



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Art and Design Enquiry: Expressive</b> <b>Art and Design Enquiry: 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

The enthusiastic responses of candidates that are reflected in so many of the submissions for Advanced Higher Art and Design continue to impress markers. This year we have seen many examples showing high standards of individual expression, creativity and invention. Many centres are well informed in their approach to this Course and the thoroughness in the presentation of folios reflects the commitment and professionalism of teachers.

## Statement of Intent and Evaluation

The updated Statement of Intent and Evaluation has had a beneficial effect on the structuring and linking of the various parts of the Course. The guidelines, which are on the SQA website, for completing this document have helped many candidates to improve the coherence of their enquiry. It is an indication of the progress centres have made that, whereas in recent years markers were disappointed by the meagre or terse approach to planning and evaluation, they are now suggesting that some candidates are over-enthusiastic and writing too much. I outlined some of the improvements that have been made in the 2009 report, but one that has more recently emerged is the way in which this thematic outline encourages an individual and critical approach to the creative process.

## Design

Textile and Fashion is the most popular design topic and, in many folios, candidates have brought the process through to well made and wearable costumes, hats or bags. Architecture design projects have attracted favourable comment this year. Many show a good understanding of IT packages in the development of ideas and some have culminated in impressive models. Graphic Design and Product Design are also impressive, but they are comparatively rare and they appear to confirm a trend, that the dominance of fashion is less attractive to boys. A number of markers have suggested ways in which this might be addressed that are interesting, but beyond the scope of this report.

## Expressive

In Expressive, figure and portrait continue to be the predominant subjects, with many candidates showing mature technical skill in handling tone and colour, and an enjoyment in depicting themselves, their friends and their world. Still life, the built environment and landscape are also evident, but printmaking and especially sculpture are noticeable by their rarity. This may reflect the financial restraints that many departments are beginning to face and, if so, it might also account for the decline in other more costly forms of expression. A number of markers discussed this trend; others commented on the continuing expense of mounting and presenting this work.

## New approaches

It is refreshing to see an increasing number of candidates presenting enquiries that involve a wealth of personal research to explore an issue, a traditional narrative, a historical event or an aspect of family history. The project, which can be Design or Expressive, is often developed through a range of activities, media and 'found' materials such as collage,

drawing, model making, Photoshop, sculpture, notation, and mark making, and it is mostly linked to a study of contemporary art. Such enquiries do not result in a conventional outcome; they are usually also art school folios and they require a degree of discipline and commitment that is not for every candidate. However, they are welcome because they are part of a tradition of personal exploration that is in the spirit of 'the Enquiry'.

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

### **Presentation**

The most obvious improvement of the last few years at Advanced Higher Art and Design is the way so many more Enquiries have been presented in an organised and unified way. The Statement of Intent and Evaluation is clear, research and development is relevant, and the work is numbered and carefully ordered and annotated. This concerted approach to a creative project is not a small achievement, yet recent experience shows that it can be done by candidates at almost all levels of ability.

### **Written and practical work**

Many markers have commented on the way in which the study of an artist or designer has directly influenced the candidate's development of the practical work. The written study has often focused on particular aspects of working methods or technique or the use of visual elements, and then this understanding is applied to the practical work. This is rarely just a slavish copy or a poor imitation: instead the enquiry is enhanced by the study. This kind of visual relationship between study and practice is valued more highly than study of dry biographical facts.

### **Research**

It is impressive to see that many centres are teaching research skills. The evidence of this is seen in Enquiries where personal research into an area of design or visual experience is explored through a variety of media: first-hand drawing, digital photography, books, magazines and objects. This body of research amounts to a kind of collection of things that have a common theme or look and, as it is assembled the candidate can become more discriminating in what is developed further.

### **Development**

Many candidates show a careful presentation of the various steps that they have taken in the creative journey of developing and refining their topic. Just as in research, markers have been impressed by the variety of approach and by the ways in which teachers have clearly structured this as part of the Course: colour, pattern, composition, shape, and materials have often been developed separately and been brought together in the final piece. This process of considering possible approaches is highly valued by all markers.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Developing Expressive ideas**

It is sometimes frustrating to see Expressive work where the candidates have reached high standards of technique and 'finish', but where the process of research and development is left unclear. Markers will give credit where possible and will look for work that can be construed as development, but Enquiries that lack clear evidence of stages of development that are relevant to the outcomes will not achieve a high grade.

### **Failure to order and annotate the Design process**

The research and development of design work is, at Advanced Higher level, a quite familiar series of stages. Candidates are aware that the ability to exemplify this working out of ideas is critical to the overall mark. It is surprising therefore that many candidates leave a rather confusing series of mood boards, sketches and 'try outs' to speak for themselves. Such work may seem to the candidate to make obvious links with the design, but markers often struggle to make sense of it.

The production of this design process is a quite self conscious activity, and the evidence of this should be edited, labelled, carefully ordered and annotated. Annotation in design can refer to specific design issues: to such things as materials, structure, alternative approaches to making, with references to specific fashion or textile or graphic design, or architectural or product design terminology.

### **Lack of first-hand drawing**

In all Expressive Enquiries markers give credit to candidates who include examples of drawing directly from the subject. There are still many Expressive folios where candidates have not attempted this skill and have relied entirely on second hand sources. First-hand drawing is immediately recognised for the freshness of its visual insight, the openness of its potential, and for the individual statement that it makes.

### **Art and Design studies topics too big**

Some candidates, in an effort to encompass the diversity of influence on their work, attempt to cover the work of three or four artists or designers in one study. There is no reason why this should not be done, but it is much more difficult to achieve the level of depth and relevant detail that is required. Such studies frequently lack personal comment and deconstruction of examples of work or reference to influence and context or discussion of issues, because there is only space to introduce each artist or designer with a brief biography.

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

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

The new Statement of Intent forms and guidelines are available to download from the SQA website.

### **Structuring the Course**

Teachers should try where possible to make a series of deadlines throughout the year of work for candidates to follow. It is quite acceptable to go back over projects in order to improve the depth of research and development.

### **Teach research skills**

Introduce a programme of research using a range of different approaches, from sketching, to photography, to collecting pictures and items. Ask your candidates to edit and annotate their research.

### **Development**

Try to consider a variety of approaches to developing ideas: looking at visual elements or techniques or methods of construction.

### **Numbering and annotating**

Sheets should be numbered and works referred to by number in the Statement of Intent form. All design research and development sheets should be annotated.

### **Art and Design studies**

Begin the Art and Design studies research at an early stage in the session and try to link it closely with the practical project. Try to encourage candidates to discuss aspects of the artist or designer they are studying. One of the best ways to achieve this discussion is to suggest making comparisons with, for example, a design of the same item by another designer, or a painting of the same subject by another artist. Often the teacher/lecturer may have to help in providing this comparative material, and by asking candidates to focus on particular areas of context or influence in the comparison.

### **Sketch books**

Sketch books are not required as part of the Enquiry, but they are not discouraged. Many teachers/lecturers, 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 books, marking pages where appropriate.

### **Making up the numbers**

Candidates are not penalised for failing to meet the 18-sheet maximum number of works and they should be aware that it is better to edit the folio rather than include works of a lesser standard.

### **Mood boards in Fashion**

Candidates who make a collection of images associated with the theme of their Fashion Enquiry must be very discriminating in selecting both the style of image and the way it is presented. Some Enquiries contain sheets of fashion photographs that have only a tenuous connection to the topic. The candidate may see the link as being obvious, but the marker is struggling to make sense of it as research.

### **Art and Design studies where the candidate discusses their own work**

Markers have often commented favourably on candidates who make clear links between their work and the topic of their Art and Design study. This is sometimes done by including pictures that show the links or brief statements that establish particular areas of influence. However, when candidates begin to make comparisons or evaluations of their work in the study such as, 'In many ways my design is more adventurous than Vivienne Westwood because it...' or, 'Lucien Freud's approach to his portrait is a bit messy compared to mine, but it still...' they are losing sight of the topic of the study.

### **The Optional Practical Unit**

For many candidates who have an interest in both Design and Expressive, the Optional Practical Unit provides a viable and undemanding alternative to the Art and Design studies. Markers have been impressed by the relevant and succinct research and development that has underpinned these Units that may be as little as four sheets.

### **Art college folios**

Art school folios often provided a basis for some excellent enquiries that showed a strong interest in developing an individual approach to the topic. The work underlined the way in which Advanced Higher can contribute much in creating structure and providing the outlet for interest in related artists and designers that enhances a folio. Candidates sometimes included the work done in figure drawing classes and, while this is interesting as background material, it should only be included when it is relevant to the topic.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Art and Design Enquiry: Design

Number of resulted entries in 2009	661
Number of resulted entries in 2010	701

## 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	22.4%	22.4%	157	137
B	30.8%	53.2%	216	119
C	33.0%	86.2%	231	101
D	7.3%	93.4%	51	92
No award	6.6%	100.0%	46	—

## Statistical information: update on Courses

### Art and Design Enquiry: Expressive

Number of resulted entries in 2009	883
Number of resulted entries in 2010	901

## 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	28.9%	28.9%	260	136
B	28.5%	57.4%	257	119
C	26.3%	83.7%	237	103
D	8.1%	91.8%	73	95
No award	8.2%	100.0%	74	—

## 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, 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.