



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Art and Design
Level(s)	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

There were no changes to the content, structure or marking criteria of the course this year. The quality of both practical folios was felt to be a return to the high standards seen a few years ago; this was borne out in the results statistics.

There was confidence and energy in the delivery in all areas of the course, and much of the work was mature in style and very stimulating. The opportunity for candidates to have personalisation and choice is one of the strengths of the subject, and these were available to most. The vast majority of candidates received first class tuition for this course and teachers are to be congratulated on the quality of education they delivered.

The grade boundary remained at the notional level: A – 70%, B – 60% and C - 50%.

The average score for the combined, practical folios was 97.9. Last session it was 94.9.

The average score for the question paper was 42.3. Last session it was 42.7.

The number of entries was 6392. This is a continuation of a downward trend; in 2011, the figure was 6929. No reason has been identified for this.

Practical Folios

There was an increase at the top end of submissions, and Markers reported that that it was an absolute pleasure to mark. Work was generally well presented and the vast majority of submissions were at the correct level of entry.

Question paper

There were no issues over the difficulty of the paper, and the mean mark has remained consistent over the years. Most candidates completed the paper within the given time, and many responded with fluid and intelligent answers. The majority were well prepared for this exam and all credit must go to the quality of teaching they received.

There was a refreshing increase in the use of less ‘popular’ artists and designers, such as Peter Doig, Sandy Gardner, Lily Dache and HR Giger, all of whom are important in their respective fields.

There was a noticeable increase in images from past papers being used in the ‘b’ questions, perhaps taking advantage of marking instructions.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Practical Activities

Expressive

Portraiture and still life continued to be the most popular areas of study. Many of these submissions were of an exceptional standard, and the quality of some of the painting was quite breathtaking.

Strong themes, such as 'The Bake Off', 'The Chemist' and 'Sunny-side Up', were usually more successful as the candidate had a clear path to follow.

Placing the title of the theme on the front of the folio was helpful to the marker as it gave a more immediate understanding to the work.

Some very successful folios used work of artists as a springboard for inspiration: themes; composition; painting techniques; colour palettes etc. Some also incorporated text within images very effectively.

In addition to a strong and personal theme, the best folios had a range of media, which allowed candidates to explore and experiment with a variety of techniques. This was particularly effective at the development stage when they were combined with a range of compositional ideas.

Paint, oil-pastel and colour pencil were popular, and there was an increase in printmaking, which was generally very well done. There were very few 3D submissions in this area.

Folios that had a strong tonal contrast were usually powerful, as were those that had a restricted palette.

Many development sheets included evaluative comments, and those who explained the impact of their working processes were more successful — 'The angle of the fabric acts as a lead-in to the main focal point of the red shoe' was more relevant and insightful than 'I used paint for this composition'.

Design

Jewellery and fashion continued to dominate the design folios, and there was an increase in graphic design, some of which was superb. Fewer pieces of 3D work were sent in with the folios.

The best submissions were those in which close attention had been paid to the details and requirements of each sheet, including the evaluation.

Candidates who were able to make a personal choice were inclined to engage more fully with the project than those who worked from a 'blanket' brief issued to all.

Research sheets with focused, relevant images of inspiration and appropriate market research were the most successful. Those who responded to these images, through

drawings and maquettes, demonstrated a good understanding of the purpose of the research sheet.

There continued to be creative use of materials, many of which were inexpensive.

There was evidence of good problem-solving, and many candidates displayed a highly developed and sophisticated understanding of colour, which ran through the entire folio.

Good use was made of evaluative comments on the first two sheets, which aided understanding of the design process and assisted in the completion of the evaluation sheet.

There were excellent examples combining Photoshop technology with textile design, putting outcomes into a context such as fabric design rendered onto an armchair or a garment.

With the increase in use of technology for the production of final solutions, markers were asked not to disadvantage candidates who had no access to technology such as laser cutters or 3D printers (or a granny who can sew!) and to look carefully at the creative process, which underpins successful design.

Question paper

Questions 1, 3, 7, and 12, were the most popular, followed by 8 and 11. Questions 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 were answered least. Many responses were written with confidence and substance, and were often very enjoyable to read. Those who paid close attention to the question and used it to structure their responses did very well. Many of those who answered Q11(a), the Mourning Pendant, wrote very poignant and touching responses.

The most substantial answers were those who backed up observations with astute personal comments: 3(a) 'The shadow to the side of the door *tells* us it is slightly open, *which suggests* the objects might have been stored there.'

The words in italics are key for the marker to know that a personal opinion is about to follow; an essential criterion for a mark.

With the 'b' questions, the best responses were where candidates had more individual choices of images; this usually generated a more enthusiastic answer.

Successful responses had some historical/biographical information, knowledge of the working methods of the artist/designer, focused discussion on a selected piece of work by each, and a conclusion that explained their importance.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Expressive

Concerns were expressed, again, that some candidates were encouraged to work directly on top of photocopies and/or photographs.

Drawing skills are part of the assessment criteria, and teaching candidates this skill defines the subject and prepares the next generation of art and design teachers to continue with skill and integrity.

Serious concerns were raised over the use of disturbing themes such as violence, self-harm and drug abuse. Candidates should be given strong guidance in selecting more appropriate themes at this level.

Other areas of concern in this activity are virtually the same as those reported in previous years:

- ◆ An overly formulaic approach to teaching stifled the better candidates.
- ◆ Folios that had no identifiable theme were generally confused due to lack of focus and direction.
- ◆ Sometimes sheet one and sheet two were so similar they could be swapped with each other.
- ◆ Some candidates were advised to, or not discouraged from, tackling subject matter that was well beyond their capabilities.
- ◆ Failing to employ a range of techniques or media.
- ◆ Candidates who shared images lost their individual voice and were problematic to mark.
- ◆ The use of random, irrelevant images such as 'celebrity' photographs were difficult to credit as they did not support the theme.
- ◆ Some finals were just a larger version of an image from the development sheet.

The Development work continued to be the weakest of the three areas and, in such cases, appeared to be due to a lack of understanding of the purpose of development. Some of the areas of difficulty were identified as follows:

- ◆ Sheets with limited variations of composition and a restricted range of media.
- ◆ Sheets that did not link well with the first or third sheets.
- ◆ Sheets that only had two images did not show any development of an idea. These incomplete sheets were awarded maximum of ten marks.

Design

Markers commented that unrealistic or complicated design briefs, such as: 'Design the Interior for a Hotel, or 'Design an Outfit' did not allow for sufficient focus, and these folios were usually amongst the weakest submissions. As with the expressive folio, the development section tended to be the least well done.

Other issues identified were:

- ◆ Excessive time spent on research drawings which were not used.
- ◆ Entire cohorts working to the same brief. This did not allow room for any personal choice, which is one of the strengths of the subject.
- ◆ Folios that were overly cluttered were difficult to read.
- ◆ Producing two different outcomes as two ideas, eg Idea 1 — design a hat, Idea 2 — design a bag as an accessory. These have different design issues and should be avoided.

- ◆ Architecture projects that failed to consider any functional aspects of the building, such as windows or entrances.
- ◆ The development of some 2D design that consisted of changing colour-ways only.
- ◆ Derivative design that was a poorly disguised copy of an existing piece of work. This approach inhibits the creative process and rarely gains good marks.
- ◆ Applied design often caused confusion if the candidate stated they were designing a shoe or a lamp when they were attaching items to an existing one.
- ◆ Totally impractical outcomes for the brief — a catwalk outfit that did not permit the model to be able to move at all.
- ◆ Inappropriate use of materials, such as using Modroc for a lampshade when paper or card would have been more effective and successful.
- ◆ Solutions that did not visually link with the first two sheets.
- ◆ Candidates running out of time to complete the folio to the best of their ability.
- ◆ Heavy or ragged materials that either fell off or were a potential hazard to handlers.
- ◆ Candidates working in an area in which the teacher had no expertise.
- ◆ Photographs that were blurred, pixelated or poorly lit sent in lieu of the final solution.
- ◆ Electronic evaluation sheets not updated — wrong date and name of centre included.
- ◆ Overly long evaluation sheets which merely described the process.
- ◆ There continued to be a lack of clarity between designing a piece of textiles and designing a garment or a bag. As in previous years, the best examples were superb, but many fell short of success as there was a lack of understanding and focus in the area of study.

Question paper

As with the practical folios, problems that did occur were very similar to those found in previous years, including the larger issues of illegible writing, poor grammar, spelling and punctuation.

‘a’ questions

- ◆ Candidates who did not answer all parts of the question, not surprisingly, missed out on valuable marks.
- ◆ Candidates who did not read the legend missed out on the opportunity to make insightful comments. Those who noticed the size of the *Two Women* by Ron Mueck were able to add that Mueck would have had to make miniature clothes and shoes for them.
- ◆ Candidates who misunderstood the information given in the legend; the dates given in brackets indicate when the work was produced and not the length of time the work existed — ‘Brunel’s bridge was not very successful as it only lasted for 32 years’.
- ◆ Candidates who showed a lack of understanding of critical analysis and repeated the same personal opinion after every observation: ‘The use of tone makes it very effective ... the use of colour makes it very effective ... the use of texture makes it very...’
- ◆ Candidates who did not understand art and design vocabulary. Some wrote about the ‘tonnage’ used or how the artist ‘toned’ in areas.
- ◆ Candidates who used offensive or flippant remarks. This may result in their answer being annulled: ‘If he thinks this is good design, he must be a total idiot!’
- ◆ Candidates who missed out on points because they didn’t justify their observations: 11(a) ‘There is a small crown at the top of the pendant’. This is a description with no personal opinion. To add, as one candidate did, ‘It looks as if it is floating showing that it would never be worn’, would get a mark.

'b' questions

- ◆ Some candidates wrote too much biographical information about their chosen artists/designers with minimal reference to describing examples of work, which the questions demand.
- ◆ Some selected works that were so similar, they led to repetitive comments.
- ◆ Others listed so many paintings they were unable to discuss any in depth.
- ◆ Candidates who wrote excessively long responses generally ran out of time to complete the paper; some had thirty to forty points for a twenty-mark question.
- ◆ Candidates who made little or no reference to the last part of the question lost out on the four marks is allocated to this. Some paid lip service by making bland comments such as: 'They were important because they were both keen on art'. No marks would be awarded for this.
- ◆ Candidates who strayed from their area of study — in answering question 1, portraiture, they had selected works that were more suited to figure composition. For this paper, it is recommended that candidates avoid ambiguous images in which the area of study is open to debate.
- ◆ A large number of centres instructed their candidates to work from the same set of notes, artists/designers and, in an increasing number of occasions, the same images. This practice tends to restrict the better candidates.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Practical Folios

- ◆ Encourage selection of personal themes.
- ◆ Work to own strengths and those of the candidate.
- ◆ Actively intervene if a candidate wishes to select inappropriate subject matter, and don't suggest such themes to them.
- ◆ Ensure that there is a strong, visual link between all sheets.
- ◆ Avoid making the final solutions just a larger version of an image from the development sheet.
- ◆ Present work in a clear and cohesive manner. Tape sheets to hang horizontally in a column and not in a row; the latter will hold up the marking process as fewer folios can be displayed at any one time.
- ◆ Attach work securely; many pieces fall off during the marking process.
- ◆ Clarify the development aspect of both folios. Many centres need to look at how they deliver this stage for both folios as it is taking on more importance.
- ◆ Check the SQA website for updates and exemplification on a regular basis. The user name and password required to access the SQA Secure site is available from each centre's SQA co-ordinator.

Expressive

- ◆ Encourage candidates to make a personal selection and work to a strong and clear theme.
- ◆ Put the title of the theme on the front of the folio.
- ◆ For development, encourage candidates to work in a range of media, explore techniques and a variety of compositions.

- ◆ Avoid sharing images between candidates, and ensure all images are relevant to the theme.
- ◆ Do not allow candidates to work directly on top of photocopies and/or photographs.

Design

- ◆ Encourage candidates to select an appropriate and practical brief; one that is within their capabilities, but allows them to demonstrate their creativity.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to question and justify the relevance of images they have selected; what purpose will the image serve?
- ◆ Consider choice of colour throughout the folio.
- ◆ With 3D outcomes, encourage candidates to make maquettes at the development stage.
- ◆ Avoid candidates using derivative and/or preconceived ideas.
- ◆ Avoid including photographs that are a merely a visual record of the construction process; this is usually a space filler and has little value.
- ◆ Encourage good craftsmanship at all times.
- ◆ Ensure the solution ties up with brief.
- ◆ Ensure that any photographs used are of a good quality.
- ◆ Avoid using hazardous materials and attach all others securely.
- ◆ Spend time on evaluation sheets. Encourage analytical and critical annotation rather than a narrative description of the process. Keep to one side of paper and the font size no smaller than 11 points.

Question paper

- ◆ Instruct candidates to read the legend before responding.
- ◆ Instruct candidates to carefully read and answer all parts of the question.
- ◆ Instruct candidates to indicate the question they are answering.
- ◆ Remind candidates to justify each observation.
- ◆ Tell candidates not to be offensive or frivolous in their responses.
- ◆ Ensure that candidates have selected work that is in an unambiguous area of study.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to become more involved in the selection of images for the 'b' questions and select from a broader range of artists/designers.
- ◆ Reinforce chronological and historical timelines.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to take their own notes.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to write in continuous prose and avoid the use of bullet points.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to keep to the notional timing of fifteen minutes for each 'a' response and thirty minutes for each 'b' response.
- ◆ Ensure that works chosen, for this exam, are within the 1750 to present day timeline.
- ◆ Make sure evidence has been marked if it has to be submitted for Exceptional Circumstances procedures.
- ◆ Look at SQA exemplification to see where and how marks are awarded.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	6493
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	6392
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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	30.7%	30.7%	1964	154
B	30.2%	61.0%	1932	132
C	26.8%	87.8%	1716	110
D	6.8%	94.6%	435	99
No award	5.4%	-	345	-

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.