



Common questions about Higher Photography

What is the structure for the Higher Photography course?

There are two externally assessed components of course assessment:

- ◆ question paper — 20 marks (23% of the total mark)
- ◆ project — 100 marks (77% of the total mark)

Higher course assessment — question paper

Do candidates have a choice of questions in the question paper?

No. All questions are mandatory, so candidates should attempt all questions.

What is the structure of the Higher question paper?

Section 1: Multiple choice has 10 marks and contains 10 multiple-choice questions.

Marks are awarded for:

- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the properties of light and image formation, camera controls, and image-making techniques and their effects

Section 2: Analysis has 20 marks. It contains two questions (10 marks each) that ask candidates to critically analyse two unseen photographic images from a range of genres and styles.

Marks are awarded for:

- ◆ analysing two unseen photographic images by applying knowledge and understanding of the properties of light and image formation, and photographic practice
- ◆ drawing valid conclusions, justified by explanation

Does the Higher question paper have specific categories?

The question paper samples from the mandatory knowledge and understanding for the course, which is listed in the course specification.

A range of genres and styles is represented in the question paper. Analysis images are selected from the following genres:

- ◆ portraiture
- ◆ still life
- ◆ landscape
- ◆ urban environment
- ◆ natural world
- ◆ documentary

Will the structure of questions 11 and 12 stay the same each year?

Question 11 changes each year depending on the image. The distribution of marks within question 11 varies between 2 and 4, but always totals 10 marks.

For question 12, the image changes each year, but the question remains the same.

In these questions, marks are not awarded for general knowledge and understanding of photography concepts. Candidates should show that they can apply their knowledge and understanding by referring to specific features of the images in their responses.

Higher course assessment — project

How can the project work be presented?

Candidates can present their work in a variety of ways. Examples include sketchbooks, folders and display books.

The selection of candidate work should reflect the requirements of the project assessment task.

The presentation should include the:

- ◆ plan
- ◆ investigative research
- ◆ line of development (contact sheets, edit experiments, shortlist) including evidence of critical reflection, refinement and creative decision-making
- ◆ final eight prints
- ◆ evaluation

Candidates should present their work in a clear and logical format. They should only submit work for assessment that is relevant to their project topic.

What type of camera should be used for the Higher Photography project?

There are no specific requirements regarding the type of camera candidates can use for their coursework. They can use mobile phone cameras.

Teachers and lecturers can advise candidates on what type of camera or equipment to use. Candidates should consider with their teacher or lecturer whether their chosen camera or equipment will help them meet the requirements in the coursework assessment task document.

How should candidates present their plan?

Candidates can include their plans at the start of the presentation or submit them as a separate piece of evidence. They can also include evidence of planning throughout the project. Planning should be clearly labelled.

How much research should candidates include in their projects?

This depends on the project and what the candidate needs to research to carry it out successfully. Research material should be relevant to the candidate's topic and approach. Candidates should not include material that does not have a specific relevance to the project. The volume of research should be proportionate to the marks available.

Do candidates have to annotate their research?

Candidates do not have to annotate their research, as they demonstrate their ability to analyse photographs in the question paper. However, candidates can choose to include brief comments or labels, for example, to explain the relevance to their topic. They can also choose to include comments within the research that demonstrate evidence of their creative decision-making.

Can work by unknown photographers be included in the research?

Candidates can include contextual research from a number of sources, including images by unknown photographers. However, candidates must explain external influences on photographers' work and practice. This section will be more accessible if candidates also include relevant work by significant photographers.

How many photographs must candidates select to explain the impact of social, cultural, historical and/or scientific influences on the photographers' work and practice?

Candidates must respond on a minimum of two photographs, each by a different photographer. There is no maximum number of photographs. However, the work should be proportionate to the marks available.

Do candidates have to include a historical and a contemporary photographer?

No. Candidates should include images by photographers who are most relevant to their topic and approach.

Do candidates have to explain the impact of a social, cultural, historical and scientific influence on each photographer's work and practice?

Candidates must explain the impact of at least one external influence on the work and practice of two photographers, although they may choose to explain the impact of more than one influence. The explanation of the impact of each influence must be related to a selected photograph or photographs.

Do candidates have to give biographical information about photographers?

The task does not ask for biographical information on photographers. However, candidates can include biographical information to support an explanation of the impact of social, cultural, historical and/or scientific influences on a photographer's work and practice. Candidates do not gain marks for general biographical information that they have not related to a selected photograph.

How many photographs should candidates include in the development?

This depends on the candidate's topic and approach. They should include images that demonstrate a body of photographic work showing a sustained line of development. They should demonstrate the development of ideas in response to their topic and show technical and creative exploration and experimentation.

Candidates should ensure that their contact sheet images can be viewed clearly so that markers can judge how well they have demonstrated applied technical and creative photography skills. Candidates should demonstrate that they have maintained a sustained and creative line of development that is relevant to their project topic and selected approach. They should show purposeful exploration and experimentation with image-making techniques. Candidates can also include edits and test prints in the development.

Candidates should not include images that are not relevant to the project. Candidates should ensure that their final images are evident within their development work.

Do candidates have to annotate their photographic work?

Candidates should demonstrate ongoing critical reflection, refinement and creative decision-making. They can show this in annotation, but could also demonstrate it effectively in shoot reviews, a mid-point review, points for action, or in their shortlisted images. Candidates do not need to annotate all their work. Quality is more important than quantity. Candidates should select methods that work best for them and avoid unnecessary repetition.

How should candidates present their final prints?

Final prints should be a minimum size of A5 and a maximum size of A4 (or equivalent area).

Final photographic prints do not need to be mounted. Unmounted photographs are acceptable, and are preferable to poorly mounted prints.

Ideally, candidates should present prints loose rather than stuck into a workbook, folder or sketchbook, unless they must be viewed in a particular order. Candidates can submit loose prints in an envelope or folder for protection. They should not submit prints individually in plastic pockets designed for documents, as this can adversely affect viewing.

The Higher Photography course specification (course support notes appendix) has further information on final print production.

How should candidates present their evaluations?

Candidates can include evaluations at the end of the presentation or submit them as a separate piece of evidence. Evaluations should be clearly labelled. There is a 500-word limit for the evaluation. Candidates will receive a penalty if their word count is more than 10% over the limit.

Candidates should ensure that they respond to both parts of the evaluation task by critically evaluating the:

- ◆ effectiveness of their photographic practice
- ◆ strengths and areas for improvement in their final prints, with reference to the project topic and selected approach

Can projects be submitted on digital storage devices?

No. Projects must be submitted in physical form. Work submitted as digital media does not meet the requirements of the project assessment.

Are there exemplar projects?

Exemplar projects are available on SQA's secure site under the Understanding Standards tab. Projects contain research images with copyright restrictions, as well as images of people, which SQA does not have permission to publish on our open website.

Can candidates request the return of their project work?

Yes, candidates can request the return of their Higher projects. For further information, please visit the [return of materials](#) web page.

You will find general questions and answers about National Qualifications on our website at www.sqa.org.uk/faq.