



## Course Report 2016

Subject	Art and Design
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

# Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

## Summary of the Course assessment

This is the first year of the New Advanced Higher course and we are happy to be able to report the high standard of work presented in 2016. The statistics shown at the end of the report reflect the continued success of candidates at this level: markers were impressed by their understanding of the new course and the evidence of personal expression, strong commitment, technical skill and lively experiment seen in many folios.

We begin by identifying some of the distinguishing features of the new course assessment and discuss how it performed in practice.

### 1: Design/Expressive portfolio of practical course work.

#### The choice of Design or Expressive — the removal of the practical option

The new course does not have the option of presenting two practical options — both Design and Expressive work — together in one folio. Candidates must choose one practical option and present practical and written critical analysis work linked to that option.

The effect of this change is not obvious. The very straightforward nature of the choice, either Design or Expressive, could be attractive to candidates by allowing them to concentrate more fully on one area of the subject. This might account for the clarity of focus and thoroughness of many folios. Alternatively, candidates who are less interested in written work have no option but to produce a critical analysis, and this might explain some rather half-hearted written submissions.

#### Sheet One

The 'Statement of Intent' which sets out the candidate's intentions in the old Advanced Higher Art and Design course has been replaced by a new 'Sheet One' that outlines the candidate's aims and ideas in the form of images and annotation. This opening sheet is a preliminary guide to the portfolio and sets the scene for what is to follow.

In a Design folio it would clearly display all aspects of the design brief and, through a number of sketches, illustrations, diagrams, photographs, annotations and references, it would outline the nature and character of what is to follow. An Expressive folio would contain the same kind of material, showing the kind of thinking and background research, development and experimentation that has already been covered by candidates in the units.

Assessors were impressed by exciting presentations of Sheet One. Some candidates appeared to recognise the potential of this opening sheet as promotion or a 'trailer' for the folio, showing the kind of background research they had already completed and its connections and developments. Others used it as means of explaining their personal ideas and created a sheet that used images and annotation to show how the ideas had emerged and been further advanced.

### **Reduced number of A1 sheets — better focus**

This year's reduced number of sheets — the maximum going down from 18 to 15, takes account of the work already completed in the enquiry unit, making the overall expectation of time spent on the whole project much as it was. In most cases, candidates presented around 15 sheets. Assessors commented that the portfolios were generally better focused.

Candidates also appeared to be editing the presentation and did not appear tempted to top up the numbers of sheets with irrelevant additional work.

### **The effect of the units — personal commitment**

This year's candidates were the first to complete two units as a prelude to beginning the course work. The remit for students of Advanced Higher Art and Design, to make a personal portfolio, is perfectly suited to a self-directed approach to forming creative ideas. The units are helpful in providing a clear structure of initial research and development of ideas, in the form of a numbered progression of outcomes. These outcomes gathered together in a sketch book or presented in sheets, are intended to form a gateway to the course assessment.

Markers made connections between the experience gained through the units and successful course work. They commented on the way so many candidates showed a strong personal commitment, finding their own individual response to the practical and written parts of the course.

### **Change of emphasis — development of ideas**

The process of creativity, the thoughts of the candidates and their consideration of ideas have always been an important part of the portfolio. This concern for working drawings, preparatory studies and visual concepts is further emphasised in the new marking instructions for Advanced Higher Art and Design. These lay stress on the importance of: 'developing well-conceived ideas', 'creative use of visual elements' and 'sustained lines of enquiry'.

These statements underpin a large section of marks given for coursework, and markers commented on the number of candidates who gained marks for the quality and presentation of this development.

## **2: Critical Analysis:**

### **The influence of art, design and visual culture — making visual connections**

From the initial ideas in the units of the course and the critical analysis, the creative process should be accompanied by a study of art, design and visual culture. This parallel enquiry is an exercise in finding all manner of visual material, such as photography, film clips, sculpture or examples of art and design related to the theme. It helps to deepen and support the project.

Assessors were impressed by the number of candidates who made connections to supporting visual material, and they commented on the many ways in which this material complemented and improved the practical work.

## **Section 2: Comments on candidate performance**

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

#### **1: Design/Expressive portfolio of practical course work**

##### **Materials and techniques — a high level of skill**

There are 15 marks available for candidates who show an assured use of techniques and materials.

The refinement and finish in drawing and painting was widely on view this year. This reflects a progression through the subject that culminates at this level. In some cases, the whole portfolio was built around the exploration of a particular painting method or craft technique and the level of control was outstanding.

IT skills such as Photoshop were equally impressive and, in Design, the care and thoroughness in creating architectural models and fashion design were far beyond the time limits of the course.

##### **'Well-conceived ideas' — the creative process**

The new Advanced Higher rewards 'well-conceived ideas'. In this more conceptual aspect of the subject, there is now a general understanding that one of the central challenges of the course is to show a process of development, illustrating the steps towards the resolution of visual ideas. Examiners appreciate that this emergence of creative thought is not a straightforward linear exercise: it involves a combination of experiment, intuition, personal expression, determination, flexibility and patience and the trail of notes, sketches, models and half-finished drawings that is sometimes difficult to follow.

Assessors were impressed by the way in which all this work was so often brought together in a cogent and visually exciting manner.

##### **Annotation — clear explanations help to support the process**

In all the best folios, candidates' developments were accompanied by annotations that explained the evolution of ideas, the derivation of research and the experiment with techniques. This is particularly important in Design portfolios, where the stages of the design process, the consideration of materials and techniques and the various changes of direction during the conception and making of the outcome must have an accompanying commentary.

The same stages occur in Expressive folios, and here too annotation is an essential part of the presentation. There are no limits to this documentation; it does not count as part of the evaluation word count unless specifically stated.

#### **2: Critical Analysis:**

##### **Analysis of chosen works — making substantiated points**

The very straightforward requirements of the critical analysis — choose a work and analyse it — seemed to help many candidates produce a well-focused and detailed study that

showed a thorough background of research and a lively personal discussion of visual elements, issues and features related to the topic.

In many cases, assessors remarked that the experience of doing this kind of deconstruction at National 5 and Higher seemed to help candidates to back up their observations by showing, for example, how certain techniques, materials or forms directly affected the chosen work/s.

### **Exploring context and influence — making connections**

The second part of the critical analysis — on the connections of influence and context with the chosen work — showed the way in which the parallel study of design, art and visual culture that created greater depth in many practical portfolios also helped to create connections between varieties of influences on the chosen works. Assessors often saw a link between practical portfolios with a wealth of supporting visual material and a lively understanding of the contextual part of the written study.

## **3. Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **1: Design/Expressive portfolio of practical course work.**

#### **Eight-sheet folios — few high marks**

The course is intended to be accessible to a wide range of ambition and ability in Art and Design. This, hopefully, attracts candidates who have creative intentions in a particular area of the subject to take on the work without feeling that they have to give up time outside of the classroom to complete the project. The eight-sheet minimum also creates an access point for portfolios that have a large sketchbook, film, Photoshop, sculpture, costume design or 3D element, allowing more time and scope for working on the outcome.

Assessors reported that, with some notable exceptions, candidates who submitted portfolios that were either on the minimum eight-sheet guideline, or at the lower end of sheet numbers, with no additional material, tended to do less well. This was either because the development of ideas was not sustained or the project was not fully resolved.

#### **Evaluation — not a story**

Candidates are asked to respond in 300 words to two aspects of the portfolio.

- ◆ Turning points in the portfolio. In general, the very specific nature of the question elicited good answers and explanations about how the folios developed. However, it seems that some candidates thought they were being asked to tell the story of the development of the whole portfolio. This meant they ran out of words to do this and often forgot to evaluate.
- ◆ Secondly, candidates are invited to evaluate their first intentions in the light of their completed outcome; how did it turn out? This part of the evaluation was less well done partly because they attempted something too long-winded, but also because they seemed unable to make any self-critical comments.

#### **Examples of 3D — ‘the act of making’**

The amount of 3D work presented for Advanced Higher Art and Design has diminished this year. This is a great loss to creative work at this level. One of the defining concepts of art and design is the idea of ‘making’. It is the belief that to conceive of something on paper is all

very well, but to actually make it in 3D, even in the form of a model, is to take a step closer to experiencing the diverse questions and possibilities inherent in a creative project.

The 'act of making' is also an encounter with the materials and techniques with all their potential for further invention and problem solving. It is all the more disappointing that there is less 3D work in all submissions, even sent in as a photograph, or in the form of a maquette, a *papier mâché* mock-up, or as a scale model.

## 2: Critical Analysis

### Critical analysis — de-constructing and finding contextual links

The critical analysis which runs parallel to the practical course work is concentrated on the study of a work or related works of art or design. The candidate is asked to write about two aspects of the work or works:

**Analyse or de-construct features of the work:** Some candidates chose too many examples, or attempted too wide a range of visual elements connected to the work, and were unable to look in detail at the effects of technique, content and, in design, function, style or impact. Assessors are aware that, in responding to the Design critical analysis, there is less background information available on specific works, especially if they are contemporary, relatively unknown or obscure.

**Explore the context of the work:** this part of the critical analysis was the weakest aspect of many portfolios. It invites candidates to research and write about any topic that can be related to the work they have studied. The list of conceivable areas of connection to any given work of art or design is huge and, in the notes to the course, there is an attempt to list 17 possible aspects of context from the stylistic categories or movements to the cultural/historical background to more obscure associations linked to the chosen work.

Given this advice, it is perhaps not surprising that this part of the written course was less well understood. Some candidates found difficulty in getting beyond an outline biography of the artist or designer, others added further artists or designers or other works by the same artist or designer in the hope of broadening the topic. In some cases, candidates left out any mention of context, therefore were unable to access any of the 15 marks.

## Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

### 1: Design/Expressive portfolio of practical course work.

#### How much work — eight to 15, a rough guide

It is difficult to define how large a submission for Advanced Higher should be. This depends on so many different factors, not least the nature of the project, so the guidelines on how many A1 sheets it takes to make a portfolio are necessarily inexact — between eight and 15 covers a wide range of possible types of presentation or schemes of work.

It should also be noted that work can be presented in many different forms from sketch books and canvases to sculpture and textiles. The A1 sheet is a notional framework that

gives a rough idea of the size of any presentation. The best advice on sheet numbers is not to focus on counting the sheets, but rather consider whether all the course requirements, particularly those related to development, are covered in full.

### **Sheet One — a bridge between the units and course**

Use sketches, illustrations, diagrams, photographs, annotations and references; outline the nature and character of the project in one sheet. Arrange this material in a way that exemplifies the style and/or the concepts that underpin the folio. Assessors referred to this as a vital introduction to the portfolio that has a bearing on the whole mark.

### **Experiment — in many different ways**

Include as much relevant experimental work as can be managed in the portfolio, even if it is very small. Whatever material being used, candidates should try out different effects with it: explore ideas, new techniques and formats, looking all the time to extend the ways in which a visual idea can be represented. Use a range of cheap materials to explore mark or shape making — such as collage, mono-printing, drawing on top of other images — to look at the theme in a new light.

### **Encourage candidates to make something 3D as part of the portfolio, and, if possible, hand it in**

It is noticeable that 3D work, even very small items that are well made and handed in, tend to create a good impression. This is because a 3D project attracts more development ideas and creates a greater variety of approach in the portfolio.

### **Encourage candidates to document work — illustrate what they are doing**

Encourage candidates to use such things as photographs, sketches, a diary, diagrams, Photoshop, or Google SketchUp, to explain their ideas and how they have developed/taken the theme in new directions.

### **Encourage annotations — explain ideas**

Development sheets and reference material should be explained and fully annotated. This does not count as part of the evaluation word-count unless specifically stated. It helps to amplify the thinking behind the work, showing the purpose of visual ideas that may look less connected.

### **Sheet numbering**

Make sure that the final portfolio has sheet numbers so that it can be viewed and understood in sequence. The numbered sheets can then be referred to in the evaluation.

### **Evaluation — refer to sheet numbers**

Encourage candidates to try to be self-critical in answering the following questions:

- ◆ What was the effect of creative decisions or turning points on your folio?
- ◆ How effective is the response to the initial idea/creative intention/design brief in the final folio? How did it turn out?

## **2: Critical Analysis**

### **Encourage candidates to choose a topic carefully — one that can be analysed and offers plenty to write about**

Before candidates choose a topic it is useful for them to do some wider research into the background of the whole field of interest. If they find that their chosen example offers too little available information, it is possible to enlarge the subject. For example: a single drawing of a ballet dancer by Degas might become all Degas' studies for a particular painting such as 'The Rehearsal'. Equally, a single fashion design by Iris van Herpen might become part of a collection by van Herpen such as the 'Micro' collection.

A broad subject offers more to write about, but is less easy to analyse or de-construct. A precise subject provides a straightforward analysis, but may have to be broadened to create the context.

### **Encourage candidates to use a subheading — broaden the subject**

Candidates should use a precise title for their analysis and a broader sub-heading for their context. For example:

**Title:** The Ballet Rehearsal

**Subheading:** the influence of photography and Japanese art on the work of Degas.

Or

**Title:** The Micro Collection

**Subheading:** wearing sculpture in contemporary fashion.

### **Edit out biographies**

Candidates should not include short biographical summaries of artists or designers. Biographical information may be used, but only if it is linked to the topic to show how it is part of the context.

### **Finding contextual connections**

The contextual part of the Critical Analysis can begin as a kind of search engine assignment — experience shows that candidates need no help in amassing information on a topic.

The subject of the work may give rise to diverse connections. For instance, the reference to Degas' Ballet Rehearsal can offer up large amounts of context, for example: the ballet in 19th century Paris; the dancers; where the dancers came from; the operas the dancers performed; where Degas got the idea of the composition; why was he interested in photography or Japanese prints.

Similarly, in Design, van Herpen's use of contemporary technology that describes movement — such as laser cutting, new materials, macro photography and 3D printing — or her interest in body sculpture, her connections to inspirational photographers, the effect of her work on the High Street brands etc.

**Quotes — a way of exploring meaning**

As candidates research the topic, they should look for quotes that they can refer to in their critical analysis. These can be quotes by the artist/designer or about the artist/designer. For example:

Degas said, '*No art is less spontaneous than mine.*'

Van Herpen said, 'Everyone can have their body scanned and have clothes that fit perfectly.'

**Speculate — candidates should give their opinion**

There is much in the writing about context and influence that is a matter of opinion. Candidates should try to have part of their analysis that is guessing about why artists or designers might have been influenced by, commented on or created something.

**Illustrations — illustrate every aspect of the topic**

Candidates should try to put in many illustrations of details of the chosen works, or contextual links, which explain particular points. They should add other illustrations that further illuminate points made or extend ideas that they do not have space to fully address.

**Captions — a useful way of extending points**

Under your illustrations, make sure that you use captions that explain the point of the picture. The captions and headings do not add to the word count.

## Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on Courses

#### Art & Design (Design)

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	563
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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 —				
A	28.6%	28.6%	161	70
B	29.1%	57.7%	164	60
C	34.5%	92.2%	194	50
D	5.0%	97.2%	28	45
No award	2.8%	-	16	0

## Art & Design (Expressive)

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0
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Number of resulted entries in 2016	859
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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 —				
A	31.0%	31.0%	266	70
B	31.5%	62.5%	271	60
C	29.0%	91.5%	249	50
D	5.9%	97.4%	51	45
No award	2.6%	-	22	0

## 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.