Course report 2022

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 appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	5690

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	24.9	Cumulative percentage	24.9	Number of candidates	1415	Minimum mark required	168
B	Percentage	30.6	Cumulative percentage	55.5	Number of candidates	1740	Minimum mark required	140
C	Percentage	28.1	Cumulative percentage	83.6	Number of candidates	1600	Minimum mark required	113
D	Percentage	13.2	Cumulative percentage	96.8	Number of candidates	750	Minimum mark required	85
No award	Percentage	3.2	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	180	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

♦ 'most' means greater than 70%
♦ 'many' means 50% to 69%
♦ 'some' means 25% to 49%
♦ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Feedback from markers and the statistical data indicates that the components effectively differentiated between candidates of different abilities and levels of understanding.

Performance in the question paper was weaker than expected. Performance in the expressive and design portfolios was more broadly in line with previous years. However, there were fewer submissions that achieved the top marks range. There was an overall increase in the average mark for the design portfolios compared with previous years. This positive change brought the design portfolios more in line with attainment in the expressive portfolio.

Question paper

The modified question paper allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of either art or design issues covered during the course. Most candidates chose to answer from the expressive art studies section of the paper.

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

Most candidates were able to complete three questions from their chosen section in the time allocated.

There is evidence that many candidates had focused on preparing for the mandatory question and were able to apply their knowledge and understanding more effectively than in optional question responses. However, the performance overall for all questions was poorer than in previous years.

In response to the mandatory questions, candidates selected a range of works by different artists and designers. Fewer candidates than in previous years chose to answer questions about the work of less well-known artists and designers. Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo, Audrey Flack and Jenny Saville were popular in the expressive section. In the design section, Vivienne Westwood, A M Cassandre, René Lalique and Peter Chang were popular choices.

The following optional questions were most popular.

Expressive Art studies:

♦ Question 2 — Still Life of Roses, Fruit and a Bowl of Goldfish by Milne Ramsey
♦ Question 3 — Reflections of Home by Gene Brown
♦ Question 5 — River Aire Leeds Canal by Charles Ginner

Design studies:

♦ Question 9 — Outfit for the Spring/Summer 2013 Collection by Louise Gray
♦ Question 10 — Let's Bake Crayola Gingerbread Kit by Stocks Taylor Benson
♦ Question 11 — North Indian Bracelet, unknown designer

Expressive portfolio

The assessment task proved to be fair and accessible for candidates in terms of coverage and overall level of demand. Markers commented positively about the quality of many expressive portfolios considering the impact of the pandemic. It is evident that both candidates and centres have worked extremely hard in exceptional circumstances throughout the session to complete portfolio work.

It was positive that many portfolios followed the guidance, with candidates able to access the full range of marks by submitting the minimum amounts included in the guidance. These included candidates using a smaller scale for final outcomes and limiting their choice or use of materials. This reduction in the number and scale of studies needed allowed for more focused portfolios in many cases.

Candidates demonstrated a wide range of creative and imaginative approaches to themes, with an increase in more personal approaches, possibly because of candidates having to work from home and seek inspiration from their home environment.

Markers commented that more candidates this year chose to use dry materials including pencil, pen and pastels to complete expressive studies, often showing a high level of skill. As has been the case in previous years, most work submitted was 2D, with both still life and portraiture continuing to be the most popular genres explored by candidates.

Design portfolio

Most design portfolios met the assessment requirements at this level. Markers commented that many candidates had produced more than the minimum amount recommended in the guidance. Candidates exemplified a wide variation of skills and processes.

Markers commented positively on the varied range of design outcomes produced both within and across centres. The most popular approaches were 2D design such as graphics and printed textiles, and 3D design based around body adornment, head pieces and jewellery. Compared with previous years, more design briefs were concise and achievable. This allowed candidates to engage in a level of personalisation and choice, showing a clear understanding of the design process.

There was more evidence of candidates effectively using very simple and cheap materials, including a good use of recycled materials. An increase in the effective use of digital media was also evident.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Most candidates understood the format of the examination and correctly selected one section of the question paper to answer.

The highest performing candidates understood how to structure their responses, with the full impact explained for each prompt word discussed in the question selected.

The marking team saw good responses, especially in mandatory questions. Several candidates enthusiastically discussed their selected art or design work, showing their in-depth knowledge and understanding of the artist's or designer's intentions with reference to each of the given prompts.

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.

Expressive portfolio

Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the requirements of the assessment. Most candidates included succinct and relevant investigation work and showed a good understanding of the creative process.

Having a strong theme allowed most candidates to successfully follow a single line of development. Markers commented on the mature approach by many candidates in the development of their theme, allowing for personal exploration and real engagement resulting in a better-quality portfolio.

Technology was used effectively as a tool to creatively develop ideas, especially when exploring composition, lighting, and mood and atmosphere. Several candidates who chose to use limited materials and/or techniques produced more highly resolved and focused outcomes.

The quality of final pieces was evident in many portfolios and showed further improvement that built on candidates' investigation and development work. Choosing to work on a smaller scale allowed more candidates to produce better quality work more suited to their skill level, approach and choice of media.

Candidates that produced effective evaluations demonstrated a good understanding of art terminology. In addition, these evaluations made reference to the candidate's theme by focusing on justified evaluative comments relating to the effects created in the production of the portfolio, rather than just describing the steps taken to complete the work.

Design portfolio

Many candidates showed a good understanding of design issues. The best design portfolios had pertinent, well-constructed and realistic design briefs that identified key design issues. This in turn allowed candidates to more fully engage with the design process.

The most effective design portfolios were laid out clearly, identifying investigation, research and the development process. This 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, focusing on, for example, the use of selected materials, the exploration of a visual element, such as shape or line, or the development of a technique.

Candidates who carefully considered both the aesthetic and functional aspects of their development ideas and design solution were in general more successful; for example, graphic outcomes where candidates had fully considered the readability of text as well as the choice of imagery.

Markers positively commented on the increase in 3D design portfolios, with the most successful candidates having the skill and confidence to experiment with materials and construction to explore the constraints of their brief.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Markers commented that 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.

In the mandatory questions, several candidates provided a lot of biographical information but were unable to relate their prior knowledge of artwork or design work to the prompts in the question. In question 7, several candidates did not specify one visual element to discuss. Rather, they made comments about several different visual elements, limiting the marks that could be awarded for that prompt.

Several candidates discussed at length the artwork or design work they had studied for the mandatory question, but did not identify the work, or the artist or designer in their response.

For questions 2 and 3 within the expressive art studies section, the prompt words 'composition' and 'viewpoint' were misunderstood by some candidates. In these instances, candidates used 'composition' to only describe what they could see in the artwork. 'Viewpoint' was confused with perspective, or with the artist's opinion. This was also true of the prompt 'tone', where some candidates commented on the mood, or the colour range used.

In the design studies section, the prompt words 'colour' and 'pattern' in question 9 were often referred to very generally by some candidates as 'the colours' or 'the patterns' without actually stating which colours or types of pattern, and where they could be seen in the

design. In question 10, some candidates lacked design understanding or vocabulary, making very descriptive comments about 'layout' and 'typography' without any justification.

Expressive portfolio

It was observed by several markers that some centres had opted for a formulaic approach, with all candidates using the same still life objects, subject matter or compositions. This limited opportunities for candidates to show creativity and personalisation.

Some candidates were not able to access the full range of marks in the second section of 'process', as they did not give enough consideration to, for example, composition, lighting, background and visual continuity to really develop a highly resolved final piece. Several candidates did not explore viewpoint or compositional arrangements in their development studies.

By working on a larger scale for their final piece, some candidates were unable to further develop the techniques they had shown in their investigation and development process. In these instances, candidates lacked the skills to scale up the composition, or did not have time to complete the work to the same quality as smaller development studies.

Some candidates did not perform well in the evaluation, where they only described the steps they had taken to produce artwork, rather than discussing the impact of their choices on the work.

Design portfolio

There was less evidence of candidates following the published portfolio guidance in their design portfolios. Many candidates produced more portfolio work than was necessary and would have benefited from editing this when presenting their ideas for submission.

Some candidates were unclear about the design process or lacked the necessary skills at this level to fully resolve the requirements of their brief. At times, development was repetitive, meaning the process did not show adequate refinement of an idea.

Some candidates tackled techniques and processes that were beyond their capabilities, displaying a lack of finesse in their use of materials. At times, candidates failed to show consideration of function or communicate a clear process.

Some candidates failed to show an effective refinement of their ideas when using technology. This resulted in limited variations in either layout or imagery of lettering in graphic design, or only making limited colour changes in repeat pattern designs.

Candidates who relied on descriptive comments alone, rather than critically evaluating their work in relation to their brief, were not able to access the full range of marks.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Candidates need time throughout the session to become familiar with art and design terminology. A list of terms that may be used in the paper is available in the course specification. Appendix 2 gives details on how these subject-specific terms could be interpreted and developed in candidate responses.

Exposure to a diverse range of art and design imagery, the full range of question prompts, and support with exam technique is essential for all candidates throughout the course.

Practice in selecting appropriate questions, structuring responses, and time management should also help candidates respond effectively to the question paper.

To gain a mark, candidates need to make a fully justified point in response to a prompt in the question.

To access the full range of marks, all prompts in the selected questions must be answered, with up to a maximum of 4 marks available for each prompt. Candidates do not need to make 4 points for each prompt, as there is some flexibility on how they can structure their responses to access the 10 marks available for each question.

Candidates should be encouraged to explain and analyse where in the work the prompt can be seen, and what effect the prompt has on the work. They should fully justify each point they make, demonstrating their understanding and knowledge of art and design terminology at this level.

Understanding Standards evidence and commentaries are available on the SQA website. Centres can make use of these to help teachers, lecturers and candidates 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 the SQA website.

Expressive portfolio

Centres should continue to follow the portfolio guidance. This in turn should help candidates gain more time to practise and develop skills throughout the course.

Candidates should clearly identify a theme on the first sheet of their portfolio. They should focus on this theme to develop a single idea towards a final piece.

Centres should give candidates the opportunity to edit portfolios to ensure that all artwork included is relevant to their theme. The full range of marks is more easily accessed when unrelated studies, or studies of poorer standard, are removed.

Candidates should present portfolios with a clear layout. This can be a minimum of two investigations and two developments, which lead into a resolved final piece. It is not a requirement to use complicated or expensive mounting to display artwork.

It is not a requirement to use a lot of different materials and/or techniques. Portfolios where candidates chose to use only one medium or technique often worked to their advantage as they were better able to develop their skill set as they progressed through their portfolio.

Centres should avoid a very formulaic approach. Centres can choose to focus on a single genre, such as still life or portraiture. However, candidates at this level should be given the opportunity to develop their own creative response to that genre by deciding on their own personal theme.

Centres should provide candidates with the opportunity to develop their evaluation skills. The evaluation must be completed independently by the candidates, without assistance from teachers or lecturers including the provision of model answers or writing frames.

Teachers and lecturers should check that the correct evaluation has been attached to the front of the first sheet, and the completed flysheet is attached to the back of the portfolio.

Design portfolio

Centres should be confident to follow the portfolio guidance, which should give candidates more time to practise and develop skills. It is not a requirement to 'wallpaper' design portfolios with additional research images or development ideas, as candidates can access the full range of marks with a concise portfolio.

Design portfolios should have three market research images and one other relevant image, for example a source of inspiration, to access the full range of marks available for investigative research.

Design briefs should 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 be supported to consider the suitability of the materials chosen in response to the brief. Materials do not need to be expensive but should allow the candidate to really explore the potential of the material in the development of their ideas and design solution.

Candidates should carefully select and present their work to ensure the design process is clear. Candidates should therefore be encouraged to present their work to show a clear line of development, presented in the order that the refinements were made and leading to the production of a design solution.

Candidates should produce a single line of enquiry by only creating one design, rather than a range, such as a CD cover with poster and merchandise.

There is no requirement to send 3D outcomes. Clear, well-lit photographs showing specific details and viewpoints will showcase 3D work.

Centres should consider the importance and potential impact that evaluations can have on the final mark. Many candidates try to use this to communicate on their steps rather than reflecting on their process and the success of their design solution.

The evaluation template provided by SQA should not be altered, and the font size should not be reduced.

Centres should ensure that the appropriate evaluation has been attached to the first sheet and that it does not overlap any other work. The completed flysheet should be attached to the back of the first sheet.

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
♦ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade 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 for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
♦ Where levels of difficulty 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 on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the National Qualifications 2022 Awarding — Methodology Report.