



External Assessment Report 2013

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

Practical Folios

The method of marking the practical folio remained unchanged. The 'double blind' marking system continues to be robust and fair to all candidates. The benchmarks, which were selected and marked by the whole group, remained on display for the duration of the marking process. In addition to this, each Marker had a pack containing a range of nearly forty benchmarks from previous years and had access to all others from the last nine years.

Markers reported that they saw a wide range of approaches and themes and the best was often 'off the scale'. There were fewer entries at the wrong level, suggesting that the vast majority of centres had a good understanding of national standards.

It was clear that the majority of candidates were fully engaged throughout the course, and Art and Design teachers are to be commended on being the driving force and inspiration to so many young people.

Markers commented that when centres were adopting a tight and formulaic approach, the voice of the individual was stifled and that candidates were generally less engaged. Encouraging choice, which leads to a better understanding and independent learning, is one of the strengths of the subject.

Candidates performed very well in the question paper and no questions were highlighted as problematic. There was a slight increase in the mean mark. As with other years, the majority of candidates completed the paper. Markers reported that the paper allowed candidates to reflect on their knowledge and convey personal understanding. The ability of candidates to respond at such a sophisticated level was down to excellent teaching and preparation.

There was a welcome increase in the number of Scottish artists and designers studied and female artists too.

For part one, Art Studies, the vast majority of candidates answered the portrait and still life questions. Part two, Design Studies, jewellery and fashion & textiles were the most popular with graphics and product design close behind.

There were very few reports of candidates using artists who predated 1750 or straying into other areas of study.

The Grade Boundary returned to the notional level: A, B and C at 70, 60 and 50% respectively.

There was a sizable drop in entries at this level, but the overall presentation remains healthy at over 6000.

Centres are reminded that benchmarks, for practical folios and question papers, from 2012 and 2011, along with the breakdown of marks and associated commentaries, are published on the SQA's secure website: www.sqa.org.uk/sqasecure. Please contact your SQA Co-ordinator, who will be able to access these.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Practical Folios, Expressive

With Expressive folios, the most popular areas continue to be still life and portraiture, with the latter becoming even more popular than in previous years. Very little 3D work was attempted.

Work that was presented in a clear and cohesive manner was more accessible to markers. When candidates had been given choice, they appeared to be more engaged with the folio.

As always, the best work in this area was quite outstanding, making it a joy to mark. There were some stimulating and personal themes: 'I Solemnly Swear That I am up to No Good'; 'The Wake'; 'In Her Shoes'; which, when matched with ability, generated inventive outcomes; the more complex the theme, the more care is required in matching it with the candidate's ability.

A creative and experimental approach to development led to a better understanding of the purpose of this sheet. Mono prints, sketches, collage, mixed media, were all tackled with enthusiasm.

There was a noticeable increase in evaluative comments on the development sheet, perhaps in preparation for the new exams. These were often well done and demonstrated an understanding of the process and purpose of development on the part of the candidate.

- ◆ 'I chose this because it represents the character I have been inspired by.'
- ◆ 'This piece of fabric acts as a lead-in to the composition'
- ◆ 'This background helps to put the objects in a clearer context'

Other observations for successful folios were:

- ◆ Using the work of artists, playwrights and mythology as sources of inspiration.
- ◆ Placing the title of the theme on the front was helpful to markers' understanding and usually the candidate's as well.
- ◆ Using a clear theme and not a generic title such as 'Still Life'.
- ◆ Candidates who used lighting to good effect produced work which had a visually strong impact.
- ◆ Using a restricted colour palette.

Practical Folios, Design

With Design folios, fashion and jewellery still dominated, but there continued to be an increase in the area of graphic and a slight decrease in product design. Fewer 3D pieces were sent in with the folios.

The majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the design process and, as always, the top end demonstrated this process at its best. Personal choice and well considered design briefs generally led to excellent research, creative problem solving and wonderfully realised solutions, with astute and pertinent evaluations. What a wonderful education these candidates are receiving.

The most successful briefs were those that were manageable, realistic and had a purpose: a specific client; a site; an interior to design a product for. This approach lent itself to more focused research and investigation sheets, and indeed the focus remained throughout the folio.

There were very few candidates who did not include market research with their first sheets, which would have resulted in a loss of marks.

Many demonstrated creativity in their responses to images on the research sheets. This practice seemed to help their understanding of the purpose of this sheet.

There were many examples of inexpensive materials being used creatively which seemed to hold the interest of the candidates who experimented with them.

Other comments were:

- ◆ Use of exciting and contemporary designers who were clearly inspirational
- ◆ Headings and annotations helped explain the theme and purpose of including certain images
- ◆ A good understanding of colour, tended to create more aesthetically appealing solutions
- ◆ Working on inexpensive paper maquettes at the development stage, reinforced the understanding of construction techniques
- ◆ Many candidates who engaged in three dimensional solutions, demonstrated superb hand-skills and patience
- ◆ The use of good, evaluative comments on the first two sheets helped the understanding of the purpose of this process and with final evaluation
- ◆ Time spent guiding candidates on completing the electronic evaluation form was time well spent; many gained full marks for this part

Question paper

The most successful candidates worked within a well practiced time frame for the marks available for each question. In addition:

- ◆ They read each question and responded appropriately.
- ◆ They demonstrated a true understanding of the visual elements and design issues and backed up astute observations with justified and personal opinions.
- ◆ They used the structure of the question on which to build their responses.

The best 'b' answers included some historical and biographical information which aided the candidates' understanding of the chronology of their chosen artists/designers.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Practical Folios, Expressive

Less strong folios were often the result of a lack of theme and there were still a significant number of candidates who confused their theme with their area of study: Shopping; The Antiques Stall; Board Games are examples of themes. Still Life, Portraiture, Landscape, are areas of study.

Research and the development sheets, which were visually similar, continued to cause problems. Candidates should be encouraged to consider that the research sheet sets the theme and include studies of a range of single images that are relevant and reinforce the theme. The development sheet is more about composition and how the objects/people work when grouped together and/or set against a background. These should lead towards the final outcome.

There was evidence that some candidates were working on top of photocopies and even photographs. This is inappropriate and not in keeping with the spirit of the subject.

Other observations made by markers:

- ◆ A lack of range of media; some research sheets used pencil only.
- ◆ Tackling subject matter beyond candidates' capabilities; multiple portraits were particularly difficult for those of lower ability.
- ◆ Centres allowing candidates to share the same photographs or the same theme restricted the better candidates as they lost their individual voice.
- ◆ Adopting an overly formulaic and controlled style of working such as application of paint.
- ◆ Using a mixture of unrelated celebrity images.
- ◆ Poor annotation 'I used a pencil for this study', 'I didn't spend a lot of time on this and it came out great'.
- ◆ Development sheets with just two images resulted in the sheet gaining a maximum of ten marks, rather than a possible twenty.

Practical Folios, Design

Markers reported candidates were less engaged when the whole class section worked to the same brief or in an area which was not of interest to the candidate.

Poorly considered design briefs created inherent problems for the candidates.

Examples of briefs that lacked challenge, focus or direction:

- ◆ Design a pendant
- ◆ Design a luxury airport
- ◆ Design a waistcoat to be worn on a smart or casual occasion

Examples of briefs that were overly complicated:

- ◆ Design a dress for Juliet from Romeo and Juliet, using sea-life as the theme and to be worn down the catwalk in the school fashion show
- ◆ Design a piece of body adornment for a named character in the film series Lethal Weapon based on shades of organic natural or man-made objects
- ◆ Design a range of jewellery: necklace, ring and bracelet

There was also concern that many candidates who were developing a 3D solution did not engage in any three dimensional work throughout the development stage.

Some candidates add 'bits' onto an existing item such as a shoe or a lamp. This is applied design and has different design issues to designing the item from scratch.

There were many examples in the development stage of fashion drawings that did not take into account practicalities such as: fastenings; how the back will look; how the model will be able to move in it. These did not show an understanding of the design process.

Other observations made by Markers:

- ◆ Uninspiring themes such as 'butterflies' or 'frogs' tended to result in bland and predictable folios.
- ◆ There was difficulty 'reading' folios that were visually confusing or overly cluttered.
- ◆ Irrelevant research: eg using Cassandra posters when designing a poster to highlight endangered tigers. Any relevance should have been made clear through appropriate annotation.
- ◆ Some candidates had a poor understanding of the development stage, producing several different ideas rather than refining and improving just two.
- ◆ Sheets that had no visual link were usually less successful.
- ◆ Candidates who set out to design a dress, but were in fact focusing on textile design, tended to be less clear.
- ◆ Development of graphics which used the same image, often a photograph from an existing CD cover, and adding some text, lacked imagination.
- ◆ Final solutions appearing out of nowhere or using a material that did not appear anywhere else on their sheets.
- ◆ Poor quality photographs sent in lieu of finals, often with badly lit or with poorly considered backgrounds that detracted from the solutions.
- ◆ Poor timing with many final solutions falling short of the promise shown on earlier sheets.
- ◆ Overly heavy samples not properly attached with many pieces ending up on the floor.
- ◆ Omitting to update design briefs in light of a change in solution.
- ◆ Overly long evaluations, going onto two sheets, rarely gained more marks than succinct ones.

Question Paper

Several markers commented that many candidates, for both 'a' and 'b' questions, described pieces of work with no additional personal opinions. This approach did not gain full marks; eg 'The background is split with the patterned curtain and dark wall'. This is an observation/description and lacks any point. If the candidate were then to say: 'This provides a counterbalance stopping the painting from looking over crowded,' this adds a personal interpretation. They would receive a mark for this.

Many did not read the information on the legend and misinterpreted the date or size of the work.

'B' Questions

Markers reported that some of the poorest responses came from candidates who had been issued with the same notes and the same examples of work to discuss. As with the practical pieces, this mechanical approach stifled the voice of the better candidate. These essays

lacked enthusiasm, were usually dull and the responses so tight, they allowed the candidates no flexibility to respond fully to the question. This approach does not encourage full understanding or independent learning.

Many candidates spent too much time discussing the first artist/designer and ran out of time to write anything meaningful about the second one. Others attempted to discuss too many examples of work, with no depth or insight to any of them. Many candidates either completely ignored the last part of the 'b' questions or made poor attempts at explaining the importance of the artists/designers:

- ◆ Discussion of personal likes and dislikes of the work, which was not asked for
- ◆ Banal comments: 'Even though they are from different movements, their paintings are similar in some ways.'
- ◆ Using obscure artists/designers who have not established any recognisable importance

There were several reports of candidates losing the thread of the area of study:

- ◆ Natural environment with focus on the people/animals in it and no reference made to their relationship with environment
- ◆ Graphic design with focus on the launch of an advertising campaign of a product and no reference made to graphic design or designers

Other observations made by markers:

- ◆ A lack of a chronological understanding or timeline; 'Lalique goes for a vintage feel.' 'Picasso influenced Goya.'
- ◆ Confusion between art and design terms: 'Picasso designed this portrait in 1917.' Charles Rennie Mackintosh was an architecture.'
- ◆ Not introducing or indicating the question being answered.
- ◆ Poor handwriting.
- ◆ Poor spelling or understanding of vocabulary: witch/which; were/where; peice/piece; there/their; numerous spellings of palette and Nouveau.
- ◆ Repeating points.
- ◆ Selecting two similar pieces of work by an artist/designer which encouraged repetition.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Practical Folios, General

- ◆ Encourage personal themes.
- ◆ Intervene if theme or images are of an explicit or inappropriate nature. Do not permit this. Candidates need clear guidance as to what is acceptable at this level.
- ◆ Avoid too formulaic an approach; it is more difficult to assess and can disadvantage the candidate, especially the better ones.
- ◆ Maintain a strong, visual link between sheets.
- ◆ Clarify the purpose of development in both folios to the candidate.

- ◆ Make every effort to manage time to ensure that the candidates' final sheets are as strong as their other ones.
- ◆ Make every effort to present work with clarity and judicious editing.
- ◆ Guide and encourage purposeful annotation.
- ◆ Make sure that work is securely attached to the sheets and they are taped together using effective tape.
- ◆ Look at exemplification on secure website. User name and password from centre's SQA Co-ordinator

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Practical Folios, Health and Safety

- ◆ Markers were concerned that there was an increase in inappropriate themes for this level. Some dealt with very violent and/or self-abuse images: "Body Slashing", "Getting Drunk". Candidates should be guided to more appropriate themes.
- ◆ Some folios contained inappropriate materials such as broken glass or ragged metal which are a danger to those who have to handle them.

Expressive

- ◆ Do not permit candidates to work directly on top of photocopies or photographs.
- ◆ Select a strong, individual theme and select objects that are relevant.
- ◆ Put the title of the theme on the front of folio.
- ◆ Avoid cutting around single studies; markers report they look better left in context.
- ◆ Make sure that the development sheet has more than two images.
- ◆ Work in a range of media.
- ◆ Avoid random and unrelated images.
- ◆ Keep subject matter appropriate to candidates' ability.

Design

- ◆ Challenge candidates' theme of inspiration. Consider using adjectives to broaden the range such as: spiral; linear; layered etc.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to question and justify inclusion of images and process. If they don't know why they have included it, it is likely that the marker won't either.
- ◆ Consider more sophisticated colourways.
- ◆ Consider making mock-ups of 3D models at the development stage and include photographs as evidence.
- ◆ Pay attention to craftsmanship of final solution, expensive materials are not a prerequisite to getting a good grade, but craftsmanship should be encouraged at all times.
- ◆ If sending photographs in lieu of finals, make sure they show the work to its best advantage.
- ◆ Ensure the solution ties up with brief.
- ◆ Spend time on evaluation sheets, but keep to one side of paper, font size 11/12.

Question Paper

- ◆ Encourage candidates to take their own notes rather than regurgitate ones issued by the section teacher.

- ◆ Remind candidates to keep to the notional timing of fifteen minutes for each 'a' question and thirty minutes for each 'b' question.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to introduce and number their answers. This would include indicating that an additional paragraph has been added to end of booklet.
- ◆ Remind candidates to justify their comments; explain to the marker the point of the observation.
- ◆ Reinforce art and design vocabulary.
- ◆ Reinforce the historical context/timeline for the candidates.
- ◆ Avoid artists/designers who have no 'importance' at this point in time.
- ◆ Avoid selecting work that is so similar, it leads to repetition on the part of the candidate's comments.
- ◆ Reinforce use of correct spelling, grammar and vocabulary.
- ◆ Teach candidates how to respond to the last part of the 'b' question.
- ◆ For the 'b' questions, encourage candidates to divide, evenly, information and time spent writing on each artist/designer.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	7019
Number of resulted entries in 2013	6493

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	25.9%	25.9%	1680	154
B	30.6%	56.5%	1989	132
C	29.6%	86.1%	1923	110
D	8.0%	94.1%	517	99
No award	5.9%	100.0%	384	-

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.