in Art and Design: Graphic Communication J162

OCR GCSE in Art and Design: Photography J163

OCR GCSE in Art and Design: Textile Design J164

OCR GCSE in Art and Design: Three-dimensional Design J165

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OCR GCSE in Art and Design: Applied J167



## Units A110 – A127

### General Comments

Now in its third year the GCSE Art and Design specification has become firmly established and continues to be well received by teachers and candidates alike.

Substantial numbers of teachers had attended INSET meetings during 2011-2012. As always OCR welcomed the high levels of participation and greatly appreciated the advice and encouragement received. This dialogue has proved invaluable to the ongoing process of producing support materials for teachers and candidates.

The majority of candidates had benefited from well delivered courses, which had been carefully designed to take full advantage of the strengths of the qualification. Unendorsed and Fine Art pathways remain the most popular approaches to study. The other endorsements, often supported by subject specialists, are significant areas of delivery in some Centres, which have the appropriate physical resources to facilitate delivery. There continues to be a significant rise in entries for Photography – Lens and Light-based Media (J163). Contextual Studies (J166) entries have also risen especially in those Centres where candidates undertake more than one GCSE Art and Design endorsement. Similarly, Applied Art and Design (J167), which meets the needs of those candidates seeking a more vocational pathway within the subject, has won further adherents.

Work for moderation was usually very well displayed and accurately labelled. Moderators commented positively on this continuation of good practice and were appreciative of the time and effort that staff and candidates had invested in facilitating moderation in this manner. However, a minority of centres did not give due consideration to the necessity of quiet and private accommodation for the moderation process. Centres are reminded that the moderation samples must be exhibited in merit order by unit.





The release of work for the purposes of Grade Award, Standardisation and Training is essential to the well-being of the qualifications and OCR acknowledges centres' collaboration in this respect. The dispatch of 'samples' is an important undertaking and whilst every reasonable precaution as regards safety and security is taken whilst these are in OCR's care centres are urged to package three dimensional and other fragile work appropriately.

Centres are thanked for their co-operation in making visit arrangements. Other aspects of administration were generally equally efficient. Most centres met the May 15 deadline for the dispatch of mark-sheets to OCR. Similarly, the majority correctly forwarded the Assessment Summary Form (GCW930) and the Centre Authentication Form (CCS160) with the MS1s to the moderator. Nonetheless, the Centre Authentication Form was frequently completed for each Unit rather than the qualification overall. It was gratifying that the advice given in respect of the 'inter-active' Centre Authentication and Assessment Summary forms had been taken. The use of the latter resulted in the incidence of 'arithmetical or transcriptional error' being particularly reduced this year.

Orders of merit were generally dependable. However, the levels of assessment, although generally more reliable than 2011, could on occasion prove unreliable and were consequently adjusted to meet the 2012 standard.

Centre staff generally accepted that moderators could only give condensed verbal feedback and looked forward to receiving a more detailed written report in August.



**SHARING BEST PRACTICE:**

***Download and use the Assessment Summary Form GCW930, which is available on the OCR web site. This option allows for the entry and addition of marks, thus avoiding arithmetical errors.***

***Display the Portfolio and Set Task in two separate rank orders.***

***Clearly identify individual units and highlight final outcomes.***

***Centres are reminded that in addition to the work sampled for the purposes of moderation all submissions must be readily available.***

## Art and Design Portfolio

The majority of work seen was for the Art and Design A110 and Fine Art A111 units. The other areas of study were also represented with Critical and Contextual Studies A116 and Applied Art and Design A117 being well supported. Photography is universal across all endorsements apart from being a well subscribed discipline in its own right. Work in three dimensions is often a feature of Unendorsed, Fine Art and Graphic Communications submissions, which reflects the multi-disciplinary approach adopted by many candidates.

Moderators reported favourably on the range of skills, media and techniques employed by candidates of all abilities in the production of the Portfolio units. The majority of candidates had benefited from courses with a clearly defined structure. Centre determined themes were praised for their scope, originality and suitability for the needs of candidates with the widest range of abilities. The themes undertaken, rather than being prescriptive, encouraged candidates to make purposeful departures in individual directions, which culminated in truly personal, informed and meaningful outcomes.

In most centres the approach to the Portfolio was usually robustly thematic, focused and well-sustained with the requirements of the Assessment Objectives been met in equal measure.

The use of worksheets, rather than sketchbooks, for preparatory studies was rather more prevalent. This approach may assist greater selection in the choice of work presented for assessment. Certainly weaker candidates were less inclined to substantiate submissions by including superfluous material. Now, irrespective of the means of presentation, with the emphasis on 'quality rather than quantity' this tendency appears to be in decline.

As in previous years most candidates made excellent use of sketchbooks, journals and diaries but others became somewhat obsessive with presentation and the decoration of pages. Inconsistency of achievement within the submission can be detrimental to accurate assessment. In this respect, centres are reminded that the purpose of moderation is to assess the best of candidates' achievement through the Assessment Objectives and not pass judgement on the progress individuals may have made over the duration of their programme.

Centres encouraged and supported candidates to produce individual portfolios. In the best examples it was evident that candidates benefited from a course structured so as to ensure coverage of the Assessment Objectives without becoming too prescriptive. However, some centres encouraged engagement with the Objectives in too rigid a manner, which did little to promote the full review, modification and consolidation of ideas as the work progressed towards final outcomes.





Moderators also reported that some candidates in their Portfolio submissions had presented sketchbooks filled with collage and magazine 'cut outs'. This practice is at best questionable as the links between secondary resource and the candidates' own work were frequently tenuous.

A continuing problem was the tension between quality and quantity. Many students produced large quantities of work but failed to develop their ideas in sufficient depth. There is no specific guidance in the specification about an ideal quantity of work. Candidates should be guided by the Assessment Objectives and consider carefully the extent to which their initial intentions are realised in their submissions. Successful candidates provided evidence of a creative journey undertaken with a genuine sense of purpose. Less accomplished work was often fragmented and poorly executed.

Some centres ignore the principle of selecting and presenting for assessment. In these case invariably all the work produced throughout the course is submitted and this results in inconsistency in levels of achievement which will be addressed in the moderation process.

Centres should impress upon candidates the importance of distinctly acknowledging reference material. Candidates may utilise research, quotations and other evidence in their submissions but they must identify their sources. Similarly, they must clearly differentiate between their own work and that of other practitioners.

Centres are reminded that when communicating in writing candidates should ensure that text is legible and spelling, punctuation and grammar accurate so that meaning is clear. Furthermore, centres are reminded that candidates are required to present information in a form that suits its purpose by using an appropriate structure and style of writing.

In most centres the exploration of artists' work and 'mind mapping' of themes remained a purposeful activity. However, some candidates are encouraged to go to great lengths to present worksheets about a wide variety of often very disparate artists, without evidence of how this connects with or informs their own work. Similarly, when researching themes candidates sometimes generated much visual investigation but failed to appropriately consider how they might select and develop specific ideas.





## Assessment Objective 1 – Develop

Candidates' ability to develop ideas was an essential aspect of the most proficient work and impacted directly on success in the other Assessment Objectives.

In this respect the ways in which candidates' respond to AO1 continue to be diverse. Once again in this series moderators noted the use of a wide range of context and stimuli. Naturally, the well established great masters from the world of 'Art History' are frequently referred to but increasingly lesser known and more contemporary practitioners are the source of inspiration.

In the best work, candidates produced highly thoughtful and analytical annotation, which demonstrated true engagement with the work of others and a clear understanding of how this informed their own practice.

Ethnic themes founded on the study of a variety of sources, including once again the ever popular Aboriginal Art, African masks, Indian miniatures and Japanese prints.

Guided and appropriate use of the Internet promotes a widening of research opportunities. The strongest candidates use search engines as a preliminary research tool and reinforce their understanding by reference to books and other printed materials. Marks awarded when Internet research is used must be based on candidates' use and processing of information rather than their ability to find it.

It is candidates' responses to 'artworks' in which critical evaluations are made and appreciation of context shown, that positively informs the development of ideas.

Many centres encouraged reference to contemporary sources, which stimulated candidates' imaginations and led to some well-considered links being forged. However, Banksy and other graffiti artists also proved popular which often resulted in superficial understanding and obvious and predictable interpretations.



### **SHARING BEST PRACTICE:**

**Use a wide range of sources to develop ideas and establish a balance between the use of media and photographic imagery. Avoid too much reliance on secondary sources from the Internet or magazines. At the core of much of the most successful work, across a range of endorsements, was the development of drawing skills as a means of researching and investigating, and developing ideas. In some cases drawings were successfully presented as final outcomes.**

## Assessment Objective 2 – Experiment

Well-devised GCSE programmes place emphasis on providing candidates with opportunity to explore the qualities of an often extraordinarily diverse range of materials, processes and techniques.

In some centres candidates were prompted to experiment with a wide range of materials and techniques at the expense of selecting and refining. This Objective was at its best when candidates were encouraged to link it closely with AO1 and build on investigations into the working processes and approaches of the practitioners studied.

In Photography some candidates engaged with some very exciting contemporary photographers' techniques and approaches, including experimentation with projecting and printing onto unusual surfaces, which gave a highly expressive effect.

When investigating a particular concept or theme candidates should be equipped to give more fluent expression to the review and refinement of their ideas and to do so with ever increasing technical ability. However, exploration should be relevant to ultimate intentions and genuinely assist in creative progression rather than being simply repetitive. Less successful submissions tend to display an unskilful and inappropriate use of materials, processes and techniques and culminate in unresolved outcomes.

Printmaking was undertaken widely. Textiles candidates, as always, employed a diversity of techniques and media and demonstrated a keen and well-informed interest in designers.

Critical and Contextual Studies candidates continue to show not only sound research skills but the ability to be experimental and selective when refining ideas towards practical outcomes.

Applied candidates displayed creativity in resolving design problems and presented convincing practical solutions when responding to vocationally orientated or commercially orientated briefs.

In less successful work, the basic skills of handling materials or techniques failed to be developed making it difficult for candidates to successfully explore or refine ideas and fully realise their intentions.



### **SHARING BEST PRACTICE:**

#### ***Make the most of local resources:***

- 1. Museums or galleries.***
- 2. Botanical gardens, parks and zoos etc***
- 3. Artists and designers***
- 4. Community Arts Centres***
- 5. Workshops or artists in residence***
- 6. Exhibitions or studio visits***
- 7. Carnivals, fairs and parades***

***Successful work often provided evidence of a coherent journey, with a genuine sense of purpose.***

***More successful candidates demonstrated that not only that they had learnt from the work of others but also simultaneously developed their own visual language.***



## Assessment Objective 3 – Record

Once again there were many examples of carefully observed, analytical drawings, which promoted fruitful creative departures. However, to be wholly effective drawing must be relevant to intentions and inform the directions taken in the work.

For some candidates the advancement of observational skills is a neglected aspect of their studies and those who substituted thoughtful recording with poorly selected collections of images from magazines and elsewhere were sadly misguided.

Many candidates go to a great deal of trouble to obtain good quality and exciting source material for recording. In contrast weaker candidates still tend to be over reliant on secondary sourced material.

When ‘found’ imagery is gathered from the Internet or elsewhere candidates must acknowledge their sources.

Photography, particularly digital, continues to be a major method of recording across all endorsements.

In many centres observations were well linked to intentions but elsewhere the discrete approach to AO1 and AO2 prevented candidates fully exploiting the knowledge and skills gained from development and exploration to expand their methods of recording.

Annotation and other written recording, rarely just descriptive but often reflective and analytical, were extensively used by candidates. Those who were clear about their own intentions and related these to the work of others invariably produced the best examples.

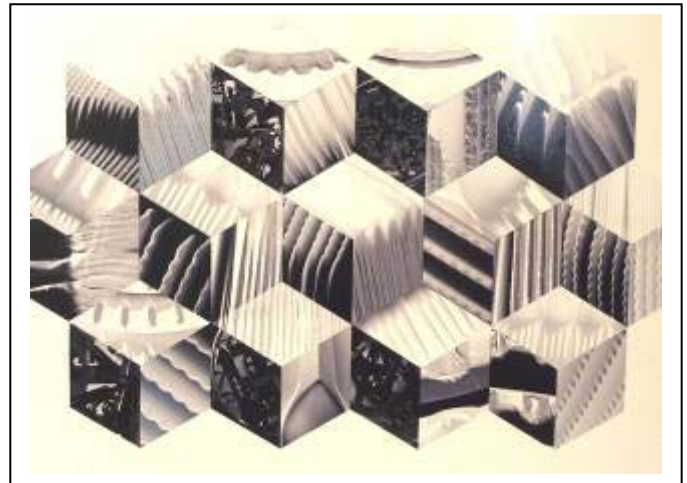




Candidates may record their ideas, feelings, insights and observations in any way that is appropriate to intentions and this is not the sole domain of drawing and photography. Indeed, successful candidates often record their thought processes, opinions and responses to experience in a range of different ways. A moderator commented, *“For the majority of candidates a diverse approach is advantageous as dependence on a single approach can prove restrictive.”*

Centres are reminded that the quality of written language is assessable. A moderator reported with some concern, *“Unfortunately the frequency of poor spelling, grammar and punctuation was alarming.”*

The quality of recording invariably impacts throughout all the assessment objectives and in the best submissions candidates ensure that the standard of work produced remains consistent throughout.



**SHARING BEST PRACTICE:**

*Present the work in a way that clearly shows the creative journey through the Assessment Objectives.  
Empty plastic bottles, cans, packaging and other throwaway items are just some of the free materials used by centres in respect of AO3.*



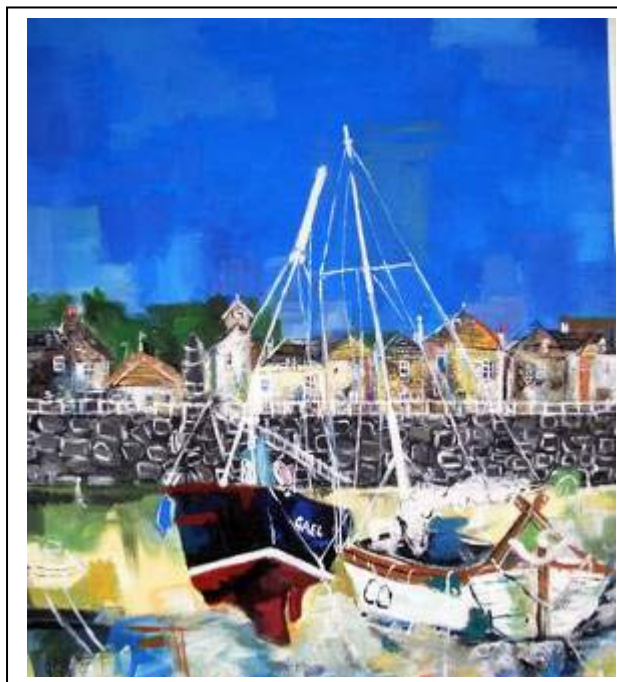
## Assessment Objective 4 – Present

Although the majority of candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of Assessment Objective 4 the more subtle nuances continued to evade some. In a cohesive body of work the responses to the Assessment Objectives overlap and inter-relate. Thus, 'Present' is applicable from the outset of the creative journey until its conclusion and should be evidenced throughout. It is worth emphasising that those who regard the Objective as relating solely to the final outcome, rather than the whole submission, are misguided.

There are unfortunately still some instances of candidates presenting all of their coursework for assessment whereas being discriminating would have been more advantageous in terms of meeting the requirements of Assessment Objective 4. Moderators' judgements of centres' levels of assessment are founded on the evidence placed before them and the responsibility for being selective rests entirely with candidates.

The strongest candidates produced exceptional outcomes, which impressed with the sophisticated use of detail, colour, scale and technique. Such candidates made connections with contexts and the work of other practitioners that demonstrated insight and sound critical and analytical understanding. Regrettably in some instances candidates simply reproduced an image from the preparatory phases and, although sometimes well executed, this did little to disclose the narrative of the creative journey.

Submissions are at their best when there was a 'journey' leading to an edited presentation of work which evidenced clear and insightful connections between elements, but also imaginative and personal expression. Some centres still seem to be presenting 'the course', rather than teaching candidates to select and present work, which best evidenced not just their skills but strengths through the Assessment Objectives.



### **SHARING BEST PRACTICE:**

***In the OCR-set Task candidates should avoid using unfamiliar materials or techniques in the production of the final outcomes, especially during the ten hours supervised period when guidance by the teacher may not be given.***

## OCR-Set Task

The OCR-set Task paper promoted responses that were almost invariably lively and well-intentioned. Moderation confirmed that the range of starting points provided a platform for all candidates to display their individual creativity and technical skills to the best advantage.

Most teachers preview the paper upon receipt and are thus well primed for its distribution to candidates early in the Spring Term. Candidates largely take advantage of the extended preparatory period and consequently most submissions were well sustained throughout the Assessment Objectives.

Less successful candidates could be equally expansive in their intentions but lacked the imagination or technical abilities to put their ideas into practice. They often chose predictable solutions, such as the direct copying of secondary sourced material, and tended to place insufficient emphasis on development and exploration.

Centres on the whole supported candidates well by building on the experience gained during the programme and fostering the exploration of individual lines of enquiry. Those with candidates undertaking Graphic Communication, in order to set a common brief, typically encouraged candidates to undertake a single starting point and prevented the full use of the range of options on offer.

On the whole the submissions for the Set Task appeared more selected and focused than those for the Coursework unit and this often meant that it 'read' better and appeared more personal and refined. Whilst outcomes sometimes lacked the ambition of preparatory work these could be accomplished and evidenced excellent time management skills. In Photography submissions, especially in the case of digital work, it could be difficult to distinguish what had been achieved in the ten hours of supervised time. However, for many exploration was evidenced by the documentation of print screen during this period.

Candidates' choice of starting point from Section 1 was particularly even:

'**Street Art**' – was a popular starting point which generated some interesting explorations of site specific art forms and showed intelligent development and exploration. This served as an antidote to the surfeit of rather obvious reproductions of graffiti.



### **SHARING BEST PRACTICE:**

***Teachers should open the paper when it arrives in the centre to enable them to prepare teaching and learning resources to support the candidate in the preparatory period.***

***The dispatch of the Set Task paper is generated from the provisional entries submitted to OCR by the centre in the autumn term.***



**‘Cut and Paste’** - led to many highly individual responses and proved particularly popular with candidates working digitally. Many dynamic contextual links were made to contemporary graphic imagery as well as with historic fine art movements such as Cubism.

**‘Star’**- a popular starting point, which promoted lively interpretations, some quite literal whilst others delved deeply into popular culture and other themes.

**‘Cityscape’** - a well subscribed starting point, which encouraged a wide variety of approaches across the endorsements. Some exciting explorations were generated by candidates considering aspects of city life and the environment, in addition to scenic approaches.

**‘Giants’** - in addition to more literal interpretations some candidates used this popular starting point to explore viewpoint, composition and scale.

**‘Dried Flowers or Seed Pods’** - this starting point proved successful with candidates who recorded effectively from first-hand experience.

**‘Olympic’** - a particularly popular choice with candidates following the Graphic Communication endorsement. Innovative approaches were often based on personal experience and the resulting imagery evolved into a number of outcomes such as stamps and point of sales displays. Surprisingly little use was seen to be made of the contextual opportunities provided by historic and modern Olympic art and design.

**‘Gather’** - not as popular a starting point as ‘Cut and Paste’ with which one could draw parallels. Nonetheless, lively interpretations, some thematic and others exploring qualities of media and process, were promoted.

The Section 2 Visual Starting Points proved more attractive this year with both ‘New Media’ and particularly ‘Portraying Animals’ finding considerable support. Candidates in the upper mark range capitalised on the overt contextual referencing for Assessment Objective 1 and moderators commented positively on the quality of research into themes such as Aboriginal Art.

In Section 3 all three starting points found support amongst Critical and Contextual candidates. Whilst **‘Representations of war’** responses particularly took the direction of a comparison of two artists those for **‘Interpretation of dreams’** especially adopted a practical route in the form of painting, printmaking or three-dimensional work. Although the least popular choice candidates investigating **‘Still Life’** largely showed a genuine appreciation of the genre through purposefully sustained study.



## Critical and Contextual Studies

This endorsement again attracted a good following especially from centres wishing to offer their candidates the opportunity to follow a course that is underpinned by contextual research and reference.

Moderators once again commented positively on the wide variety of approaches to study witnessed. Predominantly candidates made highly personal responses to art and design works through their own practical work.

Indeed practical work is frequently supported by thoughtful written observations that demonstrated commendable levels of critical understanding and appreciation.

It was encouraging to note that most candidates successfully avoided repeating factual information gathered from the Internet and made a genuine attempt to be interpretive and insightful. Not surprisingly candidates' performance in Assessment Objective 1 was almost invariably strong, impacting positively on the rest of the submission.

Candidates proved just as likely to respond to the works of contemporary, often quite obscure, practitioners as much as investigating the work, life and times of popular artists such as Van Gogh or Picasso.

Some Centres encourage candidates to reduce the amount of historical information gathered and concentrate on documenting, critical analysis and personal evaluations.



### **SHARING BEST PRACTICE:**

***Introduce a programme of research using a range of different approaches, from sketching, to photography, to collecting pictures and items. Ask your candidates to edit and annotate their research.***



## Applied Art and Design

Once again in 2012 a growing number of candidates are taking this endorsement.

Centres continue to show much ingenuity in devising vocationally or commercially orientated briefs, which often established realistic clients and target audiences with whom candidates could readily identify. Working within such parameters far from being restrictive continues to promote the creativity of many candidates who display much originality of thought in resolving design problems and presenting convincing solutions.

Candidates researched a broad spectrum of contexts and made connections with a considerable array of practitioners, equally from the fields of Design and the Fine Arts. Although candidates had the latitude to work within the broad areas of study identified by the endorsements the approach was frequently multi-disciplinary with candidates demonstrating much versatility in exploring the potential of an impressively extensive assortment of 2D and 3D media, resources, materials, techniques and processes.

It was common practice in some centres to establish a series of deadlines throughout the year of work for candidates to follow. In this respect it is quite acceptable to go back over projects in order to improve the depth of research and development.

Annotation in Applied Art and Design can refer to specific design issues such as materials, structure and alternative approaches to making supplemented by specific fashion, textile, graphic design, architectural or product design terminology.

Candidates should give proper attention to the design process in a vocational context so that the gap between research and final outcome is bridged by developmental stages.



### **SHARING BEST PRACTICE:**

***Candidates should remember that the work should be seen 'in a vocational context' and that the 'work must be supported by relevant work of their own'.***





**SHARING BEST PRACTICE:**

***Candidates should present and centres should display the work in a manner that supports the moderation process, a clear journey through the Assessment Objectives and candidate achievement.***

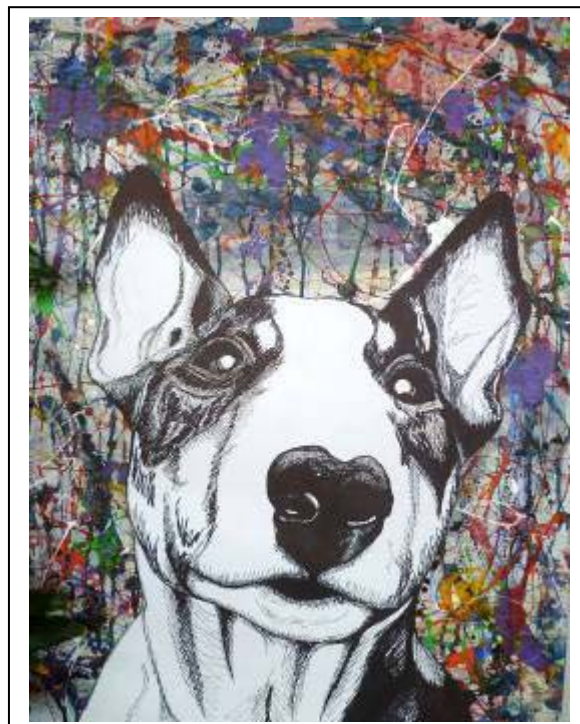


## Summary and Guidance

All centres should find it reassuring that this examination series confirmed that the changes to GCSE Art and Design greatly helped candidates achieve in all the endorsements and make full use of the creative and skills based opportunities afforded.

Centres continue to take advantage of the wider choice of endorsements and candidates' submissions distinctly demonstrated the broadest possible range of approaches at GCSE. The opportunities presented in this Art and Design specification allows for greater flexibility in designing course structures and delivery. Moreover, the assessment burden is alleviated by reductions in the amount of work and space required for moderation.

Most importantly the established good practices and standards of excellence, which all parties - candidates, teachers and moderators alike - may justly celebrate, continue to be carried forward with confidence and expertise.





In this third year of the 'new' specification informed teaching, well conceived course structures and appropriate resources ensured that candidates performed to their full potential in both Units. Teachers in the vast majority of centres achieve this and they are commended for the constructive assistance, support and guidance given to their candidates.

Centres are reminded that applications for Special Consideration must be made well in advance of the moderation visit. This responsibility lies entirely with centres as the moderator cannot activate the procedure. It is advisable to notify the moderator of such cases when forwarding documentation for the May 15 deadline.

The use of ICT was a significant feature of work across all endorsements. The Internet enabled candidates to access the work of a wide range of artists, designers and craftspeople. However, teachers and lecturers need to be vigilant in monitoring the websites used and steer candidates away from inappropriate material.



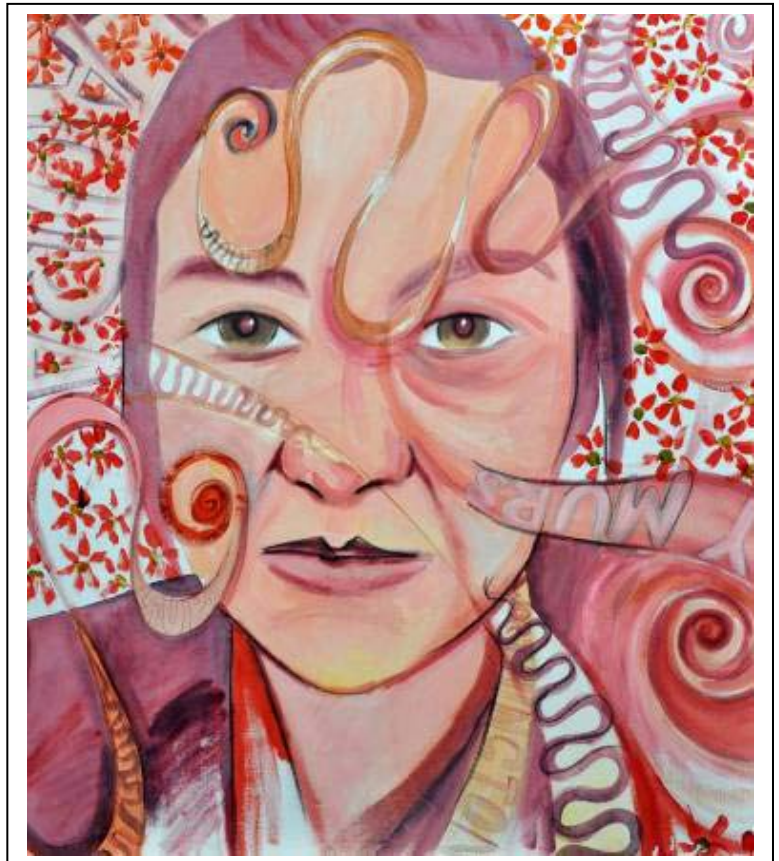


OCR thanks the many teachers who attended the INSET meetings for GCE Art and Design during 2011-2012. Their encouragement was much appreciated and the suggestions made greatly informed the support materials for both candidates and teachers.

Further information regarding training for 2012-2013 will be available on the OCR website, [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk) or by contacting OCR Training on 02476 496398 or by email to [training@ocr.org.uk](mailto:training@ocr.org.uk) in September 2012.

Teachers are reminded that they can join the OCR Art and Design social network site via the OCR website. This covers all Art and Design specifications and can be used as a forum to ask questions, share good practice and resources and to contact colleagues delivering the OCR specifications in your local area. The site is supported by the Subject Area Support team and OCR would welcome any questions, comments or feedback from teachers regarding this report.

***The exemplar photographs used in this report show a small selection of the work displayed for moderation and they are reproduced with the permission of the centres concerned. OCR would like to thank all the candidates, teachers and moderators who made this possible.***



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