



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Art and Design
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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

Individual Approaches and High Standards

The reaction of new markers to the variety of approach to topics, methods of presentation, outcomes and evaluation that they have seen was impressive. There is indeed much in the nature of the course that encourages an individual and self-directed response that is of high educational value. It would seem to be a model of independent thinking, planning, research and creative adventure.

Standards of personal commitment, organisation, presentation and technical skill appear to be rising each year, and it is delightful to see that there were candidates who received 200 marks for Enquiries that reflected achievements that were beyond the expectations of the marking criteria. In Enquiries of all levels there was a thoroughness and clarity of purpose that indicates confident understanding of the course and a genuine enjoyment of the personal challenge in creating a folio. While it is wonderful to report that such high standards are being maintained it is also important to appreciate that:

- ◆ There are limits to what can be achieved in an 80-hour practical course, and that the base line for each grade has not been altered by higher expectations.
- ◆ The experience of creating a folio at Advanced Higher must, and does, remain open to candidates of a wide range of ability and ambition.

Trends in presentation

Reassurance and anxiety

If Advanced Higher Art and Design reflects some of the preoccupations and concerns of young people of this age group, then it is interesting to note two quite contradictory themes that have been communicated in a proportion, though by no means all, of the work:

- ◆ The first is a warm and reassuring presentation of friends, community and extended family that is shown in lively representation in portraiture, still life, and landscape and figure composition of people, pets, places and things. It is also seen in designs for clothing, graphics and products that exude an enjoyment of close friends and family.
- ◆ The second reflection is a disquieting personal anxiety about appearance, identity and relationships. This is seen in Enquiries that investigate subjects like distortion, body image, emotional issues and loneliness. There are fashion designs, graphic projects and figure compositions, but by far the most intense vehicle for these worries is the self-portrait. This work often has a high standard of personal direction and sometimes contains a message, a polemic that suggests that the work is a catharsis of all that is worrying.

Materials, mark making, experiment and creative play

Each year markers have commented on a gradual loss of breadth and variety in kinds of materials and techniques that are used by candidates. Although drawing with conventional art materials of the type seen at Higher has always been a staple of many folios, the brush, pen and pencil are rather narrowly predominant when many other ways of making Art and Design could also be explored. When candidates have experimented with materials — using printmaking or forms of experimental mark making — there is an opportunity for a personal vision to develop more freely and in unexpected directions. Markers have expressed the view that this relatively inexpensive method is a way of trying out expressive or design ideas should be part of every candidate's experience of the subject.

Art and Design in 3D

Candidates are doing less three-dimensional work of all kinds: presentations of Jewellery, sculpture, product design, ceramics and architectural modelling are seen less frequently. There are good reasons for this decline: cost and space restrictions on departments make all these creative experiences less easy to accommodate. Also, the difficulties of transporting 3D, and of managing sculptural projects in class, are very real. However, we would plead the case that the act of making things in the round has a special place in art education: it has a direct appeal to many candidates who are excited, not so much by an illusion in 2D, but by creating a tangible object with their hands.

Photography

This year we have continued to see a 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.

Film and animation

Again there have been excellent examples of film and animation, and it is clear that this is an area of creative endeavour that is expanding each year. In creating animation, some candidates show remarkable skills in using complex interplay of sound and vision with commercially available software packages. Others have achieved highly creative results with relatively simple equipment like a mobile phone and a movie making app. As in all projects, markers are interested to see the development of ideas through sketches or an organised story board.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Statement of Intent

This outline of a personal plan and evaluation continues to play a key role in creating the structure of the Enquiry. In particular, the guide to completing this online form has been helpful in reinforcing the importance of the areas of research and development. Examples of this beneficial effect can be seen in folios where candidates have clearly edited and reworked the project to meet the need for structure and coherence.

There are also Enquiries that are close to the boundary of C and D where additional evidence of the creative process that is highlighted in the Guidelines for the Statement of Intent has allowed candidates to reach a more complete submission.

Expressive Enquiries

It is good to see the high standard of skill and observation in many folios that show mastery in rendering tonal values and a strong interest in drawing and painting techniques. Colour, pattern and composition are often handled with a confidence that reflects the commitment of teachers who have nurtured this talent. The best of these enquiries show:

- ◆ A real engagement with researching ideas through first hand drawing — actually visiting the site or making careful studies of the subject.
- ◆ An interest in researching artists who have looked at the topic or produced similar ideas: making studies of artists' work and notes on techniques.
- ◆ A willingness to develop ideas through preparatory sketches, and explore a range of media through experimental work.
- ◆ A desire to produce a personal, distinctive view of the subject.

Design Enquiries

There have been a number of outstanding design projects this year that show degrees of originality and genuine problem solving that exemplify the course criteria. They tend to show emphasis on the following areas:

- ◆ Clear identification of design issues in the design brief and a well-considered commentary on the evolution of the idea.
- ◆ Use of annotation and communication of evolving ideas that make links between research and development.
- ◆ Explanation, through working drawings, of problem solving that considers issues such as form, materials, uses, convenience and styling.
- ◆ Use of drawings, photographs and models to show how the solution has been constructed.

Conceptual Enquiries

The term 'conceptual enquiry' is only very loosely related to 'conceptual art'. It is an Enquiry that sees the folio as an investigation and development of an idea: 'Growth and Decay' or 'Entrapment' or 'Space and Time' are recent examples. This is a personal research project in which development and outcome are rolled into a continuous stream of creative endeavour that uses sketch books with written notes or proposals, drawing, relief sculpture, printmaking and photography all put into the service of a creative body of work that does not always culminate in a picture or a conventional design, yet is very much in the spirit of the course because it exemplifies the idea of an Enquiry — the freedom to choose the proportions of emphasis put on the creative process is an essential part of the course. This year we have seen a further growth of this approach with some delightful combinations of experimental work, such as a project that links stitching, film and sculpture into a highly imaginative folio.

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. The best Art and Design Studies:

- ◆ have a clearly defined area of the subject that is explored
- ◆ have a relevant link to the practical work
- ◆ show a genuine investigation of the background and context of the topic
- ◆ have an analysis or deconstruction of examples of the topic
- ◆ have a discussion of issues or ideas or themes that emerge from the study

Optional Practical Unit

We have seen many exciting examples of the 'Double Practical' folio this year where candidates have shown an impressive range of skills in both Expressive and Design. Some candidates have chosen to create interplay between the two units: the Design Enquiry, for example, sometimes uses the Expressive option as a means to researching parts of the design topic. This option is not for every candidate, but it serves two very different and important functions:

- ◆ For the very ambitious candidate who is making an application to an art college, it provides the sort of breadth of practical work that is required.
- ◆ It is also useful for the candidate who enjoys the practical side of Art and Design, but is less interested in writing about Artists or Designers.

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 online form on the SQA website is quite flexible in size, unlike the previous paper copy. 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 Design

In all areas of design it is important to create development that explores a range of ideas around the theme. Markers need to see that the candidate has considered a number of alternative ways of approaching the topic. This material can be presented in a variety of ways, but some illustrations should be concerned with how the design is to be made: its structure, the materials, and how they will assemble. In this regard, template figures for fashion design, for example, can only play a limited part in showing how a costume or an accessory might be constructed.

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, markers are often very reluctant to remove marks for a candidate with high technical skill, but the development of ideas is essential and development constitutes a significant proportion of the final grade.

Development in Photography

It is good that some centres are beginning to see that Advanced Higher offers a progression from Higher Photography. In an Advanced Higher Photography Enquiry it is important that the candidate finds a range of ways in which photographic ideas evolve — to do with diverse activities such as researching the topic, interpreting formal elements of composition, lighting, or showing how techniques such as depth of field or shutter speeds — can be presented and annotated. Markers feel that repeated sheets of contact prints, though useful in some aspects of the project, must not be the only way of explaining what must be complex, individual and thorough creative process.

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 Wikipedia or 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. This year markers have commented on the role of Art and Design Studies in contributing to a mark that may make the critical difference at the border between a higher or lower grade.

Practical Optional 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': what appears is rather half-hearted. Candidates who take on the unit are apt to attempt too much, and the results can look rather thrown together and incomplete.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Presentation of the folio

Many folios are beautifully presented, but it is important to note that the sequential numbering on the front of sheets helps to clarify the progression of the Enquiry for markers and it also allows candidates to refer directly to individual works in the Statement of Intent.

Numbers of outcomes

There is no stipulation at Advanced Higher for the number of outcomes or the proportion of development and research in each folio. In Design, only one outcome is required, but there may be occasions when a candidate may wish to design a group or series of related outcomes.

In Expressive, many candidates see the numbers of sheets for research, development and outcome to be roughly equal, but there is no need to follow this pattern. So long as research and development, the areas of creative process, are thoroughly completed, the candidate may choose to select only the best work to submit.

Drawing

Encourage candidates to draw from first hand sources. Make reference to drawings completed 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 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 always welcome. 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.

Advice to future candidates: Development

It is now broadly accepted that thorough development is the key to producing a high standard of Enquiry.

Here are some areas where development can be extended:

- ◆ Look to make very clear links between the Research and Development stages of your 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, try to consider three or four ideas and identify them clearly by sketches, annotations and illustrations. Develop each of your options showing how you have combined some and rejected others.
- ◆ Show how you have refined the idea you have chosen, by experimenting with materials or reworking key areas, trying out varieties of shape, colour, pattern, tone or texture. Annotate this process.
- ◆ If you are working on a 3D project, you should have research that takes the form of small models or try-outs or maquettes for 3D ideas in CAD or similar programme.
- ◆ Produce development that focuses on making the outcome. Highlight any difficulties or issues in making: this could be to do with ways of constructing material or structuring the plan for a building. The process of making could be photographed at different stages.
- ◆ In Expressive, show how preparatory drawings are linked to development ideas. Experiment with materials, print making or collage. Look particularly at composition, explaining, by a series of sketches, how the arrangement of shape and form can affect the final work. Try out your ideas in a tonal sketch or in a form that examines a particular visual element.

Advice to future candidates: Practical Optional Unit

Be careful to choose a topic that can be completed in 40 hours and to plan how it will be presented.

- ◆ 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.

Advice to future candidates: 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. Here are some suggestions for approaching the study:

- ◆ Links to practical work: You should establish connections with your practical work in this study, either by a brief statement or by presenting photos of examples of your work that have links to the topic. Resist the temptation to discuss your own work in the study; there is scope to do this in the Statement of Intent and Evaluation.
- ◆ Limit the scope of your study: Discuss an aspect of the artist or designer you are studying, so that you are focusing on a particular part of the topic or period that interests

you. If you 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: Choose an example of a work that is relevant to your study and make a deconstruction of: visual elements, techniques, materials, background and context and influences. Now 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 item by a different designer, or a painting of the same subject by another artist.

Advice to future candidates: 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 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 2013	600
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	555
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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	31.9%	31.9%	177	136
B	30.3%	62.2%	168	118
C	29.5%	91.7%	164	101
D	5.6%	97.3%	31	92
No award	2.7%	-	15	-

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	895
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	838
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates – Expressive

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 200				
A	34.2%	34.2%	287	136
B	31.6%	65.9%	265	118
C	26.3%	92.1%	220	101
D	5.3%	97.4%	44	92
No award	2.6%	-	22	-

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.