



## External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	<b>Art and Design</b>
Level	<b>Standard Grade</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

In **Expressive Activity**, there continues to be strong evidence of effective teaching and preparation for the five-hour examination and this is reflected in the quality of the submissions. On the whole, the overall standard was very good with a number of outstanding pieces of work submitted; the number of Foundation Awards remains low. Candidates who were well prepared through a process of personal choice regarding subject matter and materials, show confidence in their performance across all levels.

Candidates produced a variety of outcomes based on the titles provided. By far the majority of entries were two-dimensional; still life painting was the most popular theme, followed by portraiture and then landscape. Markers reported a welcome increase in portraiture this year and commented favourably on its high standard, particularly the use of imaginative composition and expertise in media handling.

The number of candidates submitting three-dimensional work was very low, mainly in the form of ceramics. Where clay work is produced, it is usually submitted by all candidates in a centre, and in general the standard remains very good. There was also a marked decrease in the number of landscapes this year. While many centres favour oil pastels, there was evidence of an increase in painting, and markers were encouraged by the standard they saw. Chalk pastel and good quality coloured pencils were also popular choices of media.

Candidates responded positively to the titles which were provided by SQA to stimulate the development of work towards the examination outcome. Many centres had put a great deal of thought into the preparation of resources in order to provide opportunities for their pupils to thoroughly develop the titles, themes and materials over time. The most popular title choices were 'Deep in Thought' which was the clear preference for portraiture and allowed for a broad interpretation and 'Summer Festival' which provided varying colourful versions of still life as well as portraiture, landscape and some figure work.

The title 'Close Up' elicited a large number of oversimplified or abstract images which were not challenging enough for a five-hour examination. This was the least successfully interpreted title. In many instances there was a lack of drawing and flat pattern was represented in a very graphic style. 'Car Boot Sale' was a popular option for still life but some candidates tried to deal with many unrelated objects that were too challenging for their abilities.

Candidates often struggled to compose well-balanced pictures and had difficulty selecting and arranging objects and deciding on appropriate backgrounds for their theme. 'City Life' and 'Left Luggage' allowed candidates to produce some imaginative and thoughtfully composed still life and townscape outcomes. There were very few examples of fantasy and imagination; where it existed it was poorly executed, relying heavily on the candidates' imagination.

The personal and creative response of a number of candidates was limited by a number of centres that promoted only one title or one technique. Additionally, markers commented that some centres did not appear to put any emphasis on the titles provided and that they were producing similar outcomes to previous years.

In **Critical Activity**, the overall standard and quality of submissions was thought to be very high, with some exceptional examples that provided genuinely insightful and accomplished analysis. Most submissions addressed the paper with conviction and reflected very good teaching and learning. Standards have risen across all levels as the 1500-word advisory word limit is generally accepted; this has led to more focused and pertinent work.

Responses reflect a rounded experience of Critical Activity and the very best examples demonstrated a mature and perceptive analytical style that was interesting to read. There was also a good understanding and use of appropriate art and design language within an ever-increasing diversity of topics.

It was acknowledged by markers that teachers provided good support materials for Critical Activity and used a variety of effective structures for its delivery. In general, most candidates responded well to their chosen theme, showing sound background knowledge of the topic while offering a broad spectrum of opinions and judgements.

Although the majority of centres adhered to the 1500-word limit, there are still some that repeatedly choose to ignore it and allow their candidates to submit unnecessary lengthy scripts of up to 20 or 30 pages or 3000 to 4000 words. The word limit has had the advantageous effect of reducing the amount of irrelevant padding included within such submissions, creating responses that are more considered and purposeful.

Overall, candidates dealt effectively with clearly contrasting Design and Expressive context, though Expressive submissions still tend to achieve slightly higher grades. However, the gap is closing as candidates engage more fully with relevant design criteria.

Some Design submissions failed to achieve good grades because they were heavily composed of an analysis of a design item in terms of its visual elements. This needs to be discouraged. A good reliable design submission need to take account of design criteria such as fitness for purpose, materials, technologies, target group, ergonomics, cost, manufacturing processes, construction methods, style and aesthetics. It is not necessary to labour the visual elements, as this is the function of Expressive context.

The number and range of Scottish artists' and designers' work which was researched has grown this year. Markers noted that Expressive submissions favoured the Scottish Colourists, Picasso, Currie, Redpath, Howson, Mach, Goldsworthy, Kahlo and the Impressionists. In Design, Peter Chang, Jack Cunningham, Gaudi, Westwood and Timorous Beasties were very popular choices.

Product design, fashion design and architecture were the most commonly analysed design themes and were particularly strong as candidates seemed to be able to engage more thoroughly with three-dimensional design aspects. It was encouraging to note that many candidates had access to actual products, and this had a huge impact on personal enjoyment and interaction with their chosen topic.

In the best examples, candidates kept the biographical and historical information to a minimum and cleverly used it to inform and illuminate the personal response. The writing was concise and candidates responded well to their chosen themes, showing relevant background knowledge of the topic while offering a range of opinions and judgements.

Although handling information or historical and factual information is important in Critical Activity, the personal response should form the greater part of the submission as it is the most reliable indicator of the candidate's thinking and should include critical vocabulary, personal opinions and substantiated judgements and reasons. In the overlong submissions candidates tended to include much irrelevant factual information.

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

The outcome produced in the **Expressive** examination should be the culmination of a creative process, planned and prepared using the stimulus titles as a starting point. Where centres adopt the true spirit of Expressive Activity and follow this approach, the results were undeniably individual in terms of choice of theme, scale, media and technique, and usually produce excellent results. Undoubtedly candidates benefited from clear direction and thorough preparation for the five-hour examination.

The most successful responses were made from first-hand sources in still life and portraiture. While using first hand sources is to be encouraged, it is not always possible and many candidates derive imagery from photographs. In these circumstances it is recommended that they have some input in the setting up or production of the photograph.

In the very best centres, the work showed variety in the range of themes selected and in the skill and diversity of media handling techniques.

The majority of outcomes were entirely finished in the time allowed, demonstrating good planning and determination by candidates. Markers commented that by working on a smaller scale, some candidates were able to produce more finished work, especially when faced with a busy or complex theme.

Colour was the visual element most obviously explored and some of the best work demonstrated dramatic mood and atmosphere created through the expressive use of colour and tone.

In **Critical Activity**, the best submissions were centred on a theme, topic or movement, which provided opportunities for considered and relevant comparisons. Some freedom of choice in selecting artists and designers produced the most individual and personal results.

The most common and effective format adopted by centres consists of a study of two designers/artists and an essay structured around an introduction containing factual or historical information, an analysis of four design items/paintings and a comparison. Where there was a clear focus or themed approach, such as a study of, for example, paintings entitled 'War and Peace', 'Images of Marriage' or 'The Dance', candidates produced purposeful, individual and coherent submissions.

Markers reported that the production quality of Critical Activity was excellent and the submissions were beautifully presented and illustrated. The vast majority were word-processed and markers welcomed the inclusion of illustrations which were useful in identifying lesser-known works.

The topics dealt with most successfully in Design were fashion design, product design and architecture. Candidates seemed to be able to deal with these particular design topics in more depth than when dealing with two-dimensional design such as graphics. There were some excellent fashion design submissions, which fully engaged in relevant design issues such as the cut, construction, target market, style and fabric of garments.

When candidates had actually experienced at first hand paintings, sculptures and personal design items, their work was stronger and more engaging as personal enthusiasm and natural spontaneity were clearly evident.

### **Areas which candidates found demanding**

In **Expressive Activity** candidates encountered difficulties when faced with very poor and uninspiring groups of objects from which to work. Poor still life groupings were a factor in the production of low General and Foundation awards. There was evidence that groups of candidates were working from one still life group or from a limited number of photographs. The work looked similar or even identical in subject matter, style and composition. This approach did not sufficiently challenge candidates to achieve their true potential and hampered even the most able student.

In contrast, candidates in some centres encountered difficulties when given complete freedom of choice with no apparent direction. Consequently, a number of underdeveloped or random images were presented. It was clear to markers that, where candidates were not provided with clear structures and support, the quality of their performance suffered.

Markers continue to register their concerns that some centres do not appear to place enough emphasis or importance on the stimulus titles, and it is apparent that the same resources and images are used each year.

They also highlighted an increasing number of centres whose candidates' work was not cropped or mounted. While the quality of the presentation is not relevant in the marking process, cropping and mounting work simply onto A2 paper can make a big difference to the impact of the submission. Candidates deserve their work to be presented in a professional manner.

Some centres did not allow their pupils any choice in media; particularly detrimental to candidates is the use of pencil only, as it limits their response to the visual elements. In particular, markers raised concerns where every pupil from a centre produced pencil work.

In **Critical Activity**, some candidates included too many biographical facts within their submissions at the expense of making personal opinions. Often these submissions far exceeded the 1500-word limit. Some centres encouraged candidates to examine too many examples: up to eight in some instances. The result was inadequate responses that lacked

any depth of knowledge or understanding. The subsequent grades often failed to make Credit level, as the appropriate Grade Related Criteria were not fulfilled.

Exceeding the suggested word limit is still a problem, and it appears that some centres encourage this practice year after year in the mistaken belief that their pupils will achieve better grades. By editing the writing, more concise submissions will result which should not jeopardise results. Often, these overlong submissions were exceptionally repetitive and failed to better inform the marker of the candidates' knowledge or understanding of the topic.

Markers continue to register their concerns that in some submissions the subject under investigation had no fundamental theme or link; candidates chose to analyse painting with sculpture for example, making any comparison impossible. It is desirable for candidates to focus their essay around a theme, topic or movement and to avoid comparing unrelated items with one another.

While it is useful and indeed necessary for teachers to support and direct students in teaching Critical Activity, a very restrictive formula or approach adopted by a number of centres had a hugely detrimental effect. It was difficult for markers to hear the voice of the child when all of the candidates studied exactly the same two artists or designers. This limited availability of resources provided very similar responses and often the problem was further compounded when candidates analysed the same two paintings.

It was impossible for markers to award more than a General 3 in those instances as personal choice and therefore genuine interest and enthusiasm had been removed. While this tightly structured approach may achieve success for less able pupils, it can be damaging for the more able, as it limits the scope of their responses. Candidates following a more individual route commonly produce work of a higher standard.

The least successful topics were wallpaper and textile design, where candidates centred their personal responses on the visual elements. Within this particular topic, candidates would be advised to consider the techniques employed to produce the wallpaper/textile as well as the materials, technologies, function, style, target market, suitability of setting, etc.

Often the submissions were highly descriptive, with limited reference made to relevant design issues; at worst, they were viewed as paintings. In the poorest examples, it was an analysis of the visual elements alone that comprised the main body of the essay. Candidates need to submit two clearly contrasting items, one Expressive and one Design. In each submission the content should be distinctly different; otherwise Grade 7 will be awarded to one of them.

Markers noted another common misunderstanding in the study of ceramics. Candidates should be clear about the context they are studying ceramics under, and either design or expressive criteria should come through strongly in the analysis. Often, ceramic design submissions bordered on the expressive context as the objects discussed were treated as decorative pieces rather than functional ones. This problem also arose in the study of poster design and mask design, and was reflected in the average to low grades awarded for some quite well structured and articulate submissions.

Some candidates had very obviously downloaded biographical information from the Internet or had lifted paragraphs directly from books or teachers' notes, making no attempt to interpret or edit it in any way. This practice had a detrimental effect on the grades awarded and should be avoided.

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

With regard to Expressive Activity, centres are reminded of the following:

- ◆ Use the stimulus titles provided to generate the outcome.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to work from first-hand sources wherever possible.
- ◆ Avoid mechanical scaling up of drawing from photographs; markers recognise this.
- ◆ Enable candidates to make some individual choice with regard to theme, title, media and techniques from which to make a genuinely personal response.
- ◆ Plan and prepare for the examination, including how to crop and mount work simply.
- ◆ Discourage the copying of photographs of celebrities when producing portraits.
- ◆ Ensure candidates work at an appropriate scale commensurate with their ability.
- ◆ Check that both the candidate and invigilator initial clay work before firing to confirm that it was produced on the day of the examination.
- ◆ It is advisable that all work in three dimensions is photographed from a variety of angles in case the pieces are damaged during transit.

With regard to Critical Activity, centres are reminded of the following:

- ◆ Ensure that candidates adhere to the advisory 1500-word limit for both submissions.
- ◆ Ensure that submissions are of a sufficient length to enable candidates to demonstrate their full knowledge and understanding of a topic within the 1500-word limit. Very brief submissions lack sufficient depth for markers to judge a candidate's true ability, especially at Credit level.
- ◆ Permit candidates to have some choice in their topics to ensure a personal and individual response.
- ◆ Check that Critical Activity deals with contexts that are clearly and distinctly Expressive and Design in content; otherwise Grade 7 will be awarded to one of them, bringing down the overall grade.
- ◆ Discourage overemphasis on historical and factual information at the expense of making personal opinions and evaluative comments.
- ◆ Encourage candidates to structure their submissions on a theme, topic or a movement.
- ◆ Be aware of the need for bibliographies that includes all sources used.
- ◆ Encourage the use of spell check in word-processed submissions.
- ◆ Avoid 'text speak'.
- ◆ Use legible fonts at 12- or 14-point typeface. Avoid the use of coloured text.
- ◆ Ensure that information collated from internet sites is interpreted into candidates' own words and not quoted directly as their own.
- ◆ Ensure that all written submissions are completed in pen, not pencil, on one side of A4 paper.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2009	13280
Number of resulted entries in 2010	12082

## Statistical Information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of overall awards

Grade 1	12.5%
Grade 2	37.7%
Grade 3	33.6%
Grade 4	12.8%
Grade 5	1.9%
Grade 6	0.1%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	1.4%

### Grade boundaries for each assessable element in the subject included in the report

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
0.0%	Directly Graded	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0