



Course report 2019

Subject	Art and Design
Level	Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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 assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

The assessment tasks were revised for this session with the removal of mandatory unit assessments. In general, they performed as expected. Feedback from markers and the statistical data indicates that the assessment components differentiated effectively between candidates of different abilities and levels of understanding.

Performance in the question paper dipped slightly, but was broadly in line with previous years. However, performance in the portfolios was generally weaker this year.

Question paper

There was no new content in the question paper. However, as stated in the subject review report prior to the revisions to National Qualifications, a review was carried out on the previous question paper to address issues that had been raised. The restructuring of the paper introduced a wider choice of art and design genres. This allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of art and design practice. The question paper comprises two sections: expressive art studies and design studies. Each section contains one mandatory question (question 1 in section 1 and question 7 in section 2) and five optional questions (questions 2-6 in section 1 and questions 8-12 in section 2).

The question paper was well received by candidates, centres and markers. Feedback indicated that it was fair and accessible for candidates in terms of coverage and overall level of demand.

The majority of candidates were able to complete all six questions within the time allocated. Most candidates seemed well prepared and understood the format of the examination and selected questions appropriately.

In response to the mandatory questions, candidates selected a range of works by different artists and designers. More candidates than in previous years selected a variety of less well known artists and designers. However, Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo, Lucian Freud, Audrey Flack and Peter Howson continued to be popular in expressive art studies. In design studies, Coco Chanel, Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen, AM Cassandre, René Lalique and Peter Chang were also popular choices.

The optional questions that proved most popular in expressive art studies were question 2 ('Mala and Gregory on Chairs' by Tish Murtha) and question 3 ('Charlotte's Jug' by Mary Fedden). In design studies, question 9 ('Gold and enamel bracelet with concealed watch' by Moricand and Desgrange) and question 11 ('Yikebike' by Greg Ryan) were the most popular options.

There was no major difference in candidate performance between section 1: expressive art studies and section 2: design studies.

Markers commented that, although some candidates found it challenging to respond fully to all three prompts in a question and did not always have a clear understanding of art and design terminology at this level, others clearly understood how to structure their responses and fully explain the impact for each prompt discussed.

Expressive portfolio

Markers commented positively on the quality of many expressive portfolios and the skill and process exemplified by candidates. The assessment task proved to be fair and accessible for candidates in terms of coverage and overall level of demand.

Portraiture and still life remain the most popular genres, with less evidence of built environment, landscape or surrealist portfolios.

Candidates adopted a wide variety of themes and approaches, confirming personalisation and choice. Many candidates selected themes that were clearly of deep personal interest, and this led to very insightful and thought-provoking portfolios.

As has been the trend in recent years, there were very few submissions of 3D work in expressive art. Most candidates chose to work in 2D processes, such as painting and print-making, or to use dry media, such as pencil and oil pastel.

Design portfolio

Most design portfolios met the assessment requirements at this level. However, markers commented that, in general, performance was less strong than for the expressive portfolio, with candidates exemplifying a wider variation in skills and processes.

A wide variation in the different types of design outcomes being produced was evident. 2D design such as graphics and printed textiles, and 3D design based around body adornment, head pieces and jewellery were the most popular.

Markers commented on a decrease in the number of product design portfolios and a small increase in 3D models being submitted with design portfolios.

Where design briefs had a degree of individualisation, a wider range of creative possibilities from candidates was more often evident.

Several candidates submitted evaluations where the font size had been reduced, making it more difficult for markers to read, or they submitted the evaluation using a version of the evaluation template.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Markers commented on the improved layout and content of the paper. This allowed many candidates to answer all questions effectively.

Many candidates enthusiastically discussed their selected art and design work for question 1 and question 7, showing their in-depth knowledge and understanding of the artists' and designers; intentions with reference to each of the given prompts.

Candidates who made the link clear between the artwork or design work selected and the prompts in the mandatory questions were able to access the full range of available marks.

Candidates who had a good knowledge and understanding of art and design issues and understood the meaning of question prompts were able to apply art and design terminology effectively in optional questions.

Having to respond to two optional expressive and two optional design questions allowed many candidates to apply their analytical skills in a more considered and structured way, and highlighted their ability to transfer these skills between different genres.

Expressive portfolio

Many candidates performed well in the expressive portfolio and demonstrated a good understanding of the requirements of the revised assessment. The majority of candidates included succinct and relevant investigation work.

Investigation drawings and studies were mainly of a high standard, and there were many good examples of the use of photos, sketchbook pages and artist references.

Markers commented on the mature approach by many candidates in the choice and development of their theme. Examples of this included focusing on reflective surfaces, differing viewpoints or exploring emotion. This personal exploration and real engagement resulted in a better quality portfolio.

Candidates used a wide variety of media and techniques, such as coloured pencil, acrylic paint and print-making. This, coupled with an exploration of composition in particular, led to a range of creative approaches.

In development studies, candidates took a more focused approach than in the previous year. For example, exploring a chosen medium, a selected visual element, or mood and atmosphere leading positively to the final piece.

The refinement and quality of final pieces was clear in many portfolios and showed further improvement, building on from the candidate's investigation and development work. More final expressive outcomes than in previous years were smaller than A2 in size. This allowed candidates to produce highly refined and detailed work that often better suited their skill level, approach or choice of media.

Effective evaluations demonstrated a clear understanding of art terminology and referred to the candidate's theme, rather than just describing the steps taken to complete the work. They did this by focusing on justified evaluative comments relating to the effects created in the production of the portfolio.

Design portfolio

Almost all candidates identified appropriate examples of market research relevant to their brief and understood the requirements of the revised assessment.

The best design portfolios had pertinent, well-constructed and realistic design briefs that identified key design issues. This allowed candidates to engage more fully in the design process

Portfolios whose layout clearly identified investigation, market research and the development process were clearer for markers and allowed candidates to demonstrate process, experimentation and problem solving more effectively.

Candidates were more successful when they showed a clear continuity throughout their design portfolio. This included examples where candidates focused on the use of selected materials, the exploration of a visual element such as shape or colour, or the development and refinement of a technique.

In general, candidates who carefully considered both the aesthetic and functional aspects of their development ideas and design solution in relation to their brief were more successful.

Markers saw evidence of candidates having the skill and confidence to experiment with a wide range of media, techniques and technology. This produced high-quality samples and ideas using materials such as paper or card, recycled objects, ceramics and ICT that effectively communicated candidates' creative intentions.

Evaluations that referred to the requirements of the design brief and evaluated the effectiveness of the portfolio were more successful than a description of the steps the candidate undertook.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Markers felt that responses to the optional questions were sometimes better than responses to the mandatory questions. Responses to the latter were sometimes very descriptive and biographical in style. A number of candidates failed to link their points to the art or design work being discussed and, in some cases, did not name the work at all.

Markers commented on a lack of understanding of the definition of some art and design terminology. For example, some candidates confused 'style' with mood and atmosphere.

In questions 3 and 4 in the expressive art studies section, a number of candidates misunderstood the prompt words 'technique' and 'perspective', using 'technique' to cover the

range of visual elements and confusing 'perspective' with the artist's opinion. This was also true of 'tone' where candidates commented on the mood or the colour range used.

In the design studies section, many candidates did not understand the term 'visual impact', often describing a source of inspiration or appearance without explaining how this affected the visual impact.

Some candidates struggled to fully justify points made for each prompt in their optional question responses. They could identify where there was evidence of the prompt in the work, but could not show cause and effect by saying why or how this was achieved or the effect it had on the work.

Expressive portfolio

A number of candidates had a jumbled collection of investigation and development studies and struggled to display a clear process. Sometimes they included more than one line of development, or work that was not relevant to the development of their theme and was disconnected from the final piece.

Candidates who did not have a clear theme were disadvantaged as they found it more difficult to refine their ideas and sustain the development process.

Several candidates used materials and/or tackled work on a scale that was not appropriate to their level of skill. This led to a lack of refinement, especially as they moved from development studies to the final piece.

For some candidates, experimenting with a wide range of different materials produced too much development work that had little relevance to the focused line of enquiry and did not inform the final piece, which was sometimes completed in a different medium.

Markers commented that many evaluations did not gain full marks as they tended to be very descriptive rather than evaluative. They were more of a story about what the candidate did rather than why they did it, and the effect their decisions had on the development of the portfolio.

Design portfolio

Markers commented that design portfolios presented a wide range of process and skill levels but were often less successful than the expressive portfolios. Some candidates struggled to refine their process and skills, with final solutions lacking quality compared to earlier development work.

Candidates often lacked thoroughness in developing a single idea. This meant that much of the time and effort spent on other ideas did not contribute to gaining marks.

Cluttered and confusingly presented portfolios did not help to clarify the candidate's creative process, particularly where they presented more than one idea.

A number of candidates tackled techniques and processes that were beyond their capabilities, displaying a crudeness in their use of materials together with a weak communication of process or consideration of function.

Many design briefs were either too vague or too complex. This meant that candidates struggled to develop ideas as they were beyond the scope of the course guidelines and the candidates' abilities.

Some candidates did not engage in 3D elements of their development when working towards a 3D design solution. This demonstrated a weakness in their process and disadvantaged them.

Many evaluations were too descriptive of process and lacked evaluative analysis of the work presented in the portfolio. Markers commented that, in general, design evaluations were slightly weaker than expressive evaluations.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates should be familiar with art and design terminology. A list of terms that may be used in the question paper is available in the course specification. Appendix 2 of the course specification gives details of how candidates could interpret and develop these subject-specific terms in their responses.

Exposure to a diverse range of art and design imagery and the full range of question prompts is essential for all candidates throughout the course. Support with exam technique is also essential. Practice in selecting appropriate questions, structuring responses and managing their time will help candidates respond effectively to the question paper.

To gain a mark, candidates need to make a fully justified comment in response to each prompt in the question. To access full marks, candidates need to answer all prompts in the question, with a maximum of 4 marks available for each prompt.

Understanding Standards materials containing candidate responses and commentaries are available on SQA's website. Centres can use these to help teachers and candidates to understand how the question paper is marked and the level of response required.

Centres and candidates can access the specimen question paper, past papers and marking instructions on SQA's website.

Expressive portfolio

Centres should give all candidates the 'Instructions for candidates' section of the course assessment task, and encourage candidates to refer to these instructions throughout the production of their portfolio.

Centres should allow candidates to play to their strengths. For example, candidates do not have to work in colour if their strengths are in working in tone, or produce a painting if they are better at using dry media.

Candidates who prefer to work on a smaller scale do not have to produce a large-scale piece of work. However, candidates with a very expressive style may be more comfortable working on a large-scale final piece.

When presenting portfolio work, candidates should take responsibility for editing their work to clearly show:

- ◆ pertinent investigation studies
- ◆ a single line of development
- ◆ refinement of the theme leading to the final solution

Additional studies which are not clearly part of this process may adversely affect the overall mark.

Centres should ensure they are using the correct version of the evaluation template. The font size is set in the template and should not be changed. Candidates must not exceed the one page provided. The evaluation should be attached to the first sheet in the portfolio.

Centres should check that the correct evaluation has been attached, as a number of expressive portfolios contained the candidate's design evaluation and vice versa.

Design portfolio

Centres should give all candidates the 'Instructions for candidates' section of the course assessment task, and encourage them to refer to these instructions throughout the production of their portfolio.

Design briefs should be structured in a way that allows candidates to follow a clear process using skills that are appropriate to the brief, the candidate's ability and the resources available to the centre.

Design briefs should also give clear direction to candidates and ask them to consider important functional as well as aesthetic issues. For example, candidates could consider practical issues such as ergonomics, material choice and fastenings in textile design, or the 'readability' and communication of a message to a target market in graphic design.

Candidates should consider the suitability of the materials they choose in response to the brief. Materials need not be expensive, but should allow the candidate to really explore the materials' potential in the development of the candidate's ideas and final solution.

Careful selection and presentation of candidates' work is important to the 'flow' of the portfolio. Centres should encourage candidates to present their work in a way that shows a clear line of development, showing the order the refinements were made and leading to the production of a design solution.

Centres should ensure they are using the correct version of the evaluation template and that candidates adhere to the one page in the template and do not reduce the font size.

Centres should ensure that the appropriate evaluation has been attached to the first sheet and that it does not overlap any other work.

It was pleasing to see that most centres adhered to the conditions of assessment for coursework. However, in a small number of examples this may not have been the case. Following feedback from teachers and lecturers, SQA has strengthened the conditions of assessment criteria for National 5 and Higher subjects, and will do so for Advanced Higher. Centres must adhere to the criteria that are published clearly on SQA's website and in course materials.

SQA takes very seriously its obligation to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates in all qualifications. It does this through consistent application of assessment conditions and investigates all cases where it is alerted to the fact that conditions may not have been met.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	5299
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	5233
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	23.8%	23.8%	1248	174
B	27.7%	51.6%	1451	149
C	28.9%	80.5%	1513	124
D	15.6%	96.0%	814	99
No award	4.0%	-	207	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ 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.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.