



# **National Qualifications 2014 Internal Assessment Report Art & Design**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

# National Qualifications (NQ) Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified:

Higher Level 12: Art & Design. DV37 & DV38 Expressive Unit & Design Unit  
Int.2 Level 11: Art & Design. DV37 & DV38 Expressive Unit & Design Unit  
(incomplete coursework )

## General comments

In January/February 2014, 22 centres were visited by 11 External Verifiers, with all but one centre having their internal assessments of practical Units Accepted. Both Higher and Intermediate 2 levels were sampled and the majority of folios of incomplete coursework were judged to be concordant with national standards. Most centres were presenting far more candidates than the 12 they selected for sampling. Apart from three centres where all presentations were Higher, all others featured a mix of both levels. Again this session, many Intermediate 2 folios were those of S4 candidates.

Some centres were awaiting the imminent results of prelim exams before assessing certain candidates at a particular level, but most had already differentiated between the two by that stage.

In contrast to the previous two sessions, where most centres seen had delivered both Units concurrently with more expressive work done; interestingly, this year, the majority of centres visited were working on Units consecutively, with Design Units being far more advanced. At times, there was little evidence of much expressive work, other than preliminary investigative drawing.

Where verifiers found discrepancies with centres' internal assessments, it tended to be where a Higher candidate should more accurately have been placed at Intermediate 2 level.

Overall, verifiers reported that the great majority of centres were following established SQA Course guidelines and had a clear understanding of how to apply national standards in Unit delivery and internal assessment.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Many centres featured wall displays of previously assessed SQA-returned work as benchmark examples to guide, motivate and inspire current candidates. Several verifiers noted that such visual exemplars were also extremely effective in aiding robust internal assessment, being excellent sources of reference for candidates and staff, particularly new teachers to their team and non-specialist faculty heads. These also enriched the ethos of a practical working environment for the wider community within a centre.

Where staff worked as a cohesive, collegiate team in the planning, resourcing, delivery and assessment of coursework, such centres were deemed to be strong and promoting best practice. Although extensive paperwork was not relevant to, and did not feature in, the external verification exercise, where it was seen, meaningful documentation and clear record keeping showed effective tracking, monitoring and internal assessment of candidates. Instruments of assessment featured the use of NABs, regular candidate reviews, and a formal approach to ongoing monitoring of Unit pace, content and progress.

### **Evidence Requirements**

Overall, the practical work at both levels verified showed that Outcomes were being addressed and adhered to, guiding each stage of a practical Unit. In the majority of cases, one teacher had overall responsibility for their own class section and all aspects of their coursework. Occasionally, due to staffing or timetabling constraints, staff shared a teaching group, or in some rare instances, shared the delivery of a Unit, either design or expressive activity.

With most centres undertaking Units consecutively with, in all but three cases, Design Units being done first, this was much further advanced and in a number of centres, completed. During verification most centres had begun expressive work, although this most often featured investigative, analytical drawing, with relatively view development studies having been started.

### **Administration of assessments**

Although some centres had intentionally selected a few doubtful/borderline candidates for the sampling, in order to clarify remediation requirements and procedures or discuss alternative strategies, it is nonetheless the task of a visiting verifier to review and check a centre's internal assessments at this stage, rather than help staff to undertake this during the visit.

The majority of centres, however, showed evidence of thorough, consistent and robust ongoing assessment over both Units and both levels. The standardising of assessment and regular dialogue with candidates and among staff is all the more vital, given that so many Art & Design departments are now supervised by non-specialist faculty heads.

### **Areas of good practice**

Verifiers reported seeing much evidence of good practice across centres. There was rigorous monitoring of folio progress, where regular dialogue and constructive feedback ensured candidates were clear about pace, choice of theme, quality and quantity of content, expected standards, next steps and set deadlines.

A good quality design brief was, again, noted as being pivotal in the execution of meaningful and challenging problem solving and development of ideas during the design process. Where clearly defined briefs provided candidates with necessary guidance and constraints, yet allowed for personalised exploration according to

their own interests and enthusiasms, Design Units showed proper breadth and depth of enquiry. This applied to whether the brief had been personalised for individuals or issued to a whole class. The essential structure was seen as paramount.

Textiles, once again, was the most popular choice in those centres visited, followed very closely by jewellery, then product design, then graphics. The areas of interior or architecture design rarely featured.

With the working brief identified as crucial, other specific strengths featured relevant and well edited investigative visuals, whether drawn or photographic, to outline both the design theme and area. Strong development work — invariably the most challenging and problematic — showed candidates to be considering basic design issues, such as the human form when designing an item for wear, thinking in the round when designing a 3D piece, scale, weight and function when designing an item for use. Problem solving also embraced function and intended purpose. In graphics, the vital link between image and font as well as layout for effective visual communication was explored in depth.

Highly creative and imaginative use of craft materials was seen at the development stage, showing great skill in the manipulation of a wide range of media.

Although not required for the verification of incomplete evidence, many exquisitely made solution pieces were in evidence. In the strongest folios some lovely outcomes had evolved and emerged through the fleshing-out, refining and further development of a favoured idea, rather than simply arrived at it from a consideration that was no further extended or explored than any other(s). As most centres had undertaken design activity first, as mentioned, relatively few Expressive Units had progressed beyond analytical, investigative studies, where the best work showed candidates to be working to themes based upon their own individual choices, yet ones which allowed them to play to their strengths. Observational studies were executed with great sensitivity, skill, energy and enthusiasm, using a rich variety of drawing materials, and diverse media-handling techniques.

Sound developments seen were more expressive and experimental in nature, embracing the purpose of exploring alternative considerations of composition and aspects of the visual elements at this stage.

The most popular expressive area in centres visited this year was portraiture, followed by still life, with figure, landscape and the built environment some way behind. Fantasy as an area was not recorded as having featured in samplings.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

As design activity is essentially a process-based, problem-solving activity, a quality design brief, clearly structured to identify not only the design area or theme, but also to establish restrictions and constraints associated with the

design issues is vital in launching the Unit and focusing the candidate's thinking at the outset.

Several verifiers expressed concern at the absence of any brief at all in some centres, or for some classes within centres, albeit the minority. No brief had been issued and was unavailable to accompany the Design folio work. Explanations to the effect that candidates could just work their way through things and be freer to experiment were considered by verifiers as unjustifiable, as the brief has always been an essential component of a Design Unit, for any level. Candidates of all abilities require and deserve the guiding framework of a set brief. This can be personalised and adapted to individual needs, interests and abilities, but should nonetheless be issued. As a result, most candidates working without a brief were seen to be floundering and Units lacked focus or any real breadth or depth to development stages in particular.

Although sound work was seen in the majority of Design Units, where weaknesses were identified, it was in the area of sheet 2, developments. These were with regard to a lack of thinking in the round when designing for 3D, no textural samples, specimens or trials when considering crafting materials or techniques, disregarding consideration of the human form or scale when designing an item for wear, treating text and font as an afterthought when engaged in graphic design, as well as a lack of awareness and examination of design issues like weight, scale, safety, intended purpose, fitness for purpose, especially during the development stage. When candidates are directed to consider all these areas, established in a set brief, folio work is all the more robust. Also, where a candidate had not further refined and developed a favoured idea, beyond the stage arrived at with the others, but had simply plucked one possibility to become the solution, this tended to be self-penalising, as no evolution through further development of a chosen idea or option could be seen.

Expressive activity, less in evidence this year, was found to be sound, overall. Any areas of weakness mentioned tended to be in the sheet 2 development stage. Some centres tended to blur the distinctly different sheets of investigation and development, where the interface between the two stages was non-existent. Both appeared as a double-page spread, as opposed to separate phases. A focus on the very different approach to development work, rather than seeing it as being yet more investigative studies, would have benefited these folios. Where candidates presented only two A3, or even four A4 pieces onto their development sheet, they tended to self-penalise, as this compromised space to show a richer, broader spread of consideration and experimentation. A reduction in the size of some of these component pieces would allow for the inclusion of more varied studies.

It was acknowledged throughout centres visited that the timing of these verification visits was helpful in allowing optimum opportunity to view incomplete evidence and factor in remediation time where necessary.

Again, verifiers commented on the welcoming and receptive ethos and positive engagement with staff in art and design departments visited this year.