



External Assessment Report 2011

Subject	Art and Design
Level	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 quality of work this year was similar to that of 2009, and the A–C rate increased by 2.5%.

Markers reported that, with the practical work, there were high numbers of outstanding folios in which candidates demonstrated a wide range of approaches, technical skills and creativity. However, there were a significant number of presentations that were not at Higher level, all too often across a whole centre. This raises some concerns about the quality and understanding of internal Unit passes.

With the question paper, the best candidates' observations, personal responses and justifications appeared natural and were well structured. It was obvious that discursive skills were being developed in the classroom. The overall standard of writing was high and there were relatively few poor responses. The paper was well received and did not throw up any problems. The vast majority of candidates managed to complete the paper in the allotted time. Questions 1, 3, 7, 8, 11 and 12 were the most popular, and 5 and 9 the least.

Centres are once again to be congratulated on maintaining the quality on the vast majority of submissions.

Practical folio

The method of marking the practical folios remained unchanged. The 'double blind' marking system has been proven to be robust and fair to each candidate. Discrepancies were triggered at ten marks or more, and a Standardiser provided a third mark when required. In addition to this, Standardisers made spot-checks to ensure that all markers had their marking checked regularly.

Folios used as Benchmarks remained hanging for the duration of the marking exercise. In addition to this, markers had a colour copy of last year's benchmarks and access to copies of all benchmarks from the last five years. This year's benchmarks will be published on SQA's secure website, along with the marks and associated commentaries.

Still Life and Portraiture dominate the Expressive folio, with Textiles, Fashion, Jewellery and Product remaining popular in Design. There was a slight increase in Natural Environment, which was generally well done, often with a skilful handling of media. There were some superb examples of batik, a technique which has not been in much evidence for some years. Markers commented on the strong and inventive use of material, often from recycled materials.

Focused and well organised folios did best in both areas. It was evident that candidates who were given clear direction, but also some choice, were more engaged, and their folios tended to display their individual interest throughout. These were the candidates who produced some of the most exciting and energetic pieces of work.

Borderline candidates who passed often managed to do so because their work was focused: a good theme for their Expressive folio and well considered design briefs. The opposite was usually true for those candidates who just failed.

It is still more common for centres to be stronger in one area than the other, but there was a noted increase in candidates performing equally well in both folios. Clearly, centres are working on the anomaly of previous results; evaluating performances and addressing issues, bringing the quality of weaker folio to the standard of the stronger one, which is commendable practice.

Expressive

Markers commented on the wide range of media that was handled with maturity and expertise. The use of acrylic paint has been on the increase over the past few years and its use is being taught well.

There were many examples of stunning portraits, as well as some figure compositions which included a strong narrative. The top folios demonstrated a real understanding of the whole expressive process: a strong theme; fine, analytical drawings in a range of media; the consideration of composition and picture making; and a final that is the culmination and best option in both composition and medium.

There was a slight increase in 'sketchbook' style development, some of which was very well done and was a refreshing change to the series of 'mini finals', which, although successful, is not the only approach that can be used.

As always, the folios that gained the highest awards were ones in which candidates had a strong theme, made full use of the tonal range, had a good understanding of their chosen colour palette and used a range of media with competence. This applied to all areas of study.

Titles on the front of the folios were helpful to the Markers' understanding of the piece, and it also seemed to give candidates more focus and a clearer path of enquiry. Once again, it is worth stating that 'Portraiture' and 'Still Life' are areas of study and not themes. 'The Picnic', 'The Traveller', 'The Breakup' are examples of themes.

Design

The most successful Design folios were ones in which candidates had good teacher support in constructing meaningful design briefs. These not only identified design issues and problem solving, but also had clear constraints. The briefs that allowed imaginative thinking and encouraged candidates to be as creative as possible were also amongst the most successful. Sheets that were well laid out and communicated the design process in a clear and visually striking manner were well rewarded.

There continues to be an increase in graphic design and, conversely, a decrease in three-dimensional outcomes. There was also a drop in the amount of three-dimensional work being sent to Central Marking. There was an increase in animation, some of which was very well done.

It was noted that there was clever use of inexpensive materials such as cartridge paper and recycled items for finals. The craftsmanship of such items, when of a high standard, made very striking final solutions.

Annotation on the design sheets seemed to help candidates' understanding of purpose of process. It was noted that many of these candidates were also better equipped to complete their evaluations successfully.

Many centres took advantage of the electronic evaluation sheet that is available to download from SQA's website. Markers reported that candidates who used it tended to complete it with more care and attention, and were rewarded with good marks for this section. Clearly there was good instruction from teachers.

Written Paper

This year's paper was well received and did not throw up any problems. It elicited some excellent responses from candidates and those who showed enthusiasm generally wrote well.

Candidates who answered all parts of the questions were rewarded accordingly and did not fall foul of self-penalising actions. Markers reported that many candidates responded well to the use of quotes in the questions and were focused on their responses. The Hockney portrait elicited thoughtful and insightful responses.

There was a welcome increase on the study of contemporary Scottish artists and designers, which were often well written.

Architecture, which was not answered by many, was generally done very well.

The introduction of lined paper was reported to have had a positive impact on the quality of handwriting; unfortunately, not in every case.

Some typed responses were in a very small font and with very narrow margins; this made it difficult for markers to read and record marks against the script.

Where a candidate was given a personal choice, markers reported that they tended to produce more enthusiastic and insightful answers.

Markers commented that often the 'b' responses were better than 'a' ones, but could be very formulaic. This was highlighted when some candidates who had strong answers for 'b' questions, were unable to respond to the 'a' questions in any meaningful way.

(a) Questions Section 1 and 2

Good responses were thoughtful and perceptive, and it is clear that many centres are teaching candidates how to respond effectively. These responses demonstrated evidence of skills of analysis, evaluation and literacy. Observations were followed with opinions starting with phrases such as: 'this makes it ...'; 'this suggests ...'; and 'gives me the impression that...'

(b) Questions Sections 1 and 2

The most successful candidates had a depth of knowledge and understanding of their chosen artist/designer. They had the ability to answer all parts of the question, and included historical context and the significance of the artist/designer.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Practical folio

There is still a large cohort of candidates who appear to not understand the purpose or process of the development area of the folios, and some very good candidates appear to be poorly advised. This lack of guidance disadvantages the candidates affected.

There were several incidences when the final sheet was not of the same quality as the investigation or development. This affected both Expressive and Design folios. This was thought to be due to candidates running out of time.

The less successful folios often had a lack of flow or continuity over the three sheets.

Expressive

Some centres advised their candidates to layer their work, presenting sketches in the form of booklets. This practice has not been seen for several years and in almost all cases the efforts of the candidates were diluted, with none of the studies being of a particularly strong quality.

Drawings of small objects, such as lipsticks and eye shadow boxes, drawn to actual size, were often badly done. Candidates didn't have the fine hand-skills to apply detailed observations on such a small scale.

In the case of three-dimensional finals, some development sheets were filled with photographs of the construction of the final and very little else. Some didn't show the scale or a complete image of the final, which made it more difficult to assess.

Other areas of difficulty noted by markers were:

- ◆ Drawings on sheet one which were 'floating' on the page.
- ◆ Superfluous annotations: 'I used a pencil for this drawing'.
- ◆ Drawings of objects cut around, often badly, giving the sheet an appearance of bubbles.
- ◆ Themes that were overly ambitious for the candidate's ability.
- ◆ Poor development which didn't advance the folio or enhance the overall mark for the candidate.
- ◆ Photographs of three-dimensional work on the development sheet for no apparent reason.
- ◆ Random and irrelevant images of celebrities appearing on the sheets.
- ◆ Finals with no link to the first two sheets: a portrait final which followed studies of objects.
- ◆ Interchangeable work on the first two sheets with little distinction between the images on them.

- ◆ Development sheets with just two images — this provides insufficient evidence of the development of two ideas and will be awarded a maximum of 10 out of 20 marks.
- ◆ Tracing or working on top of photographs. This is poor practice and should not be encouraged.

Design

The Design folio tended to be the one which threw up more issues for marking. Problems were often identified at the start of the process, with poorly constructed briefs. Some briefs appeared to be written after an item had been created, and some were overly prescribed by centres, which stifled the more able candidates. Markers reported that these were challenging to mark as the individual voice of the candidate was lost.

Some candidates didn't understand the purpose or process of their design and this was borne out in their confused evaluations.

Some examples of briefs which caused candidates difficulties are outlined below:

Too simplistic for the candidate's ability:

- ◆ Design a CD cover for a singer
- ◆ Design a submarine
- ◆ Design an art gallery
- ◆ Design for a paper plate
- ◆ Design a hat for a pop star
- ◆ Design a bag

Overly complicated for the candidate's ability:

- ◆ Design an oversized tropical fish ocean-themed millinery piece consisting of two sections and taking inspiration from bright, vibrant colours and sea creatures.

Design with too many outcomes:

- ◆ Design a letterhead, leaflet and logo for a company
- ◆ Design a range of jewellery: necklace, ring and bracelet
- ◆ Design a collection of textiles for Monsoon and a border pattern

Other issues that Markers reported included:

- ◆ No market research. This omission is less common now, but it is worth reminding Centres that there is a cap of 16 marks on the Research and Information sheet if no market research is included.
- ◆ Sheet one consisting of a pastiche of small images, often overly cluttered, of a very poor quality, badly trimmed, and not linking to the brief.
- ◆ Confusion between fashion and textiles — the brief is for a fashion item, but the development focuses on textile design.
- ◆ Dress design development consisting of coloured patterns on a two-dimensional template, with no consideration to the figure in the round.
- ◆ Architectural projects that had not considered entrances or windows.
- ◆ Poor layout of sheets, which didn't communicate thoughts or process.
- ◆ Some design finals which consisted of a random collection of objects threaded together with no consideration to the practicalities of the piece.

- ◆ Finals straying from the brief — candidates stating they are designing a headpiece, but the development is for accessories. This dilutes the efforts of the candidate as they have to consider different constraints and design issues for each piece.
- ◆ Development sheets that were filled with photographs of the construction of the final and very little else.
- ◆ Weighty items badly attached to sheets, which fell off.
- ◆ Poorly constructed finals that fell apart or were made from hazardous materials such as barbed wire, broken glass, or ragged-edged metal from cans.
- ◆ Photos sent in lieu of models were sometimes of a very poor quality.

Since the removal of the compulsory three-dimensional element, there has been a noticeable increase in graphic design. Whilst the best of work this area is stunning, it has given rise to a range of issues that are becoming more common, for example:

- ◆ Briefs for a small-scale product (playing cards, CD cover) not well handled as candidates are working in the actual scale size of the product.
- ◆ Development that has been completed through Photoshop was difficult to mark as there was often a poor record of the candidates' thought process.
- ◆ Development that consisted of nothing more than repositioning of text and change of colourways.
- ◆ Using a single photograph from sheet one, often a professional one, and adding some text.
- ◆ Development and final which consisted of manipulating an existing design.

Written Paper

Some candidates spent too much time on one question which resulted in them running out of time for the other questions.

The quality of English was, in some cases, very poor, and markers report that it seems to be deteriorating. Common errors included:

- ◆ Starting sentences without capital letters.
- ◆ Names of artists and designers used were often misspelled, and the variation of the word 'palette' is somewhat creative.
- ◆ Overly long sentences, often running to one hundred words in length.
- ◆ Not reading the questions.
- ◆ Repeating the question, verbatim, by way of introducing their answer without any further comment on this.

Issues relating directly to the (a) questions:

- ◆ Not reading the legend or any additional information.
- ◆ Some of the candidates who answered the 'Built Environment' question did not realise that it was a painting, even though the legend explained that it was oil on canvas.
- ◆ Many candidates thought that the shoe in question 12 was from the 'hippy 60s or 70s', even though it was stated that it was designed in 1938.
- ◆ Many candidates who answered the jewellery question did not understand the word 'artery', which seemed surprising at Higher level.
- ◆ Overly long answers which covered 20 points for a maximum of 10 marks.
- ◆ Many candidates were unsure of how to respond to the 'a' questions, and merely described the image with no personal observations.

- ◆ Some candidates answered the ‘a’ questions with no reference to visual elements and/or design issues.
- ◆ Some candidates described graphic images as paintings and not design.
- ◆ Some candidates used only the visual elements to describe design, with no reference to purpose, function, success etc.

Issues relating directly to the (b) questions:

Candidates who ignored parts of the question could not be awarded full marks despite having made 20 points. This tended to affect candidates who produced a compare and contrast essay, which is more akin to Intermediate 2 level. This approach prohibits the candidates’ ability to be flexible and respond to the variations of the full question.

When describing a second painting/design, some candidates chose an image so similar to the first one that they were forced into repeating the same points. This did not add to their response or demonstrate any real understanding of the task.

Some centres provided a very limited range of study — not only the same two artists and designers, but the same works and artefacts. Markers reported that it was very disheartening to read the tenth essay in a pack which described Chanel’s little black dress and Westwood’s Punk T-shirt.

Some centres provided candidates with overly prescribed worksheets. Groups of candidates expressed shared, and even the same, opinions. This approach gives a poor educational experience for candidates and is not in spirit of the written paper.

Other issues noted were:

- ◆ Candidates used artists/designers whose work pre-dated 1750.
- ◆ Overly long descriptions of work with nothing to signify the characteristic of artist or any innovative and ground-breaking event.
- ◆ Too much historical information with little reference to styles or works.
- ◆ Chronology of artists/designers was not always correct.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Feedback

Ensure that candidates are entered at the correct level. As mentioned earlier in this report, images (with commentaries) of the folios used as benchmarks for 2011 will be published on SQA's secure website this year. Centres should refer to the secure website for exemplification of standards.

- ◆ Try and manage timing to ensure that the candidates' final sheets are as strong as their other ones.
- ◆ Clarify the purpose of development in both folios to the candidate.
- ◆ Do not permit images of an explicit nature.

Expressive

- ◆ Spend time discussing and planning a folio that has a clear theme.
- ◆ Use sheet one to establish the theme and demonstrate the skills of the candidate through tight, analytical drawings using a range of media.
- ◆ Guide candidates towards selecting a theme and/or objects that are suitable for their ability.
- ◆ Sheet two should demonstrate candidates' ability to consider compositions and picture making. Remind candidates that they must have more than two images on this sheet.
- ◆ Ensure that there is a visual difference between sheet one and sheet two.
- ◆ Sheet three should be a culmination of the best composition and medium suitable to the candidate's ability.
- ◆ Do not encourage tracing or working on top of a photocopy.
- ◆ Spend time advising candidates on selecting the best work and presenting it to its best advantage.

Design

- ◆ Spend time creating a good design brief that has identifiable design issues and problems that need to be solved. The brief should allow for creative thinking on the part of the candidate.
- ◆ Question candidates to ascertain their understanding of the task.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to refer to their brief throughout the project to help them keep on-task.
- ◆ Keep the images and information on sheet one clear and relevant. Encourage candidates to demonstrate why they have included the images.
- ◆ Keep candidates on task and don't allow them to stray into designing a range of items.
- ◆ If submitting heavy items on the sheets, make sure they will stay attached.
- ◆ Make sure that none of the work sent in is of a hazardous quality.
- ◆ Do not allow/encourage plagiarism. This will disadvantage candidates.
- ◆ Expensive materials are not a prerequisite for a successful folio, but craftsmanship should be encouraged at all times.
- ◆ Remind candidates that if they are designing a three-dimensional outcome, they should engage in three-dimensional development to assist them in problem solving.

- ◆ Encourage annotation to assist with the subsequent Evaluation.
- ◆ Download the electronic Evaluation sheet from SQA's website and give guidance on completing it. Remind candidates that this is worth eight marks.

Written Paper

Remind candidates that merely describing an image is not enough; markers can see for themselves that there is a high viewpoint of 'The Hunter'. The question asks for the candidate's opinion. An example of this could be: 'The viewpoint of the hunter is from a high level; this suggests that the hunter is being observed, perhaps by the creature he is hunting. The hunter is being hunted'.

- ◆ Practise timed responses to 'a' and 'b' questions to help candidates manage their time more efficiently and effectively.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to read over legends and discuss information gleaned by this.
- ◆ Encourage the use of the full stop and other relevant punctuation marks.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to write in continuous prose.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to produce interesting responses.
- ◆ Quotes are there as a guide and usually ask for personal opinion. Candidates should not feel obliged to agree with the quote, but they should justify and back up their reasons either way.
- ◆ For candidates who require special arrangements, such as coloured paper or an A3 size question paper, ensure that invigilator is aware that candidates will require a full colour version also.
- ◆ Candidates should be aware of the date of the piece they are describing. This would prevent them using artists who pre-date 1750.
- ◆ When describing a second image, ensure that there are differences in style or subject matter to enable the candidate to avoid repeating themselves. Second images should be more of a contrast in style to allow candidates to comment on working methods/ development of artists'/designers' style etc.
- ◆ Ensure candidates are aware of the differences between the art question and the design one. Descriptive language should be varied accordingly.
- ◆ Vary the range of artists and designers and the selection of works.
- ◆ Pay attention to chronology of the artist/designer, and use the correct spelling of their names.
- ◆ If candidates are typing their answers, instruct them to have margins of at least two and a half centimetres on each side of the page and use a 12 point font.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2010	7,239
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Number of resulted entries in 2011	7,192
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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 220				
A	26.4%	26.4%	1,898	154
B	29.8%	56.2%	2,145	132
C	29.7%	85.9%	2,133	110
D	7.9%	93.8%	568	99
No award	6.2%	100.0%	448	-

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.