



External Assessment Report 2012

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| Subject | Art and Design |
| Level | Advanced Higher |

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

All Markers indicated that the high standard of work that was seen last year has been maintained in 2012. There were a number of remarkable folios that gained 200 marks; for some, the candidates' achievements were beyond the highest level of the grade related criteria. For most candidates, the basis of success lies in thorough development of ideas and clear presentation.

Well organised projects

It is good to see the continuing standard of organisation and purpose that is exemplified in the way that candidates tackle the Statement of Intent and Evaluation. It remains as the vital link between the creative intentions of each candidate and the expectations of the Markers.

Whereas it was once common to see folios that contained loosely connected pieces of classwork, it is now rare to find a project that has a lack of structure and direction. It is this that explains the accessibility of the Course and the low number of candidates achieving a Grade D.

Development of ideas

There is now a general understanding that the central challenge of Advanced Higher Art and Design is to show a process of development, illustrating the steps towards the resolution of visual ideas. Markers appreciate that this emergence of creative thought is not straightforward — it involves a combination of experiment, intuition, personal expression, determination, flexibility and patience; the trail of notes, sketches, models and half-finished drawings is sometimes difficult to follow. Markers are aware of the various forms in which candidates will consider possible solutions, and they often commend the ways in which this work is presented.

Financial restrictions

Markers are aware of the difficulties that many departments face in providing the range of materials required for a folio of up to 24 items of A1, in times of increasing financial restraint. These restrictions have limited what can be done in 3D, and may have caused a reduction in various types of experiment with materials and in large scale work. However, despite these restraints, the work that was produced this year was impressive. Centres are reminded that expensive materials are not a prerequisite for a successful folio, but craftsmanship should be encouraged at all times.

Trends and approaches to enquiries

Social Issues

The 2011 External Assessment Report commented on a developing interest in projects connected with personal beliefs or social issues. This trend has continued in projects

associated with environmental concerns, health, body-image and social anxiety that now appear in many forms; part of a design brief, a semi-biographical series of portraits or narrative paintings. All this seems rather worthy, but the treatment of these topics is often visually dynamic and highly personal. It is a response to Advanced Higher that reflects the concerns of this generation of candidates, and it shows the ways Art and Design can act as a conduit for thoughts and ideas.

Design

Textiles and fashion remain the most popular design option. It is interesting to see the way in which expressive ideas of print making and abstract drawing techniques combine with inspiration from popular imagery and cultural issues in some projects that create artwork that is also a garment. There are also some delightful jewellery projects that exploit the potential of sculptural forms and unlikely materials.

Product Design shows the same sense of an inventive use of shape in responding to a brief and, like jewellery, it suits the developmental format of Advanced Higher; I would recommend these options to candidates. There were outstanding Graphic Design enquiries with innovative use of unlikely materials, drawing and Photoshop. Markers often express the hope that there might be more examples of Jewellery Design, Product Design and Graphic Design.

Architecture

Once again, Markers were very impressed by the quality of Architecture folios, which formed a significant part of the Design presentation. A combination of CAD, drawing and often sophisticated models used to illustrate detailed schemes for interiors, extensions or proposals for concept buildings. Architecture folios were once the preserve of boys, but Markers commented on the success of folios by girls.

Expressive

Self-examination in a number of forms is a common theme in many Expressive projects and, through this, Markers were treated to some outstanding painting projects in which candidates used themselves and their friends as the topic. Portrait or Figure Composition remain as the predominant themes and they continue to inspire some of the best expressive work.

Still Life and Landscape are reappearing, with some innovative approaches in developing ideas. However, folios that explored concepts such as mapping the environment, myth and memory, or the planets, involved more challenging engagement with research and development of ideas that was often highly creative. This work was done through a variety of media, such as drawing, photography, animation or print making, and it breaks barriers between Expressive and Design and is in the truest sense an Enquiry.

Sculpture

Working in three dimensions is often the most exciting open-ended entrance to creative thinking, yet for quite sensible reasons, such as the expense of materials and available space, it has all but vanished. The few examples of sculpture this year reminded us that with

cheap or found materials and a reasonable control of scale, this is a viable and very exciting option that is not explored enough.

The optional Practical Unit

It is reassuring to report that the preference for the practical option that had appeared to be declining is now on the increase. There may be a number of reasons:

- ◆ a preference for practical work over writing
- ◆ a recognition that the 4 to 6 sheet task is comparable with the time spent on a written topic
- ◆ an enjoyment of both areas of the subject
- ◆ the production of a folio showing creative work in different areas of the subject, which is also used for applications to art college

Areas in which candidates performed well

High standards of technique

Many Markers commented on the high standard of technical skill seen this year. In Expressive, the care and refinement that candidates show in drawing and painting is admirable, and there are clearly centres that have created schools of shared knowledge that is passed on from one year group to the next. This in-house excellence can also be seen in Design, where teachers with specialist interests are able to inspire candidates to take projects to a high level of finish.

Research and development in Design

The best Design work we saw this year showed an enjoyment of the creative process of researching and developing ideas. In many folios the work in researching the brief was integrated into the development of ideas so that the project illustrated a continuous train of thought, making that work quite easy to follow.

Markers identified the following key areas of strength:

- ◆ clear identification of design issues in the Design brief
- ◆ use of annotation and communication of evolving ideas that make links between research and development
- ◆ explanation, through working drawings, of problem solving
- ◆ use of drawings, photographs and models to show how the solution has been constructed

Guidelines on the Statement of Intent and Evaluation

In this aspect of the project, candidates have performed well in the following ways:

- ◆ work is numbered and ordered
- ◆ there is a clear sense that the Enquiry represents the response to a plan, brief or goal

- ◆ the link between practical and written study is explained
- ◆ there is a sense of self critical analysis in the evaluation that recognises the limits of the Enquiry

Art and Design Studies

Markers are always impressed by way the study of an artist or designer can have a direct benefit on the standard of the practical work. Where this has occurred, candidates have sometimes used sketches and photographs to show the links between written and practical. The influence is often further exemplified by the way candidates make an analysis of works that have a particular association with the study. This analysis shows an understanding of visual elements of the kind taught at Higher as well as an appreciation of the role of materials and techniques in Art and Design.

It is also good to see the emergence of a more discursive tone in many written studies, where the topic is not just explained, but personal, critical judgements are argued with an emphasis on design issues or the meaning and context of work of art.

New approaches to Advanced Higher

It is encouraging to see an increasing number of candidates who are presenting a more concept-based Enquiry that does not culminate in a picture or a conventional design. Here, the emphasis is less on completed outcomes and more on personal investigation where the project is created out of a wealth of sketches, draught proposals, collections of objects, written notes or photographs that are closer to contemporary art practice. This kind of process is wholly within the spirit of Advanced Higher because it promotes research skills and a high level of creative thought, and engenders a confident independent outlook. However, it takes an experienced teacher to manage and direct this sort of course to ensure that the creative outcomes are integrated into the development work, yet stand as genuine works of art or design.

The optional Practical Unit

We have seen some exciting examples of the Double Practical folio this year where candidates have shown an impressive range of skills in both Expressive and Design. Some candidates have chosen to create interplay between the two Units; the Design Enquiry, for example, sometimes uses the Expressive option as a means to researching parts of the design topic. This can be done very well, but the two practical Units may be treated quite separately.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Drawing directly from life

The unique quality of a direct engagement with a subject through drawing is a vital experience for all Expressive candidates. The freshness, visual insights and observations that are gained from being in the presence of the subject bring a folio to life. It is therefore disappointing to see that some Expressive candidates are presenting work that is entirely

dependent on copying photographs and the result, however well done, is limited, both in its level of observation and its creative potential.

Drawing directly from life versus photography

Photography has an important part to play in many Enquiries; it can be used to research topics, providing a visual diary of ideas and as a tool for collecting information. It has also been an important aid in recording the process of forming outcomes in both Expressive and Design folios. However, all Expressive candidates must be aware of the need to base their Enquiry around first-hand drawing.

Art and Design Studies that lack analysis and discussion

This year there has been repeated comment by Markers on Art and Design Studies that have a purely factual approach to broad topics. For example, a candidate may choose to write about three artists — not particular aspects of their work, but simply a brief biography of each artist. These facts about the artists are not discussed, their relevance or context is not explained, and the candidate does not analyse or form any view of the work. This factual approach misses vital areas of the Unit and it can, at best, attain only half the marks available.

Art and Design Studies: making a link in fashion

Markers have noted that, in regard to Fashion Design, some candidates have a tendency to write a study on their favourite designer without regard to how this influence is seen in the mandatory unit. For example, Vivienne Westwood or Alexander McQueen appear in studies that have only a tenuous connection with the practical design project.

Concise Statement of Intent and Evaluation

The form that is on the SQA web site is quite flexible in size, unlike the previous paper copy, and this, combined with a commendable desire to make a full statement, has led to some accounts of the work that are long-winded, and pedantic. It seems churlish to complain about excessive zeal, when only a few years ago Markers were demanding greater emphasis on this part of the submission, but some forms are overly detailed and repetitive.

Development in Fashion Design

In developing ideas for textile and clothing, candidates are apt to conceive of the design in two dimensions by presenting repeated drawings on traced fashion figure templates. This approach is apt to limit the scope of development to colour and pattern. A garment has volume, and the candidate must consider how it will look in the round, how it will fit on the body and how can be made in 3D with all the seams, pleats, stitching and pads that are involved.

Development in Expressive

The high standard of outcomes in many Expressive folios is apt to mask a lack of emphasis on development of ideas. Some Enquiries are presented as a group of completed works, like a Maths paper with only the final answers, and no steps in working out the solutions. Markers are unable to find just how the preparatory drawing, the compositions, colour

schemes, relationships between shapes, patterns, tones and textures were worked out. In a creative Enquiry of this kind, the development of ideas is essential.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Drawing

Encourage candidates to draw from first-hand sources. Make reference to drawings done directly from life in the Statement of Intent and where possible, give advice and set up opportunities to promote drawing.

Statement of Intent and Evaluation

Follow the guidelines for completing the Statement of Intent and Evaluation, but try to be clear and concise in your explanations. Use bullet points to identify particular issues, for example:

I developed the work by:

- ◆ *making prints from my first drawings*
- ◆ *sketching a series of compositional studies*
- ◆ *making a painted sketch focusing on colour*

Structuring the Course

Teachers should try where possible to make a series of deadlines throughout the year so that candidates are aware of the length of time given to a particular assignment. It is quite acceptable to revisit projects to improve the depth of research and development. Teachers frequently timetable reviews of work so that connections between research, development and outcome can be assessed.

Teach research skills

Introduce a programme of research using a variety of approaches from sketching, to photography, to collecting pictures and items. Ask your candidates to annotate their research. If candidates are presenting images on a large sheet in the style of a mood board, be very careful that they are clearly communicating a visual idea.

Sketchbooks

Sketchbooks are not required as part of the Enquiry, but they are not discouraged. Many teachers, Markers and candidates see the importance of sketchbooks in providing a focus for research, a diary, a reference book or a personal store of ideas. Where possible, candidates should make reference to relevant parts of the book in the Statement of Intent, and they should identify appropriate pages.

Development

It is now broadly accepted that thorough development is the key to producing a high standard of Enquiry. Here are some areas where development can be extended:

- ◆ Look to make very clear links between the research and development stages of your project by beginning the development on the same sheet as the research to show how they are connected, or by making clear annotations showing how the various strands of research have led to creative ideas.
- ◆ In Design candidates should try to consider three or four ideas and identify them clearly by sketches annotations and illustrations. Candidates should develop each of their options showing how they have combined some and rejected others.
- ◆ Candidates should show how they have refined the idea they have chosen, for example, by experimenting with materials or reworking key areas, trying out varieties of shape, colour, pattern tone or texture. Annotate this process.
- ◆ If working on a 3D project, have research that takes the form of small models or try-outs for 3D ideas in a CAD or similar programme.
- ◆ Produce development that focuses on making the outcome. Highlight any difficulties or issues in making; this could be to do with ways of constructing fabric or structuring the plan for a building. The process of making could be photographed at different stages.
- ◆ In Expressive, show how preparatory drawings are linked to development ideas, experiment with materials, print making or collage. Look particularly at composition, explaining, by a series of sketches, how the arrangement of shape and form can affect the final work. Try out ideas in a tonal sketch or in a form that examines a particular visual element.

The optional Practical Unit

Candidates should be careful to choose a topic that can be completed in 40 hours and to plan how it will be presented. It is important to note the following points:

- ◆ be careful to avoid an over-ambitious project
- ◆ in Design, be precise about the limits of the brief
- ◆ make sure that Research and Development are well focused
- ◆ be selective in what you submit

Art and Design Studies

Begin the Art and Design Studies at an early stage in the session and try to link it closely with the practical project. Here are some suggestions for approaching the study:

Links to practical work: Candidates should establish connections with their practical work in this study, either by a brief statement or by presenting photos of examples of their work

that have links to the topic. Resist the temptation to discuss their own work in the study; there is scope to do this in the Statement of Intent and Evaluation.

Limit the scope of study: Try to encourage candidates to discuss an aspect of the artist or designer they are studying, so that they are focusing on a particular part of the topic or period that interests them. If they wish to include more than one artist or designer, try to think of a way of linking them under a general theme such as Magic Realists or Green Product Designers.

Analyse a selected work: Encourage candidates to choose an example of a work that is relevant to their study and make a deconstruction of visual elements, techniques, materials, background and context and influences. Now discuss points that emerge from the analysis such as design issues, meanings, or personal opinions.

Make a comparison and a discussion: Another way of bringing other artists into the study is to make a comparison. It is important for the teacher to help with this process by selecting examples that set up a valid comparison of works that have many features in common — for example, a design of the same item by a different designer, or a painting of the same subject by another artist.

Art college folios: Art School folios often provide a basis for some excellent enquiries that show a strong interest in developing an individual approach to a topic. The work emphasises the way Advanced Higher can contribute much in creating structure and providing an outlet for interest in related artists and designers that enhances a folio. Candidates sometimes include work done in figure drawing classes and, while this can be interesting as background material, it should only be included when it is relevant to the topic.

DESIGN

Statistical information: update on Courses

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| Number of resulted entries in 2011 | 657 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2012 | 583 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

| Distribution of Course awards | % | Cum. % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|----------------------|-------------|
| Maximum Mark 200 | | | | |
| A | 28.8% | 28.8% | 168 | 136 |
| B | 28.5% | 57.3% | 166 | 118 |
| C | 32.1% | 89.4% | 187 | 101 |
| D | 6.2% | 95.5% | 36 | 92 |
| No award | 4.5% | 100.0% | 26 | - |

EXPRESSIVE

Statistical information: update on Courses

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2011 | 926 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

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| Number of resulted entries in 2012 | 832 |
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

| Distribution of Course awards | % | Cum. % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|----------------------|-------------|
| Maximum Mark 200 | | | | |
| A | 27.5% | 27.5% | 229 | 136 |
| B | 29.7% | 57.2% | 247 | 118 |
| C | 32.6% | 89.8% | 271 | 101 |
| D | 7.3% | 97.1% | 61 | 92 |
| No award | 2.9% | 100.0% | 24 | - |

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.