

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Art and Design

Qualification area

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

Art and Design — Standard Grade

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003	21,941
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Number of entries in 2004	20,631
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General comments re entry numbers

Last year's total of 21,941 entries represented the largest number of candidates ever to be presented in Standard Grade Art and Design. Figures of 21,000 plus have been a feature over the last three years — the reduction of 1,310 candidates this year signals a slight downward trend as the uptake of Intermediate 2 in S4 gradually begins to increase. However, the high presentation at Standard Grade ultimately remains stable.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

Grade 1	13.0%
Grade 2	35.3%
Grade 3	33.8%
Grade 4	11.9%
Grade 5	2.5%
Grade 6	0.2%
Grade 7	0.0%
No award	3.3%

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

In **Design Activity** the pattern of grade distribution over the previous four years is consistent and stable. As before, the largest number of credit grades were awarded with a cumulative total of 51.4%. This is significantly greater when compared with 45.1% awarded in Critical Activity and 36.1% in Expressive Activity.

In **Critical Activity** there was a marked increase in the number of candidates gaining grade 1, that being 18.9% pre appeals compared to 14.7% in 2003. Additionally, candidates gaining grade 2 also increased from 24.1% to 26.2% this year. It would appear from the Markers reports that the quality of candidates work has improved since the recent introduction of the 1,500 advisory word limit. This has resulted in more focused and directed submissions. An expectation of a rise in standards was expected due to this factor and also the addition of the exemplification and support materials made available to teachers via the SQA website.

In **Expressive Activity** there is still a slow but downward trends at credit level despite the highly positive reports and perception of Markers and Standardisers during central marking. Candidates gaining grade 1 was 10.3% pre appeals compared to 11.9% and 14.5% from the previous two years. A slight drop at grade 2 was noted with 25.8% this year compared to 27.8% in 2003. Although there has been a reduction in the number of credits awarded overall in Expressive activity, 36.1% compared to 39.8% last year, it is interesting to note that the number of candidates achieving grades 1–4 in the last four Expressive examinations has been maintained at an average of between 96.6% and 96.9%.

Comments on grade boundaries

Art and Design Standard Grade is directly graded.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Expressive Activity

The standard and quality of Expressive Activity is strong and Markers were impressed with the preparation for this examination. In fact, few very poor submissions were seen this year. The most successful approaches demonstrated that candidates were encouraged to develop a personal response to the given stimulus titles and were able to negotiate and select their own media, subject, scale and technique.

By far the vast majority of work produced was two dimensional with the traditional genre of still life [80%], the most popular followed by portraiture and landscape. The best examples indicated that candidates benefited from prior instruction on composition and direction on working to a personally selected scale. The title “*Peel and slice two onions*” and “*The old and the new*” elicited some of the most successful still life paintings as candidates were given opportunities to work from first hand sources. “*Street life*” was overall poorly interpreted and amounted in some cases to little more than graffiti. “*Evening walk*” resulted in some very good landscapes. Three dimensional submissions made up about 5% of the entries and were principally ceramic heads and figures produced on a whole centre basis, the result of teacher preference or staff expertise. Many of these examples were very skilfully constructed.

The use of media is broad ranging and well handled, there were excellent examples of painting using good quality paint — acrylic, chromar and gouache on a variety of coloured and white papers. Water colour painting is declining but did produce many of the most impressive credits. The steady increase in the use of oil pastels dominated still life entries demonstrating strong colour and expressive media handling. There was however, little evidence of photography and printmaking this year.

Critical Activity

The standard of work was very good to excellent, with some notably impressive examples. Many experienced Markers commented that it was the best sample they had marked. Standards have risen across all levels because of the introduction of the advisory 1,500 word maximum limit. This has had the effect of reducing the amount of irrelevant padding, creating more considered submissions. They were indeed few very poor examples. The 1,500 advisory maximum was fairly rigidly adhered to though some centres are choosing to ignore it and continued to submit unnecessary lengthy scripts.

Clearly, candidates have had access to a wide range of resources and a variety of teaching approaches have been adopted. The best of the submissions were centred around a theme, topic or movement which provided opportunities for considered and relevant comparisons. Freedom of choice in selecting artists and designers produced the most individual and personal results.

Markers commented on the wide range of design subject matter covered including architecture, (which tends to be done very well), product, jewellery and fashion design. Design themes most often poorly considered were stained glass, masks, posters and the textiles and wallpaper of William Morris.

The areas of study for Expressive submission presented fewer difficulties and the favourites were Impressionism, Surrealism and the Scottish Colourists. A number of Scottish artists were popular this year including Watt, Bellany, Blackadder and Eardley.

Markers felt that most of the submission were well planned and presented.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Expressive Activity

Some excellent examples of painting were produced, demonstrating skill in the use of composition, colour and technique. The standard of drawing across all levels was very high. In the main, candidates make effective use of the given stimulus titles to produce a personal interpretation. The most successful responses were made from first hand sources in still life and portraiture. The best approaches were the simplest, where the media and subject matter selected allowed the candidate to produce an honest response in five hours. Clearly, candidates benefited from clear direction and preparation for the examination.

Critical Activity

The most successful examples dealt with areas of Art and Design that were of interest to the candidate and where they were obviously given a degree of personal choice. This invited opportunities for personal opinions and comments to shine through. A well defined topic or theme demonstrating a good balance of relevant factual/historical background material which informed a personal analysis, marked out the stronger entries.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Expressive Activity

Concerns were raised when all candidates from a centre were working from a limited number of resources and were also using the same media. The examination then became a technical exercise lacking any real sense of personal response to the stimulus. Candidates also have difficulty in achieving their full potential when working with identical second hand sources, for example, photographs, as this also provides little room for personal choice or interpretation.

Markers continue to be concerned with those centres that encourage all of their candidates to complete their entire submission using pencil. Pencil studies rarely do justice to the candidates ability as the medium is restrictive. The poorest examples resemble a study rather than an expressive outcome. Occasionally the work in Expressive Activity is over directed and formulaic resulting in little opportunities for genuine personal interpretation.

Critical Activity

Difficulties arose in Critical Activity where there was not a clear distinction between Expressive Critical and Design Critical. It occurred principally in Design where the critical analysis was approached in an Expressive manner. Design criteria that Markers expect to be addressed deals with purpose, audience, style, materials, construction, materials, costs, aesthetics, etc. Often they were not addressed in any depth, if at all. At times there was an over emphasis on the description of a design item, or it was analysed purely in expressive terms. This difficulty was found in Design submissions dealing with some of the following themes — poster design, masks, stained glass design, wallpaper and textiles, stamps, logos and public art.

Markers commented that in some centres, limited resources and lack of choice resulted in a similarity of all the submissions. This restriction affected the range of grades awarded. Limited teacher generated notes used exclusively by candidates in a centre also presented difficulties when trying to detect genuine personal input.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Expressive Activity

Centres should be reminded of the following:

- ◆ to encourage candidates to make individual choices of theme, media and technique to enable them to make a personal response
- ◆ to discourage mechanical scaling up from photographs
- ◆ to encourage candidates to work from first hand sources
- ◆ to discourage candidates from copying posters and photographs of celebrities for portraiture and to use first hand sources where possible
- ◆ to discourage candidates from copying works of art by established artists as source materials for Expressive Activity
- ◆ to ensure that candidates do not use any form of tracing or photocopies during the examination
- ◆ to ensure that 3D work is photographed before firing to obviate the risk of accidental damage

Critical Activity

Centres should be reminded of the following:

- ◆ to ensure that candidates adhere to the advisory 1,500 word limit for both submissions
- ◆ to discourage an over emphasis of historical and factual information at the expense of making personal opinions and comments
- ◆ to encourage submissions to be built around a meaningful theme or topic
- ◆ to ensure that Critical Activity deals with contexts that are clearly Expressive and Design
- ◆ To ensure that the bibliography includes all sources used such as teacher's notes, books, CD Roms, Internet Websites, etc
- ◆ to include quotation marks where statements or comments are not those of the candidate
- ◆ to ensure that all written submissions are completed in pen (black or blue), on one side of A4 paper
- ◆ to ensure that each submission is fixed or stapled in some manner, numbering pages would be helpful
- ◆ to discourage the use of text abbreviations
- ◆ to encourage the use of spell check in word processed submission