



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	Art and Design
Level(s)	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

The number of candidates being presented at Higher level remains strong, and the A-C rate was similar to last year's.

The method of marking the practical folios remained unchanged. The 'double blind' marking system continues to be robust and fair to all candidates.

The majority of candidates have been given the freedom to respond to all aspects of the course on a personal and intellectual level. This is a major strength of Art and Design, and the core aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence* are being covered by this excellent practice.

Each year a grade boundary meeting takes place for each subject at each level where all the information available (including statistics and marker feedback) is brought together and discussed. The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet the relevant SQA Head of Service and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of SQA's management team. Grade Boundaries can be adjusted up or down at this meeting.

Following discussion and analysis of statistical data at this year's meeting, the decision was taken to make a slight adjustment to the grade boundaries for Higher Art and Design as it was felt that the revised boundaries gave a better reflection of candidate achievement.

## Practical folio

It was clear that the majority of candidates were fully engaged and enjoyed the subject. The range of outcomes was wide and demonstrated how dynamic, enterprising and holistic the learning and teaching of Art and Design in Scotland is. The education of our young people is being served well by those who deliver the subject, and we must strive to maintain this excellent standard.

However, there are still a considerable number of centres who entered candidates at the wrong level. This raised concerns that these centres have lack of understanding of standards with regard to Unit passes. This is despite the availability of exemplar material published on SQA's secure website, [www.sqa.org.uk/sqasecure](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqasecure). This year's benchmark folios will be published on the secure website, along with the marks and associated commentaries. Centres are reminded that last year's benchmarks with commentaries are also published on the secure site.

## **Question paper**

Generally, the standard of candidate response was high, with no questions causing any particular problems. The average mark for the question paper has remained constant for several years, and many candidates gained full marks.

Markers commented that the paper was an extremely fair and well balanced one, with interesting images which stimulated good responses. The vast majority of candidates were able to complete the paper with the allocated time.

The most successful candidates used the wording of the question as an aid to structure their response.

As in previous years, most responses for Section 1, Art Studies, came from the Portraiture and Still Life questions. Section 2, Design Studies, elicited responses from a broader range of questions; Textile/Fashion Design, Jewellery Design, Product Design and Graphic Design.

There were no reports of candidates using artists who predate 1750.

## **Areas in which candidates performed well**

### **Practical folios**

Successful folios tended to be the ones in which candidates has engaged in an area of personal interest which tended to generate a strong theme. The level of work produced by these candidates was quite outstanding as the exhibited skill and understanding well in advance of their years.

Markers commented that well presented, tidy folios were more easily accessible, and that they tended to be more successful than those which had been presented in an overly fussy manner.

One Marker's comment, 'the stronger the theme, the stronger the work', holds true.

### **Expressive**

Still Life and Portraiture are still, by far, the most common areas of study, although there was a slight increase in the area of Landscape.

There was evidence of excellent teaching of the skills of drawing, painting and printmaking.

The sketch book approach to development, exploring a wide range of compositions and media, in a loose, not necessarily completed form, was more popular than in previous years. Those often led to more successful final solutions. There was also some increase in the use of effective annotation at this stage, where the candidate considered the purpose of the development process, such as, 'Positional the long object at an angle creates a lead in to this composition; 'Putting the figure against a dark background brings it forward, making it more of a focal point', etc.

## **Design**

Markers commented that keeping market research images separate from investigative ones was easier to comprehend and therefore mark.

There was excellent and very creative use of recycled materials, which when combined with good craftsmanship, often achieved full marks.

Architecture worked well when due consideration was given not only to windows and doors, but also scale and location.

There was an increase in textile/wallpaper pattern design, which was often, but not always, very successful.

There was a marked improvement in quality of evaluations, indicating that time had been spent guiding candidates on how to complete these effectively.

## **Question Paper**

Responses to the 'a' questions were generally very good, indicating thorough preparation and practice by departments.

Markers noted that, for question 7(a), in addition to astute observations on the main function of the poster, many candidates were also able to make insightful and relevant commentary on the power of propaganda and the prevailing political position in Germany at that time. Whilst this knowledge was not essential to gain full marks, it was encouraging to see an example of interdisciplinary work happen naturally.

The most successful responses to the 'b' questions tended to ones that had a strong structure; a good balance between historical/biographical details, perceptive information on specific works (including knowledge of styles), and an understanding of why the artists/designers were important and influential.

There continued to be a good range of artists and designers discussed for the 'b' questions, including many Scottish ones.

Many Markers commented that the more personal the choice, the more fresh and exciting the response and the enjoyable they were to mark.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Practical Roles**

Markers commented that when strict and formulaic approaches were used, the folios were often more difficult to mark. With some submissions, each area was so tightly regimented that the voice of the individual candidate was lost. This approach stifled the better candidates and inevitably disadvantaged them.

It was also noted that folios lacking a strong theme or process tended to lack focus and direction.

There was an increase in the use of inadequate gluing systems that failed to keep all studies attached to their mounts when hung for the marking process. This included the use of spraymount and in some cases, glue guns, especially with metal objects.

Some folios were taped together incorrectly – sheets in the wrong order or upside down.

## **Expressive**

Markers were very concerned with the increase of submissions that were worked on top of photocopies and, in some instances, photographs. This was seen as an attempt to deceive the Markers and was very difficult to assess. This practice was unacceptable, and should not be encouraged. Drawing is the basic skill which underpins the Expressive unit, and removing it undermines the integrity of the subject and is a very poor educational experience for the candidate. The hand of the candidate must be evident for the whole of the study, not just the 'top layer'.

Other issues raised by Markers were:

- ◆ A lack of range of media, eg, using only graphite pencil for sheet one.
- ◆ Drawings which were cut around, often badly. Very few were enhanced by this practice as it removed the objects from their context.
- ◆ Little visual difference between sheet one and sheet two.
- ◆ Drawings of celebrities, which usually resulted in poor development of the work.
- ◆ Candidates not working to their strengths and making a poor choice of media for the final.

Markers reported that many less successful folios were often due to simple oversights, for example:

- ◆ Sheet one: studies of seemingly random objects, which had no theme and bore no relation to the other two sheets.
- ◆ Sheet two: development sheets with just two studies on them. This was not confined to candidates of lower ability, and there were many first-rate students who were denied full marks because of this practice. Centres are reminded that candidates cannot achieve full marks with just two images.
- ◆ Sheet three: finals that had no link to the first two sheets, or the choice of medium was ill-suited to the candidate's ability.

## **Design**

Markers reported some common areas of difficulty, some of which have been highlighted in previous years' reports.

There are several examples in which it was apparent that candidates did not fully understand the purpose to all or some of the stages of the design process.

Design briefs that were ill-advised or ill-considered hindered the progress of the candidate rather than helped them. Many were far too complex, some bizarre; other failed to identify any design issues or constraints. Some examples are:

- ◆ Design an interior for a restaurant including wall coverings, lighting, tables, chairs and layout.
- ◆ Design a coat, inspired by love.
- ◆ Design a sculpture or a small object
- ◆ Design a headpiece for a catwalk based on a theme.
- ◆ Design a space station

Some research sheets were images of market research only. This tended to constrain the candidates and the resulting work was very derivative and lacked creativity and originality.

There were examples of very effective research sheets which were completely ignored at the development stage.

Development on a very small scale, such as on a dressing doll or playing cards, was often too difficult for the craftsmanship skills of the candidate, and the development was obscured by these restrictions in scale.

Some finals had no link with either of the preceding sheets.

Photographs of design solutions that were badly lit or has excessively busy backgrounds tended to make the item difficult to see and therefore mark. This was an issue when the photographs were sent in lieu of the final solution.

Some evaluations were confused and made no sense. Others were an excessively long, extending to more than two sheets of A4.

All of the above indicate a basic lack of understanding, by the candidate, of the purpose of each stage of the process.

There was some evidence of poor choice of materials, a lampshade made from modroc, when even paper would have been more suitable and successful.

Other issues raised where:

- ◆ Fashion design which had no consideration as to how the item would fit on and around the body.
- ◆ Lighting design when the actual light source was evidently an afterthought.
- ◆ Jewellery design that would be hazardous to wear.
- ◆ Development for a three-dimensional outcome that showed no experimentation of construction techniques or possible materials.
- ◆ Development that merely changed the colourways of a single image,
- ◆ Dress design that was really textile design.
- ◆ Design briefs well beyond the capability of the candidate, for example, making a dress when it was clear that the candidate had no construction skills.

- ◆ Stating that the candidate was designing an item, such as a skateboard, when they were actually applying a design on to an existing one.

## **Question paper**

### **General**

Issues and difficulties that Markers commented on included:

- ◆ There continues to be a lack of effective punctuation, and some sentences are over-long. Some sentences ran to eighty words or more.
- ◆ The quality of some of the handwriting, even with lined paper, was almost illegible.
- ◆ Some candidates, whose answers had been typed, used very small fonts, 10 or less, with virtually no side margins.
- ◆ Using a hard pencil made the writing difficult to see against the pale paper; making it difficult to read.

### **Issues with 'a' questions**

The poorest responses to 'a' questions tended to consist of descriptions with little or no personal opinion.

There were many examples of overly long responses to 'a' questions. Some candidates wrote far more than they could be credited for and, as a consequence, they ran out of time to complete the paper.

### **Issues with the legend**

Some candidates did not understand the purpose of the legend and many did not use the information to their advantage. Other issues highlighted included.

- ◆ The title of the question 1, *End of the Festival*, was not picked up by many who answered this question. Responses often went off on a complete tangent regarding the subject of the painting.
- ◆ Of the few who answered question 4a, several candidates responded to the image as a photograph and not as a piece of sculpture as the question asked.
- ◆ With question 11a, some candidates ignored the information given on the size of the piece of jewellery and made the assumption that it was very small.
- ◆ With question 12a, some candidates confused the updated outfit with the older one, despite this being made clear in the question. Some of the responses to this question only considered the appearance of the outfits with no consideration to practicalities/design issues as asked for in the question.
- ◆ Other candidates copied the legend in full, as part of their response. No marks can be awarded for this if no additional relevant response is provided.

### **Issues with 'b' questions**

Markers expressed concern over the continued practice of merely comparing and contrasting two pieces of work by their chosen artists/designers. Responses to the 'b'

questions should include biographical and historical references, as well as commentary on techniques, inspiration and importance.

By contrast, some candidates wrote two or three pages on the history of the development of an area of study, such as Product Design, which left them with insufficient time to respond fully to the question.

There was concern that centres were restricting the choices of responses for the 'b' questions, to not only the same artists/designers, but the same works. The lack of learner choice, breadth and diversity goes against the spirit of the course and that of Curriculum of Excellence.

Responses were too often formulaic and lacked the energy and personalisation of the 'a' responses. Candidates often ignored the question, relying instead on a memorised response. This restricted their ability to be flexible and respond to all parts of the question, such as why the artists/designers were important. Many candidates were denied full marks due to this omission.

Some candidates strayed into other areas of study, such as discussing a Still Life and then a Landscape.

Others were clearly confused with the with the chronological order of their chosen artists/designers, eg one stated that Picasso's *Guernica* had a great influence on Goya's *Third of May*.

Many candidates confused the difference between designers and artists and failed to use the appropriate descriptive terminology, eg 'This chair has a lot of shadow on it, making it look three-dimensional'.

Some responses were very repetitive, especially when discussing two pieces of work by the same artist/designer that were very similar to each other. One candidate discussed Cezanne's *Still Life with Apples* along with his *Still Life with Apples and Peaches*. Marks cannot be awarded for the same point made twice.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

### **Expressive**

- ◆ Discuss and negotiate a strong and individual theme with the candidate. Make sure that it is not of an inappropriate subject matter.
- ◆ Use sheet one to visually establish the theme. Advise the candidate to work on single studies that reinforce this. Putting the title on the front is also helpful.
- ◆ Use a range of media.
- ◆ Use sheet two to explore composition; consider backgrounds, position within picture plane, strong lighting, a range of media etc.
- ◆ Ensure that there is a visual difference between sheet one and sheet two.

- ◆ Encourage candidates to further develop their ideas for the final solution rather than opt for a larger version of a development image.
- ◆ Spend time on drawing the final image taking care with proportions, scale, ellipses etc before working with chosen media.
- ◆ Advise candidates on their choice of media for their final piece, taking into account their strengths and ability.
- ◆ Make sure that the work, from start to finish, is entirely the candidates own.
- ◆ Use an adequate gluing system. Spray glues and glue sticks often dry out and the work can fall off the sheets.
- ◆ Refer to exemplar material published on SQA's secure website.

[www.sqa.org.uk/sqasecure](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqasecure).

## **Design**

- ◆ Discuss and negotiate a strong and individual design brief with the candidate and help them to identify issues and potential problems that may need to be solved.
- ◆ Question the purpose of the brief.
- ◆ Avoid open-ended areas of research such as 'nature'.
- ◆ Avoid candidates working straight towards a pre-conceived or derivative idea.
- ◆ Advise the candidate on how to distinguish between designing a three dimensional item and applying decoration to an existing one.
- ◆ Keep market research as appropriate as possible. For example, if designing a cover for a children's book, examples of these should be a main part of the market research.
- ◆ Where appropriate, encourage candidates to explore materials and construction techniques at the development stage.
- ◆ If sending photographic prints in lieu of three dimensional finals, ensure that they are of a good quality and show the work to its best advantage.
- ◆ Avoid the use of models in inappropriate poses or clothes.
- ◆ Spend time advising candidates on how to complete the evaluation in a purposeful manner.
- ◆ Attach all work and samples securely with an adequate system to ensure nothing will fall off the sheets.
- ◆ Keep evaluations to the space allocated on the form and make sure they are signed. Keep font to a minimum of 11 points.
- ◆ Refer to exemplar material published on SQA's secure website [www.sqa.org.uk/secure](http://www.sqa.org.uk/secure).

## **Question Paper**

- ◆ Work through past papers with candidates and encourage them to pay attention to the legend and the question.
- ◆ Practice timed responses with candidates. Suggested time for 'a' questions is 15 minutes; 30 minutes for 'b' questions.
- ◆ Remind candidates to use dates to assist them in placing the work in a chronological context.
- ◆ Give candidates more choice when selecting images for the 'b' questions.
- ◆ Avoid candidates using very similar examples of work by any one artist/designer.

- ◆ Show candidates how to structure their 'b' responses in a mature manner, that is more in keeping with the Higher standard.
- ◆ Reinforce the importance of good handwriting, spelling and punctuation; keeping correcting these errors.
- ◆ Discourage the use of bullet points. The rigour of the exam includes the use of essay style answers.
- ◆ Remind candidates to use a pen. Pencil is often too pale against the paper, making it difficult to read.
- ◆ Typed scripts should be no smaller than size 12 font with margins of 2-3 centimetres.
- ◆ Give candidates a full prelim, in one sitting, if possible. The more it replicates the format of the SQA paper, the better the preparation for the candidates.
- ◆ Read over this report with staff and the new cohort of candidates. Highlight the pitfalls and how they can be avoided
- ◆ Refer to exemplar material published on SQA's secure website [www.sqa.org.uk/secure](http://www.sqa.org.uk/secure).

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	7192
Number of resulted entries in 2012	7019

## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 220				
A	25.5%	25.5%	1791	152
B	30.3%	55.8%	2126	130
C	29.5%	85.3%	2072	108
D	7.8%	93.1%	548	97
No award	6.9%	100.0%	482	-

## 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.