



External Assessment Report 2010

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 work of the majority of candidates continued to be of a very high standard and the quality of teaching has clearly been delivered with energy and enthusiasm. Remarkable progress has been made in the subject since the introduction of Higher Still in 2000.

Markers of the practical folios reported that, this year, there were fewer submissions at the very top end of the scale and more at the bottom end, some of which were not Higher level. This observation was borne out in the statistics which showed a slight downward shift this year, with fewer A Grade passes and more fails.

Part of this may be explained by a less successful cohort of Intermediate 2 candidates progressing from last year's diet into this one. Another factor was an increase in some basic drawing errors, pointed ellipses, lack of understanding of depth, poor proportion of the head, etc.

The overall response to the written paper showed a sound knowledge of artists and designers and their work. This was accompanied by competent and, in some cases, insightful critical responses using appropriate terminology. Questions 1, 3, 8 and 12 were answered most, and 4, 5 and 9 least. There was a fairly even spread of the other questions being tackled.

The vast majority of candidates completed the paper within the allotted time, and none of the questions confused or caught out the candidates. The average marks for the written paper remain in line with previous years.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Practical Folio

The full range of abilities was evident throughout the marking period. The top work was superb and way beyond the highest mark available. The skill, process and craftsmanship of many of the candidates were outstanding, particularly as the age of the vast majority of them is 16 or 17. Much of the work was very honest and candidates were fully engaged and committed to completing the two practical folios. There was delicate and sensitive work in both areas and a superb range of themes: strong and personal ones generally were the most successful.

The system for marking remains unchanged: folios are marked independently by two markers and checked by a third marker (Standardiser) if there is a discrepancy of more than ten marks. Where there is no discrepancy, the candidate is awarded the aggregate mark. The Standardiser also completes a series of quality assurance checks to ensure consistency and fairness to the candidates. As one marker noted: 'The system supports assessors and is fair to students'.

Expressive

Still life and portraiture were the most popular areas of study. There was very little landscape, built environment, or fantasy and imagination.

There was evidence of an increase in strong, traditional painting, indicating a slight move away from the polished 'photographic' finish which has predominated over the last few years. Pencil work, particularly colour pencil finals, maintained its popularity, and last year's noted increase in printmaking was evident this year and was generally very successful.

There were some superb examples of strong and confident media handling and understanding of tone and colour. Where candidates had paid attention to strong, directional lighting of their chosen subject matter, the work tended to have much more of a visual impact.

Markers commented that including a title on the front of the folio enabled them to 'read' the work in a much more coherent manner. It should be noted that 'Portraiture' and 'Still Life' are not themes, whereas 'Waiting' or 'Getting Ready' are.

The most successful folios were the ones in which candidates were clearly engaged with the topic and had chosen a strong theme which they established on the first sheet. For the development sheet, they demonstrated consideration of a variety of compositions, viewpoints, techniques, media and even different backgrounds. There was also a clear distinction between their research sheet and their development sheet. The final outcome had a strong visual link with the two other sheets, and the whole folio obviously belonged to the individual candidate.

Design

Research sheets, on the whole, were well done: the best having clear and concise design briefs which identified relevant problem solving, enabling candidates to be very focused throughout the process.

Jewellery and fashion were still the most popular, with candidates employing innovative techniques and manipulation of materials, many of which were made from recycled materials and therefore inexpensive.

There was an increase in the creation of paper toile and models; these were often better than the fabric final outcomes. As with the Expressive folio, work which had strong, visual links between each of the sheets tended to be the most successful.

Centres are reminded that it is essential to emphasise the importance of the evaluation sheets, in order that their candidates have the opportunity to gain the full eight marks. Neatly written evaluation sheets were so much easier to decipher, as were typed ones, as long as the font size was not smaller than 12-point. An electronic version is now available on the SQA website for downloading. Centres are advised to print the Higher evaluation sheet on pink paper wherever possible.

Written Paper

Markers reported that the (a) questions allowed the candidates to produce insightful and excellent responses.

Candidates who paid attention to the wording of the questions were more able to construct their answers in a clear and cohesive manner.

Candidates who gained full marks for the (b) questions did so by answering all parts of the questions. A depth of historical understanding was also present when candidates achieved full marks, as this underpins the description of the painting.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Expressive

The development sheet continues to be the area with least understanding, and the same issues as in previous years are mentioned in this report with little change:

- ◆ When just two images are on the development sheet, there is insufficient evidence to satisfy the criterion of 'development of at least two ideas'. Two images can be either one idea developed, or two ideas, neither of which has been developed. The work on this sheet will receive a maximum of 10 marks rather than 20.
- ◆ The other main area of misunderstanding is when there is virtually no difference between the research and development sheets. A reference to successful sheets has been made in the section 'areas in which candidates performed well' above.

Other comments noted by Markers were as follows:

- ◆ There was evidence that some candidates ran out of time, as the quality of their final piece was less strong than the other two sheets.
- ◆ There was little evidence of landscape or three-dimensional work, but many of these submissions tended to be less well done.
- ◆ In some cases there was very limited use of media and excessive use of colour pencil throughout entire folios.
- ◆ Bold expressions in Portraiture proved to be too challenging for lower ability candidates.
- ◆ Cutting around drawings on sheet one, often poorly, did little to enhance the Expressive work.
- ◆ The use of lurid coloured mounting paper detracted from the actual work.
- ◆ The inclusion of drawings of seemingly random celebrities rarely added to the quality of a submission.
- ◆ Working on top of photocopies is poor practice and unacceptable.

Design

A poor design brief, such as one which lacked focus or was too challenging for the candidate's ability, was identified as the main cause of problems within this folio.

Some examples of briefs which candidates failed to respond well to are as follows:

- ◆ Design a cushion
- ◆ Design a Visitors' Centre
- ◆ Design a jewellery box which holds an electronic device
- ◆ Design a candle holder for elderly people who like shells
- ◆ Design a nineteenth-century dress

Other issues noted by Markers were:

- ◆ Some centres guiding their candidates away from problem solving tasks and focusing on repetitive work which was often sterile.
- ◆ Research sheets in a 'scrapbook' style, demonstrating no real understanding of the purpose of relevant research.
- ◆ Many candidates designing items such as helmets, garments or chairs, giving no consideration to anthropomorphics or ergonomics.
- ◆ Some candidates being overambitious in what they attempted to design and spread themselves too thinly, eg constructing fabric as well as designing a corset, producing a set of jewellery, designing a restaurant.
- ◆ Confusion over applied design. Candidates would state that they were designing a dress, a lamp, a skateboard, etc, when they were actually designing a decorative feature for an existing garment/object. This type of brief would have different design issues and considerations.
- ◆ Poor development, where candidates would make minimal changes to their ideas. This was quite common in graphic design where the development consisted of just moving the position of the lettering or changing the colour of the background.
- ◆ Candidates spending a lot of time and effort drawing existing products, to no obvious purpose.
- ◆ Production of many different ideas, with none of them actually developed.
- ◆ Fashion development which ignored the three dimensional aspect and was often a front view only.
- ◆ Overly cluttered and confusing development sheets which were hard to 'read'.
- ◆ Development sheets which were just a photographic record of the construction of the final.
- ◆ Finals which were made with potentially hazardous materials: broken glass, jagged metal, raw edges of chicken wire, etc.
- ◆ Poor quality photographs sent in lieu of finals.
- ◆ Plagiarism, which is unacceptable.
- ◆ Evaluation sheets not completed with any thought or understanding to their purpose.
- ◆ Evaluation sheets pasted to the back of the folios.

Written Paper

The standard of handwriting has increasingly become more difficult to read. In 2011, a lined answer booklet will be introduced.

The use of bullet points has been on the increase in recent years, and this approach should be discouraged. Part of the development of skills in art and design studies is teaching pupils

to respond to a question in the form of an essay that is structured and coherent. The use of bullet points restricts a candidate's ability to write in a fluid manner.

Other areas in which candidates had difficulties are as follows:

- ◆ Repeating the legend with no additional observations or comments.
- ◆ Describing the image with no additional observations or comments.
- ◆ Overly long answers, some running to six pages and not always gaining full marks.
- ◆ Failing to address the last part of question (b). Some very good students are falling foul of this and losing marks unnecessarily.
- ◆ Using unknown, contemporary artists/designers. This makes it difficult for candidates to answer the last part of the question as the artists/designers have no legacy of contribution or influence in this respect. That they have 'influenced the candidate' is not what is being looked for.
- ◆ Not naming any artists or designers.
- ◆ Mixing up the names of artists/designers and their works.
- ◆ Writing a compare and contrast answer with no historical context or reference to the question.
- ◆ Memorising class notes and not understanding what they are writing about.
- ◆ Formulaic approach, working to the lowest common denominator. This stifles the voice of the better candidate and is not in the spirit of this paper.
- ◆ Using expressive terminology for a design question, ie visual elements when describing a product or other piece of design.
- ◆ Using artists who predate 1750, which makes this part of the answer irrelevant.
- ◆ Misguided interpretations of paintings that some additional research would correct.
- ◆ Blurring the lines between areas of study. This is becoming particularly evident with portraiture and figure composition. This tactic could make a candidate's response irrelevant.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Make sure that candidates are entered at the correct level for all parts of the Course and make every effort to manage their time well.

Staff and candidates should refer to exemplar material on the SQA website.

Staff should take the opportunity to visit Central Marking when available.

Spend time editing work and present it in a visually clear and communicative manner. Overly cluttered sheets are generally more difficult to read and therefore assess.

Ensure the three sheets are joined together in the correct order and with ample lengths of strong tape; masking tape and short lengths of sellotape are ineffective.

Expressive

Encourage candidates to:

- ◆ Work to a strong theme
- ◆ Use a wide range of media
- ◆ Produce some work from first-hand sources
- ◆ Avoid basic drawing errors
- ◆ Have a clear distinction between research and development sheets
- ◆ Have more than two images on the development sheet
- ◆ Avoid tracing or working on top of printed images

Design

- ◆ Spend time on creating a brief which allows for focused research and identifies problem solving
- ◆ Keep the design brief manageable and have just one outcome
- ◆ Clarify design issues such as ergonomics and anthropometrics where appropriate
- ◆ Clarify difference between designing the object or applying a decorative design to an existing item
- ◆ Avoid hazardous materials, especially if they are being sent to central marking. All items are handled by many people and should not have the potential to cause harm
- ◆ Do not allow or encourage candidates to copy the work of others
- ◆ Attach objects of an awkward shape securely; glue guns do not always keep the work in place
- ◆ Mount all work to the front of the folios. SQA staff who check-in work and Markers should not have to 'hunt' for anything
- ◆ Give time and guidance for the completion of the evaluation sheet

Written Paper

- ◆ Encourage candidates to read the question thoroughly and use its structure to help organise their response
- ◆ Encourage essay-style answers in continuous prose
- ◆ Avoid repetition of opinions
- ◆ Use the correct terminology for each area of study
- ◆ With the (a) questions, always back up an observation with a personal opinion: the marker can see the image and needs more than a description to award marks
- ◆ Avoid writing overly long answers. Keep it focused and concise
- ◆ Name artists/designers and include some historical/biographical information about them
- ◆ Avoid using artists/designers who have no record of importance in the area of study
- ◆ Answer all parts of each question. Remember that four marks are allocated to the last part of the (b) question
- ◆ Avoid an overly formulaic approach to preparing candidates for the (b) question
- ◆ Avoid using artists/designers whose works pre-date 1750
- ◆ Avoid straying into other areas of study
- ◆ Negative language and phrases such as 'I don't like this... I hate this' usually indicate a lack of enthusiasm and interest, and should be avoided
- ◆ Use past papers as practice, and prepare candidates for the exam with an unseen prelim paper or equivalent

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	7232
Number of resulted entries in 2010	7239

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	21.6%	21.6%	1563	154
B	29.9%	51.5%	2168	132
C	32.2%	83.7%	2328	110
D	9.0%	92.7%	649	99
No award	7.3%	100%	531	–

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 judgmental). 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.