Course report 2019

Subject	Art and Design
Level	National 5

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

Performance in the question paper was weaker than in previous years. Most questions performed as expected, but the mandatory questions were more demanding than anticipated. Grade boundaries were adjusted to take this into account. The wording of the mandatory questions will be reviewed to improve accessibility for candidates at this level.

The portfolio assessments performed as expected. Performance in the portfolios was not quite as strong as last year, but was in line with previous years.

Question paper

Feedback from the marking team, centres and candidates indicated that the paper was positively received and fair in terms of course coverage and overall level of demand. The question paper generated a wide range of marks from candidates and discriminated effectively between candidates with different levels of understanding. The majority of candidates were able to complete all four questions within the time allocated. Most candidates understood the format of the examination and selected questions appropriately.

In response to the mandatory questions, candidates selected a range of works by historical and contemporary artists and designers. In expressive art studies, Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, SJ Peploe, Frida Kahlo, Chuck Close, Wayne Thiebaud and Ralph Goings continue to be popular. In design studies, works by Alphonse Mucha, AM Cassandre, Saul Bass and Milton Glaser were popular in graphic design; while in jewellery design, candidates often chose works by René Lalique and Peter Chang. In fashion, Coco Chanel, Vivienne Westwood and Alexander McQueen were popular, with candidates who had studied pattern design often choosing works by William Morris and Timorous Beasties.

In section 1, question 2 (*Still Life* by Edward Collier) and question 4 (*The Cliffs at Étretat* by Claude Monet) were the most popular options.

In section 2, question 8 (*Poster* by Henry Reb) was the most popular option, followed by question 9 (*Whistling Bird Kettle* by Michael Graves) and question 11 (*Engagement Ring* by an unknown 17th century designer). The number of candidates answering question 12, which focuses on fashion and textiles, has declined in recent years.

The marking team noted a significant number of poor responses where candidates failed to demonstrate the basic knowledge and understanding for this level.

Expressive portfolio

The majority of expressive portfolios demonstrated the skills and understanding required at this level. Some very high quality submissions were evident, but not as many as in the previous year.

Still-life continues to be very popular with candidates at this level. There were a number of portraiture submissions, with landscape and built environment increasing in popularity this year. Fantasy and imagination was much less frequently seen, but was often well attempted. A range of interesting themes encouraged personalisation and choice. Some exciting expressive approaches were evident, as well as more realistic interpretations.

There were very few submissions of 3D work in expressive art, with most candidates working in 2D processes. Painting, oil pastel and coloured pencil were popular choices of media, and there were some interesting examples of print-making. Some candidates chose to work in a diverse range of media in their portfolio, with others focusing on a more limited selection, perhaps even choosing to explore one material in depth. Most candidates worked in colour, but some took a monochromatic approach.

Design portfolio

Design portfolios were not as strong as expressive, with fewer submissions in the top marks range. Most portfolios met the assessment requirements at this level.

2D design continues to grow in popularity, with a number of candidates submitting graphic design and repeat pattern portfolios. In 3D design, body adornment and headpieces were very popular options.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

The marking team saw very good responses to all questions. The highest performing candidates demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding and were able to manage their time effectively to make focused, justified comments in response to the questions asked.

In response to the mandatory questions, most candidates were able to apply some knowledge and understanding of specific art and design works. Well-prepared candidates who demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of art and design practice were able to gain marks in the upper range. These candidates applied relevant factual information to the question asked. Some candidates showed very good knowledge of compositional methods, as well as understanding of how artists had created texture — either tactile surface effects, or a realistic impression of texture. The best responses showed a sound knowledge of style and how it was demonstrated in the selected artworks. If the artwork did not belong to a particular movement, candidates often referred to an 'expressive' style or a 'realistic' style and were able to explain how this had been achieved.

Some candidates responded very effectively to part (b) of the mandatory questions, and were able to give clear and succinct explanations of the impact of particular influences on the work or practice of an artist and designer.

It was encouraging to see that many candidates who attempted question 2 showed an understanding of 'tone', as this has often been misconstrued as 'mood and atmosphere' in the past.

Optional questions were well attempted by candidates who had a good knowledge and understanding of expressive art and design concepts. These candidates understood the question prompts and were able to apply art and design terminology effectively to make justified comments.

Expressive portfolio

Most candidates showed a good understanding of the creative process. The best submissions explored compositions from different viewpoints, and often considered orientation, framing, cropping and changes of scale. Technology was used effectively as a tool to develop ideas. At its best, candidates were not using simple filters, but layers of colour and texture exploring composition, lighting and style, which enhanced creativity. In highly effective portfolios, experimentation with materials and techniques was focused and well considered, with candidates playing to their strengths and demonstrating their personal preferences.

The majority of candidates demonstrated an appropriate level of skill. Some portfolios were outstanding and showed skill beyond the level required.

A strong theme, as opposed to 'Still Life' or 'Portraiture', for example, allowed candidates to engage with their subject matter on a more personal level. A theme that the candidate could interpret in a personal way tended to be more effective in helping them to explore their idea creatively.

Many final pieces were highly finished with excellent visual impact, with candidates making appropriate choices about the media and scale of their final artwork.

In the most effective evaluations, candidates reflected on the success of their portfolio and considered the effectiveness of their decisions. Candidates expressed their opinions using appropriate art terminology and made clear references to their theme.

Design portfolio
Candidates were able to respond effectively to well-constructed, realistic design briefs.

Most candidates produced appropriate investigative research, including their source of inspiration and examples of relevant market research.

The most effective design portfolios were clearly laid out and contained only relevant work. In most portfolios, development linked well visually with the investigative research.

Some candidates demonstrated a high level of skill in using materials and techniques. This included: good use of paper manipulation and modelling to solve design problems; skilful handling of low-cost and recycled materials; effective and meaningful use of technology in a number of graphics, textile and architecture portfolios.

The most successful portfolios considered functionality as well as aesthetics.

The most effective evaluations demonstrated a sound understanding of design issues and made clear references to the design brief. Candidates reflected on the decisions made and the effectiveness of the design solution.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper
The question paper continues to present a challenge for many candidates at this level. A number of candidates wrote simplistic responses without attempting to justify their comments. At times, comments were general and lacking in detail. A few candidates could not recall the names of their selected artists or designers, or tended to confuse them. Some stated the names of their artists and designers but were unable to name the works.

Basic subject-specific terms which candidates often misunderstood or misconstrued included:

♦ Composition — understanding could be very limited, with candidates giving a description of subject matter.

- Style — often confused with mood and atmosphere in expressive art, for example 'a happy style', and with sources of inspiration in design, for example 'a sea-life style'.
- Fitness for purpose — often misconstrued by candidates who simply described the function of the design.
- Visual impact — often poorly understood, with candidates describing the mood or telling a story in response to an expressive artwork, and generally describing the appearance of a design, rather than commenting on how striking or memorable it is and why.

In response to the mandatory questions 1 and 7, a number of candidates gave speculative responses, sometimes containing factually incorrect information. At times, the selected artworks or designs did not offer much scope to answer the question effectively for a candidate at this level. Selecting artworks or designs for which very little information is available could also cause problems for candidates.

Some candidates based their mandatory question responses on examples of artworks and designs from past papers. It should be noted that questions 1 and 7 test knowledge and understanding of artworks and designs previously studied. It often appeared that these candidates lacked the underpinning knowledge to attempt the mandatory questions effectively.

In response to question 1(a), some candidates showed a limited understanding of how their selected artists had used composition, which has generally been well understood in the past. Some made statements about focal point, leading lines or rule of thirds without any justification. Many showed very little understanding of the style of their selected artworks. Some candidates incorrectly referred to an 'abstract' style in relation to any artwork which was not highly realistic. At times, candidates referred to a style, such as Post-Impressionism, but did not explain in what way the selected work was Post-Impressionist.

When responding to question 7(a), many candidates described the function of their selected designs rather than commenting on their fitness for purpose. Some candidates showed only a limited understanding of the materials and techniques used to create their selected design works. Visual impact was sometimes misunderstood, with candidates giving a simple description of the appearance instead. In responding to which design was most effective, some candidates focused on which they preferred, with no reference to effectiveness. Designs were sometimes described in very general terms as being 'unique', but not the way(s) in which they were unique.

Part (b) of the mandatory questions was often poorly attempted. A number of candidates gave only biographical information, or referred to influences without explaining the impact on the work.

Optional questions were often poorly attempted. A number of candidates who attempted question 8 (*Poster* by Henry Reb) demonstrated little or no understanding of graphic design issues. Likewise, a number of candidates attempting question 12 demonstrated very little knowledge and understanding of fashion design.

Expressive portfolio

Some centres adopted a 'house style' where all candidates had followed exactly the same process, using identical materials and techniques, often with very similar subject matter. This 'one size fits all' approach inhibits personal choice. It can result in candidates working with materials and techniques that do not suit them, or having little opportunity to demonstrate personal choice and creativity.

At times, candidates selected subject matter which was too demanding for their personal skill level, such as a variety of still-life objects with difficult perspective, or portraiture. This tended to highlight their weaknesses.

Some final pieces were less resolved than earlier development studies, with some candidates struggling to achieve a comparable level of finish in a larger scale work.

Some evaluations contained a descriptive account of the subject matter and the techniques used, rather than reflecting on decisions made and the success of the work.

Design portfolio

As has been the case in previous years, design portfolios were generally less successful than expressive portfolios.

Many candidates continue to be adversely affected by poorly constructed and unrealistic design briefs. Some design briefs were concerned only with aesthetic issues and did not give candidates an opportunity to consider functionality or target market. Some briefs were so open-ended as to be meaningless. Overly complicated briefs sometimes required more than one solution, such as a set of postage stamps, or pattern being applied to multiple products. This presented candidates with unnecessary challenges, often resulting in a confused design process.

Sometimes candidates had been directed to produce expressive drawings in their investigative research. Often, they could have replaced these time-consuming drawings with found images, without impacting on the creative process.

Some portfolios were confusing and cluttered and would have benefitted from editing to clarify the line of development leading to the design solution. At times, portfolios lacked a clear process and appeared to miss important steps leading to the solution. In some cases, the development steps were very repetitive and did not show adequate development and refinement of the idea.

Problem-solving was weak in some portfolios with very little consideration of functionality. For example, in graphic design it was not uncommon to see limited consideration of lettering and layout, with lettering appearing as an afterthought and placed where there was a space. Development in repeat pattern portfolios could be limited. Occasionally, development was limited to showing the same pattern in a number of colourways. In body adornment and fashion, there was sometimes little or no consideration of wearability. In product design, there was often little evidence that candidates had considered practical issues, such as how to integrate a light source into a lighting design. In architecture, candidates often did not explore layout and use of space, with the overall appearance of the design sometimes being the only consideration.

In fashion and body adornment, showing a design solution by pinning various elements to a mannequin does not allow the candidate to demonstrate a fully realised concept. While there is no requirement to use professional techniques at this level, the solution should show how the candidate has considered functional issues and construction, as well as aesthetics.

Centre approaches could disadvantage candidates, particularly where a formulaic process is imposed. Candidates at this level do need some direction and often respond creatively to constraints. However, having all candidates follow exactly the same steps leaves little scope for personalisation and creative thought. Prescriptive approaches often limit the most able candidates.

Weaker evaluations often included narrative descriptions of the process, rather than reflecting on decisions made and the effectiveness of the solution. A number of candidates did not refer to their design brief.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

♦ Candidates should be familiar with the art and design terminology which they may encounter in the question paper. The course specification contains a list of terms. Appendix 2 gives further detail on how candidates could interpret and develop these subject-specific terms in their responses.

♦ Candidates should have opportunities to develop their exam technique so that they can answer effectively and manage their time in the examination.

♦ Teachers, lecturers and candidates can access specimen question papers, past papers and marking instructions on SQA's website to help them understand the level of response required and how the question paper is marked. Exemplar candidate responses and commentaries are also available on the Understanding Standards website.

♦ Responses to questions 1 and 7 should demonstrate that a candidate has previously studied the works selected. Comments must be based on factually correct information and show appropriate knowledge and understanding.

♦ In response to part (b), candidates do not gain marks for biographical information alone. Candidates must explain the impact of specific influences on the work of the selected artist or designer.

♦ Centres should recommend special arrangements for candidates whose writing is so illegible that it may disadvantage them in a written examination.

Expressive portfolio

♦ Centres should give candidates the 'Instructions for candidates' section of the Expressive coursework assessment tasks.

♦ While it is practical for centres to place some limitations on candidates at this level, very formulaic approaches should be avoided. Candidates should have some scope for personalisation and choice.

♦ Portfolios should not include more work than is necessary at the investigative research and development stages. A succinct and focused approach is often more effective and less time-consuming for the candidate.

♦ Themes should be included on the first sheet of the expressive portfolio.

♦ Tracing or colouring over photocopies is self-penalising as it does not allow candidates to demonstrate appropriate skills.

♦ Including repetitive compositions from similar angles can limit potential in the development stage. Instead, candidates should explore viewpoint, scale and framing when developing their idea.

♦ There is no requirement to produce a painting as a final piece if a candidate's strength and preference is in using dry media. Likewise, there is no need for a candidate to work in colour if their strength is in working with tone. It is not necessary for a candidate to produce an A2 final piece if they are not confident working on this scale. Some candidates will prefer to work on a larger scale, but this should be a personal choice.

- Portfolios should include only one line of development. Work that has no connection to the final piece should not be included as this can impact on the mark awarded for process.
- Candidates should make their line of development clear. They can use labelling or arrows if required.
- Candidates are not required to submit 3D outcomes, but should provide clear, well-lit photographs that show the piece from different angles.
- Candidates should produce their evaluation independently. They must not use writing frames or model evaluations.
- Candidates must not change the font size in the evaluation template. Evaluations for each portfolio must not exceed the one A4 page provided. Evaluations must be attached to the first sheet and candidates should ensure that it does not overlap other work.
- Candidates should check that the correct evaluation has been attached to each portfolio, as some expressive portfolios contained the design evaluation and vice versa.
- The overall maximum size for each portfolio must not exceed three A2-sized, single-sided sheets or equivalent.
- Exemplar candidate expressive portfolios and commentaries are available on the Understanding Standards website.

Design portfolio
- Centres should give candidates the 'Instructions for candidates' section of the Design coursework assessment tasks.
- While it is practical for centres to place some limitations on candidates at this level, very formulaic approaches should be avoided. Candidates should have some scope for personalisation and choice.
- Portfolios should not include more work than is necessary at the investigative and market research, and development stages. A succinct and focused approach is often more effective and less time-consuming for the candidate.
- Design briefs should be included on the first sheet of the portfolio.
- Design briefs should be realistic, achievable and give clear direction to candidates. They should ask them to consider important functional issues as well as aesthetic issues. For example, candidates could consider readability and clear communication of a message in graphic design. In jewellery design, they could consider practical issues such as balance, weight and fastenings. Design briefs should also encourage candidates to consider their target market. Centres can provide briefs or design brief templates for candidates.
- Expressive drawing is not a requirement in the design portfolio. Drawing for design can have an important place, but this is often a different type of drawing that is used to explore shape, form or pattern.
- In graphic design, candidates should consider layout and how lettering will integrate with their imagery.
- Colour is an important element in repeat pattern design, but it should be used with consideration. Centres should also encourage candidates to consider motif development, layout, different types of repeat and scale.
- Candidates working in 3D areas should engage with 3D development to refine their ideas, techniques and skills before starting the production of their design solutions.

- Candidates should avoid 'wallpapering' in portfolios. For example, the development should not include numerous photographs of a sculpture or design solution at different stages of construction. This does not attract any marks and the space would be better used to show the experimentation carried out before construction of the final piece or design solution.
- Portfolios should include only one line of development. Candidates should not include work that has no connection to the final piece or the design solution, as this can impact on the mark awarded for process.
- Candidates should make their line of development clear. They can use labelling or arrows if required.
- Candidates are not required to submit 3D outcomes, but should provide clear, well-lit photographs that show the piece from different angles.
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- Candidates should check that the correct evaluation has been attached to each portfolio, as some design portfolios contained the expressive evaluation and vice versa.
- The overall maximum size for each portfolio should not exceed three A2-sized, single-sided sheets or equivalent.
- Exemplar design portfolios and commentaries are accessed on SQA's secure site (because of copyright issues).

It was pleasing to see that the majority of centres adhered to the conditions of assessment for coursework. However, in a small number of examples this may not have been the case. Centres must adhere to the criteria that are published clearly on SQA's website and in-course materials. SQA is committed to ensuring fairness for all candidates through consistent application of assessment conditions and investigates all cases alerted to us where conditions may not have been met.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	9198

Number of resulted entries in 2019	9322

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	34.9%	34.9%	3252	173
B	28.9%	63.8%	2693	148
C	23.4%	87.2%	2182	123
D	10.0%	97.1%	929	98
No award	2.9%	-	266	-

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.