



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	ART AND DESIGN
Level(s)	STANDARD GRADE

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

Critical Activity

In Critical Activity, the overall response by candidates was very good, although it was noted by many markers that the standard has slipped slightly from last year. There were fewer convincing Credit 1's and more General 4's due to the adoption of a more descriptive style and the inclusion of extraneous factual information. There was a sense that some scripts at the top end lacked substance and had less depth than previously. Subject choice seemed to have narrowed, and many candidates shared the same topics. This resulted in a repetitive and inflexible style, and the genuine voice of the candidate was missing.

A small number of submissions were exceptionally good. In these articulate and intelligent responses candidates demonstrated outstanding insights into the work of artists and designers. Markers commented that those scripts were a delight to read. The best examples of Critical Activity were focused around a theme or topic, and the historical and factual information was kept to a minimum. An in-depth analysis of the topic was rewarded. Where no specific comparisons or contrasts were made between artists' and designers' work, markers felt that it was sometimes difficult to award a Credit level.

Most candidates stayed close to the 1500 word limit, and though it is generally accepted as the norm, there was an increase of overlong scripts from some centres, and double and triple length word counts were not uncommon. There is a belief by some that quantity over quality is required to gain a Credit award, but this is not so. At the other end of the spectrum many very well written scripts with convincing ideas were far too short in length, and those candidates failed to gain the grades they were undoubtedly capable of.

Generally, candidates dealt successfully with clearly contrasting Design and Expressive content, though Expressive submissions still tend to achieve slightly higher grades overall as teachers and pupils are more comfortable using expressive criteria and language. In some centres, Design submissions failed to achieve as high grades because there was an over-emphasis on discussing and analysing the visual elements rather than dealing comprehensively with design criteria. Many design submissions completely failed to comment on obvious design criteria, such as function, materials, audience, materials and technologies, and the marks reflected this. This year, markers awarded more split grades than in previous years, indicating that one script was clearly of a much better quality than the other. This indicates different levels of maturity, and markers were aware that usually one submission was produced in S3 and the other in S4.

Markers observed a wide range of subjects under investigation, particularly in Design submissions where everything from the Bic razor to Converse footwear was selected. The most popular genre was fashion, followed by jewellery and product design. Philip Treacy and David Shilling, two contemporary hat designers, were often successfully compared and contrasted. The jewellery designs of Peter Chang and Rene Lalique provided an excellent contrast between contemporary design and the Art Nouveau style. Vivienne Westwood and

Alexander McQueen were the most common fashion designers studied. The study of William Morris's textiles is finally in decline, replaced with the contemporary textile design team Timorous Beasties. Furniture design and lighting provided good opportunities for analysis and architecture was particularly successful, especially when there was a strong analysis and engagement in function and materials.

In Expressive submissions, Vincent Van Gogh reigned supreme, with Picasso and Matisse close behind. Peter Howson and Stephen Conroy were popular contemporary artists to study, as were the traditional Scottish Colourists and French Impressionists. It was noted that sculpture was more popular this year, especially the work of David Mach and Anthony Gormley.

Limiting resources was of concern to markers. In some centres every candidate compared the same two paintings by the same two artists. As a result, the grades never rose beyond a General 3, as there was little opportunity for the comments to be different or indeed personal.

Some of the best Expressive essays were created around gallery visits where the candidates had first-hand experience of paintings and sculptures. Markers felt that this had a positive effect on their ability to convey personal interest. Portraiture and figure compositions seemed to be the most successful subjects for a genuine and intelligent response. Still life was often difficult for candidates to offer meaningful personal opinions as they struggled to relate to the subject matter. Some centres set specific topics for their pupils to choose from eg *People at Work* or *Dancers*. This provided focus and structure in the eventual choice of artworks.

Expressive Activity

In Expressive Activity the overall quality was excellent. Markers reported the best standard yet and they identified numerous outstanding Credit 1's.

There was firm evidence of effective teaching and valuable preparation carried out by candidates for the five-hour examination. When individual centres' work is observed during the marking process, it is immediately apparent to the markers where there has been strong direction and support from teaching staff. Candidates who have been well prepared through a process of personal choice regarding subject matter and materials, show confidence in their performance across all levels.

Many centres had obviously put a great deal of thought into the preparation of resources to provide opportunities for their pupils to thoroughly develop the titles, themes and materials over time. By far the most popular choice was *Nature's Bounty*, which elicited exclusively still life paintings of varying standards. Where care had been taken over the selection and composition of the subject matter, candidates were able to show their skills and produce pleasing, balanced pictures. Some candidates were disadvantaged by having a limited amount of objects and by using media that were clearly too difficult for their ability. *Reflections* was also very popular and was interpreted in many interesting and creative ways but used most commonly to stimulate still life and portraiture. The quality of painting this year was very high and showed off the candidates' skills in handling the media, and their use of tone and colour, most successfully. *Dreaming* was an obvious choice for portraiture. There were some particularly striking pieces obviously done from first hand sources. *The Old and*

the New allowed candidates to produce a wide variety of still life interpretations. However, some centres created complex still life paintings consisting of unconnected objects with little thought to composition or picture making. At the other end of the spectrum, there were many thoughtful and interesting compositions using this stimulus. *The Water's Edge* and *A Room with a View* elicited very considered landscape works, which captured mood and atmosphere along with excellent media handling skills.

Candidates performed well in the genres of still life and portraiture and it appears that most Centres concentrated in these areas. The most popular selection of media included paint, oil pastel and coloured pencil and they were generally handled with confidence. Markers remarked that painting far outstripped the use of oil pastels and that it was used with skill and assurance. Very few candidates produced work entirely in monochrome, unless there is an exceptionally good understanding of tone and handling of the media, monochrome outcomes do not generally elicit top Credit grades.

A good variety of media and techniques were explored including etching, lino cuts, batik and ceramics, although there were fewer 3D pieces than usual. One marker was excited to mark a piece of embroidery too.

Markers commented that the general quality of drawing was very good across all levels. Candidates had a solid grasp of proportion and scale and could draw simple ellipses even at lower levels.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Critical Activity

In Critical Activity, the best submissions were obviously centred on a theme, topic or Movement, which provided opportunities for considered and relevant comparisons. Some freedom of choice in selecting artists and designers was vital in producing the most individual results. The best submissions demonstrated a clear focus of study, and invited opportunities for personal opinions and evaluative comments to present themselves. The factual or historical information was kept to a minimum and cleverly used to inform the personal response.

Centres who encouraged more freedom of choice in subject matter achieved more Credit grades. These submissions displayed more of the pupil's own voice and genuine personal enthusiasm.

Markers reported that the production of Critical Activity was on the whole excellent; the submissions were beautifully presented and illustrated. By far, the vast majority were word-processed and contained useful and relevant bibliographies. It is interesting to note that most of the research of artists and designers now emanates from the internet and not books, as it did in previous years.

In general, the breadth of choice offered to candidates has increased enormously over the history of Standard Grade, and teachers should be congratulated for their hard work in resourcing and introducing such a huge range of artists and designers to their pupils.

Expressive Activity

The outcome produced in the Expressive examination should be the culmination of a creative process, planned and prepared using the stimulus titles as a starting point. Where centres adopt the true spirit of Expressive Activity and indeed follow this approach, the results are undeniably individual in terms of theme, scale, media and technique, and most often produce excellent results. Careful preparation for the examination and consideration given to composition and scale greatly benefited candidates' performance across all levels.

Most of the best work was in the form of still life and portraiture using first-hand sources. While this is to be encouraged, it is not always possible, and many candidates derive imagery from photographs. It is therefore desirable then that they at least have some input in the setting up or production of the photographs.

Markers commented on the quality of painting this year, which they felt, was generally of an excellent standard, and in some instances at Credit 1 it was exceptional. It is a testament to the quality of teaching and preparation and efforts of the young people that this has occurred during an examination where there is no support available.

This year, it was widely recognised that the vast majority of centres had very successfully interpreted the titles and candidates had generated an interesting mixture and variety of responses across all levels. In the very best centres, the work showed variety in the range of themes selected and in the skill and diversity of media handling techniques allowed.

The majority of outcomes were successfully finished in the time allowed, demonstrating good planning and determination by the candidates. Markers remarked that by working on a smaller scale, some candidates were able to produce more finished work, especially when faced with a busy or complex theme or simply a very tight and controlled method of working.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Critical Activity

In Critical Activity, markers were very concerned about the growing number of centres who allowed all of their pupils to discuss exactly the same limited number of paintings and design items. In these examples it was difficult for the marker to hear the voice of the individual. Consequently, it proved problematic to distinguish one candidate's work from another, with the result that the pattern of grades did not go beyond General 3.

Some well-written submissions achieved General 3 awards because the analysis of the artwork or design item was purely descriptive. It is personal opinions, and justifications of those opinions, that count and not a lengthy commentary on what the piece looks like. Markers were frustrated by these examples as some very able candidates were missing Credit awards.

The balance between 'historical and factual information' and the 'personal response' is unclear to some centres. It is the personal response that is the most important part of the submission. Markers commented that there were far too many submissions that consisted of irrelevant facts, which were simply used as padding.

Problems continued to exist in Design submissions where the item under investigation was discussed in Expressive terms. In the very poorest examples, it was an analysis of the visual elements alone that comprised the main body of the essay. In the worst examples, candidates were awarded a 7 as they had failed to submit two clearly contrasting items, one Expressive and one Design. The design topics where this happens most regularly are textile and wallpaper design, mask design, illustration and poster design.

When candidates chose to investigate products like cars, motorbikes and smartphones or other similar technological hardware for their design submission, they regularly failed to analyse the product in a meaningful manner as they were too focused on listing the detailed specification of the product. This has little to do with showing an understanding of the design process in its basic form.

While it is recognised that teachers need to direct the teaching of Critical Activity through questionnaires or worksheets, it was reported that some centres had used a very restrictive formula providing over-directed questionnaires, which stifled and limited the scope of candidates' responses. This also had the effect of preventing some very able candidates from gaining a grade beyond General level.

Markers reported that there was an increase in the quantity of works under investigation by individuals, and the resulting analysis was limited to a small paragraph for each work, which usually lacked depth or substance. The subsequent grades awarded often failed to make Credit level, as the appropriate GRC was not satisfied.

Expressive Activity

In Expressive Activity, markers noted that some candidates found difficulty in completing their work within the five hours. This was due in part to the A2 scale being too large and inappropriate to their ability.

A number of still life groups were over-complicated, containing too many objects, resulting in no clear focus or time to develop tone and colour. On the other hand, a number of centres allowed very small-scale outcomes to be produced. Markers felt that this did not permit candidates to fully explore scale and composition. Of more concern was the feeling that some able candidates had not made the most of the five-hour exam as they were working to a very limiting scale of A3 or even A4.

Markers observed that some candidates' creativity and freedom of expression was limited when they had to share and work from the same photograph or group of objects. It is highly detrimental, and in some notable cases the work appeared almost identical.

Candidates should avoid using photographs of famous people to generate portraits. The generally wooden and often graphic results are self-penalising.

Un-cropped or un-mounted work caused problems for the markers, as they were not able to view it with space around it. Simple mounts help isolate one candidate's picture from another.

Statistical information: update on Courses

STANDARD GRADE

Number of resulted entries in 2012	11259
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	10864
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Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	12.3%
Grade 2	36.9%
Grade 3	35.7%
Grade 4	12.3%
Grade 5	1.6%
Grade 6	0.1%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	1.0%

Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Directed Graded									