



## External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Art and Design
Level(s)	Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

This report provides information on the performance of candidates, which it is hoped, will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. 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 question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

### Practical folios

In the final year of presentation, the cohort did not disappoint. The quality of practical folios appeared to be higher than in previous years and this was borne out in the statistics.

Just over two thousand candidates were presented for this exam, which was approximately one third of previous numbers; the other two thirds were presented for the new Higher.

The marking methodology remained unchanged. The 'double blind' marking and standardising system has always been robust and as fair as possible to all candidates.

The most popular areas in Expressive folios were still life and portraiture, with a slight increase in landscape. Very few attempted 3D work in this area.

Fashion and jewellery dominated the Design folios, and there was an increase in graphic design. The majority of candidates sent photographs in lieu of 3D outcomes. There were fewer reports of candidates attempting unmanageable briefs.

Markers reported that they saw a wide range of approaches and themes and the best was often 'off the scale'. There were relatively few entries at the wrong level.

### Question paper

Markers commented that they felt the paper was well balanced, fair and consistent with the difficulties of previous years. It enabled candidates to impart knowledge and proffer intelligent and astute observations. No questions were highlighted as being problematic.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

### Practical folios: Expressive

As always, strong and well observed drawing underpinned this unit. Markers reported that folios with a clear theme, often reinforced with a title on the front, were the most successful. Clarity of presentation was also recognised as an important factor. These folios were easier to read and were therefore more accessible when awarding marks. Where candidates had choice in selecting their theme, they appeared to engage more with their folio.

Other observations for successful folios were:

- ◆ themes inspired by literature and mythology
- ◆ use of a chiaroscuro technique
- ◆ use of a restricted colour palette

## **Practical folios: Design**

Over the years, design folios have become more sophisticated and the majority of candidates showed a good understanding of the design process.

Successful folios followed a similar rationale:

- ◆ well-considered design briefs
- ◆ focused and inspirational research
- ◆ creative problem solving
- ◆ well-crafted solutions
- ◆ astute and pertinent evaluations

## **Question paper**

The vast majority of candidates completed the paper within the time constraints of the exam.

As with previous years, the most successful candidates were well prepared, and:

- ◆ read each question and responded appropriately
- ◆ demonstrated a true understanding of the visual elements and art and design issues
- ◆ backed up astute observations with justified and personal opinions
- ◆ used the structure of the question on which to build their responses
- ◆ managed their time effectively and completed all questions

The best 'b' answers included some historical and biographical information, which aided the candidates' understanding of the chronology of their chosen artists/designers.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Practical folios**

Areas that candidates found demanding or problematic are the same as those detailed in this report in previous years:

### **Expressive**

- ◆ candidates using a limited range of media
- ◆ candidates tackling subject matter beyond their capabilities
- ◆ centres allowing candidates to share the same photographs
- ◆ centres adopting an overly formulaic and controlled style of working
- ◆ centres encouraging candidates to work from a range of unrelated 'popular' images
- ◆ centres allowing candidates to work on top of photocopies and even photographs
- ◆ centres allowing candidates to select inappropriate subject matter for this level
- ◆ candidates submitting development sheets with just two images

### **Design**

- ◆ candidates sharing the same brief and images tended to be less engaged
- ◆ briefs that lacked challenge or were overly complex created inherent problems

- ◆ irrelevant market research
- ◆ lack-lustre images for inspiration
- ◆ candidates who customised an existing product were confused by the brief and associated problem solving
- ◆ development sheets that failed to demonstrate a full understanding of design issues
- ◆ poorly presented and/or overly cluttered folios were difficult to decipher
- ◆ too many separate ideas and none developed/refined
- ◆ development that was just a series of colour ways
- ◆ confusion between fashion design and textile design
- ◆ poorly produced final solutions
- ◆ final solutions not linking with other sheets
- ◆ candidates posing in an inappropriate manner
- ◆ poor quality photographs sent in lieu of 3D solution
- ◆ heavy samples falling off
- ◆ fragile models being crushed in packaging
- ◆ overly long evaluations, often too descriptive
- ◆ poor quality tape used to attach sheets

### **Question Paper**

- ◆ failing to read the question properly
- ◆ ignoring the legend and making incorrect assumptions about the work
- ◆ descriptive observations with no personal opinions
- ◆ repeating points
- ◆ candidates discussing the same artists/designers and even the same works tended to produce 'tired' responses
- ◆ failing to link 'a' question with 'b' question
- ◆ discussing too many works and none in depth
- ◆ using obscure artists/designers who were neither established nor, as yet, important
- ◆ wandering into other areas of study, eg from portraiture into still life and landscape
- ◆ describing works produced before 1750
- ◆ poor understanding of historical context
- ◆ poor handwriting
- ◆ poor punctuation
- ◆ overly long answers
- ◆ poor planning of time required for each response
- ◆ ignoring the last part of the 'b' question

Detailed explanations of these issues can be found in previous reports.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

Art and Design teachers are to be congratulated on their continued, high standards of pedagogy, without which, even the most naturally able students would never have achieved their full potential. Congratulations also to the candidates, whose work has made it a joy to mark.

This wonderful subject offers deceptively sophisticated and transferrable skills, which need to be passed on to future generations. As custodians of the subject, art and design teachers must

maintain their integrity and continue to encourage and nurture young people into a world of creativity. Ensuring the future of Art and Design within Scottish education is a privilege indeed.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	6392
Number of resulted entries in 2015	2109

## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark	220			
A	35.8%	35.8%	754	154
B	30.8%	66.5%	649	132
C	22.3%	88.9%	471	110
D	6.0%	94.9%	127	99
No award	5.1%	-	108	-

The Course assessment functioned as intended, therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

## **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.