



Course Report 2017

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| Subject | Art and Design |
| Level | Advanced Higher |

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

Section 1: Comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

After the second year of the new Advanced Higher assessment, markers' reports reflect a unanimous appreciation of the high standards of commitment, skill and imagination that they saw in folios. The results support this view, and, by all accounts, many candidates appear to be exploiting the openness and flexibility of the arrangements, seeing the potential for expressing their ideas while understanding the demands of the marking instructions. This comment by one marker is not unusual: 'As a teacher of Advanced Higher, I have been blown away by the overall high quality of work.'

Expressive or Design

One of the obvious attractions of the new course that seems to be benefiting candidates is the very straightforward choice of a Design or an Expressive folio. It simplifies the task with one topic to concentrate on. This might account for the clarity of focus and thoroughness of many folios.

Numbers of A1 sheets

The reduction, or greater flexibility in the number of sheets presented, from 8 to 16, has also made the course more accessible to the different ambitions of candidates. In the past, some candidates have been tempted to add irrelevant items work to bulk up the folio, but this tendency has been less evident in the new course and we have seen examples of small, tightly organised folios of 10 to 12 A1 sheets achieving good results.

Understanding Standards

In November 2016, there were three days of Understanding Standards that illustrated and explained differing levels of performance in the new course, it was attended by an average of 80 teachers per day. The effects of this kind of event on the attainment of candidates can be exaggerated, but the focus of the presentations and the opportunity to see and discuss a range of folios does help to clarify and consolidate a confident knowledge of the course.

The presenters also emphasised the rationale and higher objectives of the 'creative process', and its links to the field of art and design education and creative industries. Seeing the course in this wider context can also be an inspiring idea to bring to candidates. The delegates returned to the classroom armed with a hefty pack of support materials.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Portfolio project

Individual approaches to presentation

There are few restrictions on the format of presentation or the numbers of outcomes at Advanced Higher. The large volume of work allows for a freedom to experiment with ideas and develop a folio that reflects an individual outlook. Some submissions are directed by developing the theme and techniques towards several outcomes, while others see the outcome as part of a process of exploring an idea through sketch books, research and experiment.

Markers welcome the many contrasts in submission and can make the adjustments necessary to honour the intentions of the candidate. They see this wide range in presentation as verifying the personal nature of the challenge and as reflecting the diversity of ideas in the world of art and design. It seems there are as many varieties of both Design and Expressive folios as there are candidates.

Themes and ideas

It is difficult to reflect on the diverse range of topics that have been explored without resorting to an inadequate list. Many folios can be seen under broad headings such as fashion, product design, graphics, illustration, jewellery, architecture, still life, figure composition, sculpture or portrait; but, beyond this, are a spectrum of interests such as, the celebration of family life, friends and childhood nostalgia, concerns about identity, body image, personal anxiety and broader issues like the natural environment, gender equality, migration, tourism or animal welfare. This impression is, as previously mentioned, inadequate — it makes these topics seem rather worthy, whereas in fact they are often interpreted with great imagination, powerful expression and even humour. They reveal a personal world supported by a wealth of visual material and sometimes literary references. Poetry, blogs and quotes feature as well as illustration and artistic research.

Development

The improvements in layout and exemplification of development work has also been appreciated by markers. This concern for working drawings and preparatory studies is further emphasised in the marking instructions for Advanced Higher Art and Design: the importance of ‘developing well-conceived ideas’ and ‘sustained lines of enquiry’. The sheets of development often reflect a knowledge of visual concepts such as shape, colour, line and form. Assessor have commented on the way this ‘creative use of visual elements’ has been purposefully extended through experiment with materials to further candidates’ ideas.

Design

This has been a particularly strong year for design — it is reflected in marks that are better than ever. In many Enquiries, candidates have brought together ideas from their studies of designers with lively experiments into materials and effects, often in 3D, and have bound this together with cogently presented development of ideas and well annotated sheets. One

marker commented on candidates having 'produced a strong link and a clear direction throughout the folio.'

There is a tendency in some Design folios for candidates to take a highly individual direction so that the work looks like sculpture or, in the case of printed fabric and illustration, like painting. The boundaries between the two areas of activity (Expressive and Design) have never been clearly drawn at Advanced Higher. It could be argued that the new marking instructions, with their emphasis on experiment, visual connection and creative process, lend themselves to the way a design folio develops.

The influence of Artists, Designers and visual culture: making visual connections

What we said for Design, about the benefits of integrating the study of visual material into the folio, also goes for Expressive. Candidates who are conversant with ideas that run parallel to their own, have a depth of knowledge that informs their creative imagination and makes the project more independent.

There are 10 marks apportioned to 'Evidence of personal applied understanding of artist's/designer's work and practice,' This complementary enquiry is an exercise in finding all manner of visual material, such as photography, film clips, sculpture or examples of art and design related to the theme. Markers were impressed by the way many candidates had extended and supported the project, 'by making connections to discover more visual resources.'

Skills and Materials

As candidates become more interested in exploring conceptually based projects, it has been supposed that the level of practical artistic technique will be diminished and traditional drawing, painting, making, craftsmanship could be lost: the brilliant work we saw this year contradicts that view. Markers have reported on the assured level of technical skill, mentioning: 'beautifully painted and highly ambitious final outcomes,' 'Striking examples of textile, fashion and product design where the final products such as woven felt upholstery, costume and chair design, all made with care and skill.'

The refinement and finish in drawing and painting was also prominent. This reflects a progression through the subject that culminates at this level. In some cases, the whole portfolio was built around the exploration of a painting method or craft technique and sometimes the level of control was outstanding.

Inexpensive materials

The circumstances in which Advanced Higher candidates assemble the coursework and create the folios differ greatly. Some candidates are privileged to be timetabled in well-resourced departments, others are less fortunate, working more independently and with a restricted choice of materials.

Markers have commented on the possible differences this would make to the standards of work. A new marker said, 'I was highly impressed by the reach and scope of Advanced Higher, the course can be interpreted to make the best of limited resources, concentrating on experiment with basic materials and developing ideas: if anything, the end results, and the marks, were enhanced by this emphasis on process.' Another marker noticed the

effective use of, 'recycled materials, plastic bottles, wire, old fabrics combined with art materials.'

Photography and Printmaking: New Media/Old Craftsmanship

The camera, once a specialist item of equipment, is now ubiquitous, and its role in every aspect of art and design is expanding. In addition to the photographing of research material and final outcomes, markers have been impressed by the way candidates use photos in the creative process, to document the progress of work, take pictures of 3D models, draw over images or collage or print, or use Photoshop effects or infills or distortions or layering to alter, personalise or subvert or generally renew or remake the original pictures.

This is a relatively new practice, but alongside it, in both Design and Expressive work, runs a parallel interest in craft of printmaking: etching, lino, press-print, mono-print, collagraphs and even the ancient art of the wood cut. 'The use of printmaking and photography adds grist to the creative mill in developing ideas.'

Component 2: Written Assignment: Critical Analysis

Word Limit: 2,000 words

The word limit for Critical Analysis has been extended to allow candidates to cover the topic adequately. Few candidates had difficulty in writing both Analysis and Context within this limit.

Critical Analysis — finding the right topic

The Critical Analysis which runs parallel to the practical coursework is concentrated on the study of a work or related works of art or design. The candidate is asked to write about two aspects of the work or works:

1. Analysing by studying how the work(s) were made.
2. Providing a context by explaining what influenced the artist or designer.

Assessors are sensitive to the degrees of difficulty presented by different topics: some famous works of art and design have a huge hinterland of background material, whereas, for other more obscure works, candidates would struggle to find a small reference. In practice, this disparity of information did not appear to make any difference to the success of the written work, if anything those studies on a little-known topic were more resourceful and contained a higher standard of personal comment.

1 Analysis

Candidates seemed to enjoy this analytical examination of a topic; there were examples where sections of the work were referred to in detail, showing how materials had been combined to create a jewellery piece, or where the composition of figures in the background of a painting produced an effect on the whole image. This deconstruction of works seems to complement the practical work, tapping into candidates' knowledge, gained at National 5 or Higher, of the way visual elements like colour, materials, shape and form effected the meaning and purpose of the example.

2 Exploring context and influence — making connections

The second part of the Critical Analysis — on the connections of influence and context with the chosen work — showed the way in which the parallel study of design, art and visual culture that created greater depth in many practical portfolios also helped to create connections between varieties of influences on the chosen works.

Assessors often saw a link between practical portfolios with a wealth of supporting visual material and a lively understanding of the contextual part of the written study. Some candidates looked at other works of art and design of the same kind: a study of Mary Cassatt's 'Mother and Child' took on the context of the depiction of children in 19th century painting. In design, a study of Jean Paul Gautier's ethnic collection led to an exploration African pattern making.

Illustrations and quotes in Critical Analysis

In many examples of Critical Analysis, the written work was well illustrated with captioned images and sketches that illuminated the text and sometimes did much to explain ideas that had not been fully covered. Some candidates made skilful use of quotes from a designer or artists or critic: markers were often impressed by the efforts of candidates to explain quotes or use them as a talking point.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Portfolio project

Sheet One

This opening sheet is a preliminary guide to the portfolio and sets the scene for what is to follow. In a Design Enquiry, it would clearly display all aspects of the design brief and, through sketches, illustrations, diagrams, photographs, annotations and references, it would outline the nature and character of what is to follow. An Expressive folio would contain the same kind of material, showing the kind of thinking and background research, development and experimentation that has already been covered by candidates. Assessors were impressed by exciting examples of Sheet One, but in some folios the presentations were no more than a mood-board of vaguely related images that did little to illuminate the folio.

The influence of art, design and visual culture — 'Evidence of personal applied understanding of artist's/designer's work and practice'

From the initial ideas in Sheet One to the Critical Analysis and Evaluation, the creative process should be accompanied by a study of art, design or visual culture. This parallel enquiry is an exercise in finding all manner of visual material, such as photography, film clips, sculpture, or examples of art and design, related to the theme. It helps to deepen and support the project. In some folios, the connection to Art or Design, or indeed any aspects of visual culture was not explored and markers were unable to award any of the 10 marks available.

Evaluation — not a story

Candidates are asked to respond in 300 words to two aspects of the portfolio.

- ◆ Turning points in the portfolio. In general, the very specific nature of the question elicited good answers and explanations about how the folios developed. However, it seems that some candidates thought they were being asked to tell the story of the development of the whole portfolio. This meant they ran out of words to do this, and often forgot to evaluate.
- ◆ Secondly, candidates are invited to evaluate their first intentions in the light of their completed outcome — how did it turn out? This part of the evaluation was less well done by some candidates, partly because they attempted something too long-winded, but also because they seemed unable to make any self-critical comments.

Examples of 3D — ‘the act of making’

The amount of 3D work presented for Advanced Higher Art and Design has improved this year, but it is still at a low level. One of the defining concepts of art and design is the idea of ‘making’. It is the belief that to conceive of something on paper is all very well, but to make it in 3D, even in the form of a model, is to take a step closer to experiencing the diverse questions and possibilities inherent in a creative project.

The ‘act of making’ is also an encounter with the materials and techniques, with all their potential for further invention and problem-solving. So many folios could be improved by the addition of 3D work, even sent in as a photograph, or in the form of a maquette, a *papier mâché* mock-up, or as a scale model.

Component 2: Written Assignment:

Critical Analysis — de-constructing and finding contextual links

The Critical Analysis, which runs parallel to the practical coursework, is concentrated on the study of a work or related works of art or design. The candidate is asked to write about two aspects of the work or works:

1 Analyse or de-construct features of the work

Some candidates chose too many examples, or attempted too wide a range of visual elements connected to the work, and were unable to look in detail at the effects of technique, content and, in design, function, style or impact. Assessors are aware that, in responding to the Design Critical Analysis, less background information is available on specific works, especially if they are contemporary, relatively unknown or obscure. It is clear, however, that some centres are not yet conversant with the new arrangements and are submitting written work that belongs to the old arrangements.

2 Contextual writing: the weakest area

This part of the Critical Analysis was the weakest aspect of many portfolios. It invites candidates to explore the background to the work they have analysed. This background or context that is connected to the subject of their Critical Analysis can consist of a straightforward influence — for example discussing how Mackintosh was influenced by Japanese art and contributed to art nouveau, or how he was connected to the Austrian Secession — or it can look at social or economic factors, such as the rise of Glasgow at the turn of the century and the commissioning of new architecture and design, or Mackintosh influence on Modernism. The list of conceivable areas of connection to any given work of art

or design is huge and, in the notes to the course, there is an attempt to list 17 possible aspects of context from the stylistic categories or movements to the cultural/historical background to more unlikely associations linked to the chosen work.

Is contextual writing difficult?

It could be said that this contextual writing presents a more academically challenging task. Some candidates appeared to find difficulty in doing more than an outline biography of the artist or designer; others added further artists or designers or other works by the same artist or designer in the hope of broadening the topic. In some cases, candidates left out all mention of context, and therefore were unable to access any of the 15 marks. This seems to suggest that contextual writing is a high-order skill, beyond the reach of some candidates. However, in direct opposition to this, markers felt that those candidates who understood the need to address this part of the course, met the requirement comfortably, ‘with impressive connections and some original ideas.’

The present Higher written exam questions make a similar demand for context, and candidates are familiar with the way searches on the internet are set up to make connections — for example asking, ‘Mackintosh influences?’, will result in a torrent of data. It is tempting to conclude that, with more information on the demands of the course, all candidates can cope with this part of the Critical Analysis without overly extending themselves.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Portfolio Project

1: Design/Expressive portfolio of practical course work.

How much work? 8 to 16, a rough guide

It is difficult to define how large a submission for Advanced Higher should be. This depends on so many different factors, not least the nature of the project, so the guidelines on how many A1 sheets it takes to make a portfolio are necessarily inexact — between 8 and 16 covers a wide range of possible types of presentation or schemes of work.

It should also be noted that work can be presented in many different forms from sketch books and canvases to sculpture and textiles. The A1 sheet is a notional framework that gives a rough idea of the size of any presentation. The best advice on sheet numbers is not to focus on counting the sheets, but rather consider whether all the course requirements, particularly those related to development, are covered in full.

Sheet One — a bridge between the units and course

Use sketches, illustrations, diagrams, photographs, annotations and references; outline the nature and character of the project in one sheet. Arrange this material in a way that exemplifies the style and/or the concepts that underpin the folio. Assessors referred to this as a vital introduction to the portfolio that has a bearing on the whole mark. Annotate

everything on the sheet and avoid adding images that have only a distant connection to the folio. Design Sheet Ones must have a design brief.

Experiment — in many ways

Include as much relevant experimental work as can be managed in the portfolio, even if it is very small. Whatever material is being used, candidates should try out different effects with it: explore ideas, new techniques and formats, looking all the time to extend the ways in which a visual idea can be represented. Use a range of cheap materials to explore mark or shape making — such as collage, mono-printing, drawing on top of other images — to look at the theme in a new light.

Encourage candidates to make something 3D as part of the portfolio, and, if possible, hand it in

It is noticeable that 3D work — even very small items that are well made and handed in — tend to create a good impression. This is because a 3D project attracts more development ideas and creates a greater variety of approach in the portfolio.

Ask candidates to document work — illustrate what they are doing

Encourage candidates to use such things as photographs, sketches, a diary, diagrams, Photoshop, or Google SketchUp, to explain their ideas and how they have developed/taken the theme in new directions.

Encourage annotations — explain ideas

Development sheets and reference material should be explained and fully annotated. This does not count as part of the evaluation word-count, unless specifically stated. It helps to amplify the thinking behind the work, showing the purpose of visual ideas that may look less connected.

Sheet numbering

Make sure that the final portfolio has sheet numbers so that it can be viewed and understood in sequence. The numbered sheets can then be referred to in the evaluation.

Evaluation — refer to sheet numbers

Encourage candidates to try to be self-critical in answering the following questions:

- ◆ What was the effect of creative decisions or turning points on your folio?
- ◆ How effective is the response to the initial idea/creative intention/design brief in the final folio? How did it turn out?

2: Critical Analysis

Encourage candidates to choose a topic carefully — one that can be analysed and offers plenty to write about

Before candidates choose a topic, it is useful for them to do some wider research into the background of the whole field of interest. If they find that their chosen example offers too little available information, it is possible to enlarge the subject. For example: a single drawing of a ballet dancer by Degas might become all Degas' studies for a particular painting such as

'The Rehearsal'. Equally, a single fashion design by Iris van Herpen might become part of a collection by van Herpen such as the 'Micro' collection.

A broad subject offers more to write about, but is less easy to analyse or de-construct. A precise subject provides a straightforward analysis, but may have to be broadened to create the context.

Encourage candidates to use a subheading — broaden the subject

Candidates should use a precise title for their analysis and a broader sub-heading for their context. For example:

Title: The Ballet Rehearsal

Subheading: The influence of photography and Japanese art on the work of Degas, or Paintings of the dance.

Or

Title: The Micro Collection

Subheading: Wearing sculpture in contemporary fashion or Fashion design from new materials.

Edit out biographies

Candidates should not include short biographical summaries of artists or designers.

Biographical information may be used, but only if it is linked to the topic to show how it is part of the context.

Finding contextual connections

The contextual part of the Critical Analysis can begin as a kind of search engine assignment — experience shows that candidates need no help in amassing information on a topic.

The subject of the work may give rise to diverse connections. For instance, the reference to Degas' Ballet Rehearsal can offer up large amounts of context, eg the ballet in 19th century Paris; the dancers; where the dancers came from; the operas the dancers performed; where Degas got the idea of the composition; why was he interested in photography or Japanese prints.

Similarly, in Design, van Herpen's use of contemporary technology that describes movement — such as laser cutting, new materials, macro photography and 3D printing — or her interest in body sculpture, her connections to inspirational photographers, the effect of her work on the High Street brands etc.

Quotes — a way of exploring meaning

As candidates research the topic, they should look for quotes that they can refer to in their Critical Analysis. These can be quotes by the artist/designer or about the artist/designer. For example:

Degas said, 'No art is less spontaneous than mine.'

Van Herpen said, 'Everyone can have their body scanned and have clothes that fit perfectly.'

It is important to explain or discuss what artists and designers meant when they made these quotes.

Speculate — candidates should give their opinion

There is much in the writing about context and influence that is a matter of opinion. Candidates should try to have part of their analysis that is guessing about why artists or designers might have been influenced by, commented on or created something.

Illustrations — illustrate every aspect of the topic

Candidates should try to put in many illustrations of details of the chosen works, or contextual links, which explain particular points. They should add other illustrations that further illuminate points made or extend ideas that they do not have space to fully address.

Captions — a useful way of extending points

Under your illustrations, make sure that you use captions that explain the point of the picture. The captions and headings need not add to the word count.

Whilst it was pleasing to see that the conditions of assessment for coursework were adhered to in the majority of centres, there were a small number of examples where this may not have been the case. Following feedback from teachers, we have strengthened the conditions of assessment criteria for National 5 subjects and will do so for Higher and Advanced Higher. The criteria are published clearly on our website and in course materials and must be adhered to. SQA takes very seriously its obligation to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates in all qualifications 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: Art & Design (Design)

Statistical information: update on Courses

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2016 | 563 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2017 | 490 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

| Distribution of Course awards | % | Cum. % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|----------------------|-------------|
| Maximum Mark - | | | | |
| A | 39.4% | 39.4% | 193 | 70 |
| B | 29.8% | 69.2% | 146 | 60 |
| C | 24.7% | 93.9% | 121 | 50 |
| D | 3.3% | 97.1% | 16 | 45 |
| No award | 2.9% | - | 14 | - |

Art & Design (Expressive)
Statistical information: update on Courses

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2016 | 859 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

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| Number of resulted entries in 2017 | 818 |
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

| Distribution of Course awards | % | Cum. % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|----------------------|-------------|
| Maximum Mark - | | | | |
| A | 37.0% | 37.0% | 303 | 70 |
| B | 33.0% | 70.0% | 270 | 60 |
| C | 24.7% | 94.7% | 202 | 50 |
| D | 3.4% | 98.2% | 28 | 45 |
| No award | 1.8% | - | 15 | - |

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). 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 management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ 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, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this 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.
- ◆ 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.