

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Art and Design

Qualification area:

**Subject(s) and Level(s)
Included in this report**

**Advanced Higher Art and Design; Design
(Enquiry)
Advanced Higher Art and Design; Expressive
(Enquiry)**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	Design Enquiry – 502 Expressive Enquiry – 605

Number of entries in 2003	
Pre appeal	Design Enquiry – 508 Expressive Enquiry – 755

General comments re entry numbers

2003 saw a substantial increase in numbers. A steady increase of about 50-60 entries per year has been apparent at this level including CSYS for about 8-10 years, but there was a significant increase in numbers this year (156 candidates) perhaps due to the accessibility of the examination. It was particularly notable that almost all of these were in Expressive Activity.

There had been an increase in the number of female entrants.

Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Advanced Higher Art and Design (Enquiry) – Design

C	–	100
B	–	124
A (lower)	–	149
A (upper)	–	177

Advanced Higher Art and Design (Enquiry) – Expressive

C	–	100
B	–	124
A (lower)	–	149
A (upper)	–	177

General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as syllabuses evolve and change

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

- The grade boundaries remain the same as 2002 in both of the above courses. there has been no change in the examination requirements, and no change in the assessment of either examination.
- Submissions which scored a mark of 148 were not considered to have been of a sufficiently high standard to merit an A award.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

- It was noted that two out of three candidates had selected a course option that included Art and Design Studies.
- The revised Statement of Intent appeared more "user-friendly" and candidates had completed it more successfully.
- Some submissions were still too bulky/too long, with centres and candidates ignoring the submission limits.
- Although there was only limited use of computer technology in practical terms, many candidates had used or referred to internet sources.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

- There were many fine submissions in Art and Design Studies. Where the studies informed the practical work in a real and meaningful way, with directly related subject matter, the candidates were enabled rather than restricted. Many candidates adopted a format that included both an essay and an illustrative display or layout. This proved to be an effective and successful approach.
- In Expressive Activity, the most impressive submissions were again in figurative work and portraiture where a very high standard of work was apparent. In their reports, markers stated that Expressive submissions in general were of a higher standard than Design submissions, although this was not borne out at all by the overall statistics.
- In Design Activity, there were some excellent submissions in textiles (but not fashion) and in jewellery.
- Media handling skills in general were of a very high standard across all submissions.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

- The greatest difficulties occurred in attempts to link two practical units by a common theme. In a great many cases the connections were contrived, and in the worst cases the optional unit was severely limited by artificial connections to the main study theme.
- In Design Activity, too many candidates failed to address, or even show awareness of design issues (particularly in fashion design), concentrating too much on aesthetics rather than in solving design problems. Frequently the design problems were not identified. There were also weaknesses in the design processes that were adopted. This was particularly apparent in those centres that had a multiple design brief approach, which although linked by subject matter, tended to be thematically and structurally weak.
- Some centres submitted one unit only. This raised the question about whether or not the candidates had satisfied the course requirements.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

- Centres must pay close attention to the submission requirements in the Conditions and Arrangements. Candidate folios must be checked before submission, with particular regard to the number of sheets submitted, to the length of Art and Design Studies summaries, and to the presence of the Statement of Intent.
- Material submitted on disk must also be submitted in hard copy. This applies to still images only and not to animated or film sequences.
- Clear labelling and identification of work is important and sheets should be numbered 1-24 (max), with a suffix I, D or S (Investigation, Development, Solution).
- A clear Design Brief should be provided where applicable.
- Do not enclose work in ring-bound plastic sleeves as it makes it more difficult to view.
- Be aware of the value of a strong Statement of Intent.