



## External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	<b>Art and Design: Expressive</b> <b>Art and Design: Design</b>
Level	<b>Advanced Higher</b>

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

I am pleased to report the enthusiastic comments from markers on the Advanced Higher Art and Design submissions that we saw this year. Centres are gaining confidence in the way they approach the Course and it is clear that the provision of information, exemplars and advice on SQA's website is providing useful insights and reassurance on the possibilities offered to candidates.

## Structure and Creative Freedom

Many of the folios reflect an exciting combination of creative forces that fuse an individual sense of experiment, invention and artistic vision, with an ordered plan and a rigorous application of technique and 'finish'. The essential spirit of the course gives the freedom to explore a field of interest, develop a range of visual ideas and make a personal response. It is delightful to report that in large measure candidates are revelling in this creative experience.

The role of the teacher in inspiring ideas, creating a structured course, in teaching the skills and concepts, and in balancing the capacities of candidates with the ambition of their ideas, is central to the development of this wide-ranging creative opportunity.

## Understanding Standards Event March 2011

This event featured an exhibition of exemplary folios and was important in disseminating information on the Course. It provided an opportunity to examine work that represented a variety of standards and allowed teachers to discuss key questions that affect the performance of their candidates. The event was superbly managed. Slides and exemplars relating to it are available on SQA's secure website.

The Advanced Higher Candidate Gallery on SQA's main website has been updated to include some folios that were exemplified at the event.

## Trends in Design Submissions

### Photography

This year saw a greater number of high quality folios in which the digital camera made a significant contribution to the development of ideas. It has been used to research topics, providing a visual diary of ideas and 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. We are also seeing more wholly photographic projects, where research and development leads to a series of Photographic outcomes.

### Design

The main topic of design folios is fashion, which is interpreted sometimes as the creation of a specific garment with high levels of skill in making. There are also examples of more

conceptual fashion projects where clothing is made to reflect social and cultural issues or personal attitudes. Architecture is emerging as a popular alternative with a combination of CAD, drawing and often sophisticated models used to illustrate detailed schemes for interiors, extensions or proposals for concept buildings. There were outstanding graphic design enquiries and memorable examples of innovative product design; markers often express the hope that there might be more examples of both.

## **Expressive**

This year saw some outstanding painting in which candidates used themselves and their friends as the topic. The portrait or figure composition remains as the predominant theme, and it continues to inspire some of the best work. Still life and landscape are reappearing with some innovative approaches in developing ideas. Printmaking makes a valuable contribution to all folios as it often leads to experiment with media. Sculpture is very much appreciated by markers, though it rarely appears.

Some of the most ambitious and exciting folios followed a concept or personal theme through a variety of media such as drawing, photography, animation or print making.

## **Art and Design Studies**

The themes for this written study are closely linked to the practical work. Jenny Saville and Lucien Freud are the most popular topics in Expressive, but younger, contemporary artists are appearing. In contrast to this, there is renewed interest in the Renaissance: the 1750 cut off does not apply to Advanced Higher. These preferences for artists are often allied to wider interests in such things as feminist issues, music or religious belief.

In Design folios, the frequent discussions of Vivienne Westwood or Alexander McQueen reflect the passion for fashion, and it is good to see that the range of interest is being extended to younger emerging designers whose work is perhaps closer to the aspirations of the candidates. Some of the best studies have been done in response to architecture folios and such subjects as Zaha Hadid and Frank Gehry where analysis and discussion combine with outstanding personal comment.

## **The Optional Practical Unit**

It is reassuring to report that the preference for this 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 Art College application

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

### **Research and Development in Design**

It is delightful to see the improvement in performance of Design candidates this year. The statistics show a marked rise in grades, which is reflected in the standards that we saw during the assessment. In previous reports, markers have expressed concern at Design folios where research and development is rather superficially treated. These comments were emphasised at the Understanding Standards Event. While it is not possible to directly attribute the rise in performance to a single message, there is a general understanding that thorough research and development in Design equates with good marks. Markers remarked on the following key areas of improvement:

- ◆ clear identification of design issues in the design brief
- ◆ use of annotation and communication of evolving ideas, making 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**

I have previously reported on the beneficial effects of the guidelines on the completion of the Statement of Intent and Evaluation, which is available on the SQA website. It contains instructions on planning, presentation and co-ordination of the work. Most centres recognise that the Statement of Intent and Evaluation is an important part of the submission, and most candidates are made aware that it is worth 20 marks. Though the writing of this document can be long winded, its effects on the practical work continue to support the structure and presentation of the folio as:

- ◆ 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

These beneficial effects continue to be seen and, in particular, they are evident in the work of candidates for whom the challenge of bringing together an ambitious personal project is greater. Such candidates, who might well have been assessed on the low side of the 'C/D' border, can now aspire to 'C' and above. This simple improvement contradicts the assumption that a creative experience of this kind is beyond the reach of many candidates.

### **Art and Design Studies**

It is very exciting to see the way in which practical folios are influenced by the chosen artists and designers. These studies are carefully presented, with a host of illustrations that make the visual link between the written and practical projects. Often the visual link is made by drawings that copy details of works by a chosen artist or designer, and the practical work is clearly informed by this analysis.

## **Expressive**

The high standard of painting skills continues to delight markers. It is impressive to see the care and understanding of technique, tonal values, colour variation and observation. It is often possible to follow the progress of candidates from their early attempts to grasp this visual language to the more assured later work. Much of this process of learning skills far exceeds the 80 hour Unit.

## **Candidates who take innovative approaches**

In an Enquiry-based course of this kind, it is particularly good to see candidates who take on a personal research project. This sometimes involves the collection of a series of objects and images, the study of a contemporary artist or designer, photographing a location, delving into family history or researching the ways in which a story has been illustrated. Much of this research is done in sketch books with written notes or proposals, and it is exciting to see how drawing, relief sculpture, print making and photography are put into service in the creative expression of ideas that emerge from this approach. This kind of project rarely culminates in a picture or a conventional design; instead the outcomes can be a series of creative works linked by a common theme.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Drawing**

The freshness of visual insight that comes from drawing directly from life is immediately recognisable wherever it appears. It is a practice that is highly valued by markers but, in some Expressive folios, it is noticeable by its absence. Candidates should be aware of the importance of drawing from first hand sources and the need to emphasise this in their submissions.

### **Concise Statement of Intent and Evaluation**

The form that is on the SQA website is quite flexible in size, unlike the previous paper version, 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 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.

### **Analysis and Discussion in Art and Design Studies**

In approaching this study, candidates rely too heavily on a factual background on the life of the artist or designer, and fail to make a full enough discussion of the work. The extent of information that is available on the internet has lulled some candidates into a solely factual account of their subject that resembles an extract from the Dictionary of Art and Artists. This

approach, which frequently gives an account of a series of artists or designers in which biographical facts are not mediated by any explanation of how they might be relevant, omits any analysis, discussion or personal comment.

### **Optional Practical Unit**

Markers are conscious of the amount of time spent on this Unit, and they are sensitive and understanding in marking the work of candidates who have been over-ambitious. Sometimes a range of fashion items is planned or a project to make painting of 'the Family', but what appears is rather half-hearted. Candidates who take on the Unit are apt to attempt too much, and the results look rather thrown-together and incomplete.

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

### **General**

Centres are advised to ensure that candidates are entered for the appropriate Advanced Higher Art and Design Course and associated Units.

Centres are reminded that they must submit a folio consisting of the mandatory Design or Expressive Enquiry, together with the Optional Unit plus the Statement of Intent. There were some centres this year who had failed to submit complete folios.

### **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 in order 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.

## Sketch Books

Sketch books are not required as part of the enquiry, but they are not discouraged. Many teachers, markers and candidates see the importance of sketch books 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. Some areas where development can be extended are:

- ◆ Look to make very clear links between the Research and Development stages of the 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, by experimenting with materials or reworking key areas, trying out varieties of shape, colour, pattern tone or texture. This process should be annotated.
- ◆ If working on a 3D project, candidates should have research that takes the form of small models or try-outs for 3D ideas in CAD or similar programme.
- ◆ Candidates should make 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, candidates should show how preparatory drawings are linked to development ideas, experiment with materials, print making or collage. They should look particularly at composition, explaining by a series of sketches how the arrangement of shape and form can affect the final work. Encourage candidates to try out their ideas in a tonal sketch or in a form that examines a particular visual element.

## Practical Optional 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. Some suggestions for approaching the study are outlined below:

- ◆ **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, but they must not discuss their own work in the study; there is scope to do this in the Statement of Intent and Evaluation.
- ◆ **Candidates should limit the scope of their 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:** Candidates should 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. They should 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 type of 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 in which Advanced Higher Art and Design 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.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Design

Number of resulted entries in 2010	701
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	657
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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	27.7%	27.7%	182	136
B	30.3%	58.0%	199	118
C	29.2%	87.2%	192	101
D	7.0%	94.2%	46	92
No award	5.8%	100.0%	38	-

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Expressive

Number of resulted entries in 2010	901
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	926
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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	27.6%	27.6%	256	136
B	27.8%	55.4%	257	118
C	30.1%	85.5%	279	101
D	8.1%	93.6%	75	92
No award	6.4%	100.0%	59	-

## **General commentary on grade boundaries**

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that 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, though, very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA 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 Head of Service 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.