**National Qualifications 2015**
**Internal Assessment Report**

# Art and Design

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

# National Qualifications (NQ) Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified:

DV37 12  Art and Design: Expressive (Higher)
DV38 12  Art and Design: Design (Higher)
DV37 11  Art and Design: Expressive (Intermediate 2)
DV38 11  Art and Design: Design (Intermediate 2)

## General comments

In January/February 2015, all 21 centres visited had their internal assessments of incomplete Units Accepted after verification.

Most centres were presenting only Higher folios, although in three cases Intermediate 2 folios also featured. At both levels, the majority of folios were deemed to be concordant with national standards. Some centres were awaiting prelim results before committing to a level for the occasional candidate, but most had assessed candidates appropriately for the evidence of attainment in practical work reached by then.

Interestingly this year, both Design and Expressive Units were undertaken concurrently, unlike the previous trend for Units being done consecutively, with Design work invariably launched first.

In the three centres presenting both Higher and Intermediate 2 candidates, assessment for the lower level was considered to be appropriate.

Overall, verifiers reported that centres had been fair and accurate in their judgements, according to national standards.

## Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Lively displays of previously marked work returned by SQA, provided not only a vibrant enhancement to the ethos of candidates' working environments but also facilitated optimum opportunity for benchmarking quality and standards and more robust internal assessment. Such displays are invaluable in inspiring and motivating candidates whilst aiding staff as a teaching and marking resource.

Although extensive record keeping need not feature in the external verification of practical folios, where seen, recorded notes indicated effective monitoring and tracking and useful marking schemes. A cautionary point would be that such documentation might not always ensure concordance with national standards when the practical work evidence is externally verified. It was, however, generally found that effective recording systems reflected good practice overall. The use of NABs, clear Unit specifications, staff team marking and regular candidate reviews was ongoing in those centres that were most concordant.

**Evidence Requirements**

With most centres delivering the Design and Expressive Units concurrently, Design activity, nonetheless, tended to be at a more advanced stage, if not completed. Only four centres, at the time of visits, had completed Expressive folios, with Design work in some cases barely started.

Although stage 3 evidence, either the final solution or outcome, need not feature when sampling incomplete evidence, these were sometimes available for inclusion.

Verifiers reported that folio work, regardless of the favoured order of undertaking or the stages reached, showed that SQA guidelines and standards were understood and being addressed and met.

Most centres deployed one staff member to oversee their own teaching group(s), with full responsibility for all aspects of Unit and Course work. Teachers and classes were occasionally shared or split for reasons of specialism, timetabling constraints or staffing issues, but this was untypical.

**Administration of assessments**

The majority of centres used consistent and robust record keeping, covering all component stages of Unit and Course work. Systems were in place to provide and promote co-operative approaches to regular cross-marking checks, ongoing interim assessment and candidate reviews. These were formally timetabled in some departments and reflected sound and effective standardisation of internal verification. With only three centres visited still presenting Intermediate 2 candidates, most verification was therefore based on sampling only Higher folios, which greatly streamlined the process in the final year of this Higher Course.

As mentioned, past work already marked and returned, provided a wealth of references to benchmark standards — not so much for theme and content, which is highly personalised, but in terms of quality and quantity guides for internal assessment of current work. Marking schemes were based on exemplified formats for SQA's NQ assessment criteria, with candidates being formatively assessed throughout specific stages of the Unit(s). Next steps and development needs were regularly shared and discussed with candidates. Such organisation, administration and communication are important throughout, but even more so when the department is not overseen by a subject-specialist principal teacher. Interestingly, half of all centres visited this year still had a principal teacher in post, rather than a non-specialist faculty head.

# Areas of good practice

Verifiers noted good practice in many centres. Candidates appeared to be clear about Unit content and pace, as well as standards expected. Again, special mention was made about the importance of a good quality design brief being essential as a launching pad and working guide to the problem solving process of design activity. The best of these offered clear restrictions and constraints in

considering design issues, yet allowed the candidate freedom to explore their own interests and enthusiasms. This applied to both individual or class briefs being issued.

Again this year, textiles and jewellery were the most popular areas of design, although graphics outweighed product design in other folios. Virtually no architecture or interior work was seen. Strong investigative studies featured dynamic visuals to support theme and context. The best developments were thorough and robust, showing real breadth and depth of consideration, where a clearly refined, favoured option was further worked towards the intended solution.

Items for wear referred to the human form and thinking in the round related to 3D outcomes. Many gorgeous trials and samples showed highly imaginative use of craft or recycled materials, often creating magic from the manipulation of seemingly insignificant, everyday odds and ends. An obvious link between the interdependence of image with font was seen in some striking graphic work. Where included, many Design outcomes showed wonderful skill, both in terms of media handling and in their sophisticated construction and execution featuring subject matter of personal interest to candidates.

Expressive work in many cases included analytical drawing done with great skill and sensitivity, while the most exciting developments reflected imaginative exploration of ideas and craftwork.

The most popular theme of study in this Unit was portraiture, followed by still life — the reverse of last year. Built environment, landscape, figures and fantasy themes featured much less. The strongest developments showed clear distinction from investigation, with often lively and exciting studies beautifully worked in a variety of media.

## Specific areas for improvement

When the Design Unit is not guided by an effective brief, candidates flounder: unable to properly address vital issues, constraints and requirements. It was concerning to verifiers that in some centres, no brief could be viewed with folio work as none had ever been issued. Such scenarios invariably resulted in much weaker performance, as candidates had not been sufficiently directed in their focus. Development work failing to show the further refinement and fleshing out of a selected option being morphed towards a solution was among the weakest. Instead, the solution was apparently plucked from one of a number of ideas, with no focus on the further development of the key idea. In addition, some work lacked important consideration of human form and scale for an item of wear. These would have been greatly enhanced with the inclusion of mannequin sketches indicating scale and function.

Any weaknesses in Expressive folios tended to be at the development stage, where investigation and consideration stages were blurred into a double-page spread of similar work rather than mounted as distinctly different activities. More clarity between these areas would benefit submissions. Also, overlarge or repetitive studies risked compromising available space for alternative studies.

The timing of visits was generally acknowledged by centres to allow for helpful input. It allowed for remediation time in which to act on any advice or suggestions contained in feedback.

Verifiers commented on the welcoming and receptive engagement with centre staff in the Art and Design departments visited, in the final year of this Higher Course.