



Higher
coursework
assessment task



Higher Art and Design, SCQF Level 6

Design portfolio

Assessment task

This document provides information for teachers and lecturers about the coursework component of this course in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed. It **must** be read in conjunction with the course specification.

Valid from session 2026-27 and until further notice.

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Introduction

This document contains instructions for teachers and lecturers, marking instructions and instructions for candidates for the Higher Art and Design design portfolio. You must read it in conjunction with the course specification.

The design portfolio is worth 100 marks. The marks contribute 38.5% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This is one of three course assessment components. The other components are an expressive portfolio and a question paper.

This design portfolio has three sections.

Section	Marks
Section 1: process	40 marks
Section 2: skills	50 marks
Section 3: evaluation	10 marks

Instructions for teachers and lecturers

Setting, conducting and marking the design portfolio

The design portfolio assessment task allows candidates to demonstrate their ability to work independently and is sufficiently open and flexible to allow personalisation and choice.

Before candidates undertake the design portfolio assessment task, teachers and lecturers must ensure that they have the necessary skills and are aware of the requirements of the assessment.

The design portfolio assessment task is:

- ◆ set by centres within Qualifications Scotland guidelines
- ◆ conducted under some supervision and control
- ◆ submitted to Qualifications Scotland for marking

All marking is quality assured by Qualifications Scotland.

Assessment conditions

Time

Candidates develop their design portfolio in response to a design brief. It is produced over an extended period, allowing them to develop and refine their work before it is presented for assessment.

Supervision, control and authentication

Teachers and lecturers must ensure that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work. Candidates do not need to be directly supervised at all times.

Candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting. Teachers and lecturers may give support and guidance if required, and should put in place processes for monitoring progress; for example, regular checkpoints to ensure that the work is the candidate's own.

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources that candidates may access while producing their design portfolio.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates can seek clarification regarding the design portfolio assessment task if they find it unclear. In this case, the clarification should normally be given to the whole class.

If a candidate is working on their portfolio and is faced with more than one possible solution to a problem, then the teacher or lecturer may explore options with them. The teacher or lecturer and candidate can discuss the pros and cons of each option. The candidate can then decide on a solution based on the discussion.

Once a candidate has decided their design portfolio is complete, and has submitted it to their teacher or lecturer, it must not be changed by teachers, lecturers or the candidate.

Candidates must complete their evaluations on the Qualifications Scotland template. Teachers or lecturers must not provide model answers or writing frames to help candidates complete their evaluation.

Evidence to be gathered

Volume

Candidates can present their work in a variety of ways; however, the overall maximum size for the design portfolio must not exceed three A2-sized, single-sided sheets or equivalent. The design portfolio must fold to a size not exceeding A1 for submission to Qualifications Scotland. All work selected for the design portfolio must occupy its own space on the sheets. The evaluation must be attached to the first sheet and must not overlap work or extend beyond the three A2 sheets or equivalent.

There is no word count.

Candidates must use the evaluation template provided by Qualifications Scotland.

Further information on portfolio submission is available on the Higher Art and Design subject page.

Marking instructions

In line with Qualifications Scotland's normal practice, the following general marking instructions for the Higher Art and Design design portfolio are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates' evidence is submitted to Qualifications Scotland for external marking.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b If a specific candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- c When marking the portfolio, you must refer to specific descriptions of competence for different mark ranges and allocate marks for each section of the portfolio using a 'best fit' approach.
- d The band descriptions define the expected level and the standard of evidence expected at the mid-point of the band range. Select the band descriptor that most closely describes the evidence, before calibrating accordingly within the mark range. The examples below illustrate this.

Section 1 of the portfolio includes a three-mark range. When you have decided on the 'best fit' mark range, use your professional judgement to allocate a mark as follows:

- ◆ If the candidate's evidence almost matches the level above, award the highest available mark from the range.
- ◆ If the evidence does not meet the standard described, award the lowest mark from the range.
- ◆ Otherwise award the mark from the middle of the range.

Section 2 of the portfolio includes a six-mark range. When you have decided on the 'best fit' mark range, use your professional judgement to allocate a mark as follows:

- ◆ If the evidence almost matches the level above, award one of the two highest marks in the range.
- ◆ If the evidence does not meet the standard described, award one of the two lowest marks in the range.
- ◆ Otherwise, award one of the two middle marks in the range.

Detailed marking instructions

Section 1

Design portfolio – process (40 marks)

Candidates provide evidence of their ability to:

- ♦ respond to their design brief by producing relevant and focused 2D/3D investigative material and compiling relevant and focused market research
- ♦ use this to demonstrate a single line of development and produce a design solution

Mark range description: producing relevant and focused 2D/3D investigative material and compiling relevant and focused market research appropriate to their design brief and their line of development

0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10
Limited relevant and focused 2D/3D investigative material and market research	Partially relevant and focused 2D/3D investigative material and market research	Relevant and focused 2D/3D investigative material and market research	Highly relevant and focused 2D/3D investigative material and market research

Mark range description: demonstrating a single line of focused development showing visual continuity and the refinement of one idea, and producing a design solution

0-7	8-15	16-23	24-30
Limited effective single line of development demonstrating limited refinement leading to the production of a design solution	Partially effective single line of development demonstrating some refinement leading to the production of a design solution	Effective focused single line of development demonstrating refinement leading to the production of a design solution	Highly effective, thorough and focused single line of development demonstrating a high level of refinement leading to the production of a design solution

Section 2

Design portfolio – skills (50 marks)

Candidates provide evidence throughout the design portfolio of their ability to respond to their design brief by creatively and skilfully:

- ♦ using appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology for aesthetic and functional effect
- ♦ demonstrating their understanding of appropriate design elements

Mark range description: creatively and skilfully using appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology for aesthetic and functional effect in response to their design brief

0-6	7-12	13-18	19-25
Limited effective creative and skilful use of appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology	Partially effective creative and skilful use of appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology	Effective creative and skilful use of appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology	Highly effective creative and skilful use of appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology

Mark range description: creatively and skilfully demonstrating understanding of appropriate design elements (for example, aesthetics, style, layout, function, safety, balance, ergonomics, wearability, target market, impact, visual elements) in response to their design brief requirements

0-6	7-12	13-18	19-25
Limited creative and skilful understanding of appropriate design elements	Partially creative and skilful understanding of appropriate design elements	Creative and skilful understanding of appropriate design elements	Highly creative and skilful understanding of appropriate design elements

Section 3

Design portfolio – evaluation (10 marks)

Candidates provide evidence of their ability to reflect on and critically evaluate their creative process. They should give a justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of their decisions and the aesthetic and functional qualities of the design portfolio with reference to their design brief.

Mark range description: giving a justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of decisions and the aesthetic and functional qualities of their design portfolio with reference to their design brief

0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10
Limited justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of decisions and the aesthetic and functional qualities of their portfolio, with little or no reference to their design brief	Partially justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of decisions and the aesthetic and functional qualities of their portfolio, with some reference to their design brief	Justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of decisions and the aesthetic and functional qualities of their portfolio, with reference to their design brief	Fully justified and detailed critical evaluation of the effectiveness of decisions and the aesthetic and functional qualities of their portfolio, with clear reference to their design brief

Instructions for candidates

This assessment applies to the design portfolio for Higher Art and Design.

This portfolio is worth 100 marks. The marks contribute 38.5% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

It assesses the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ producing relevant and focused investigative material and compiling relevant and focused market research appropriate to your design brief/design area and line of development
- ◆ producing a single line of focused development showing visual continuity with your investigative material and market research
- ◆ demonstrating the refinement of a single idea, leading to a design solution
- ◆ creatively and skilfully using appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology for aesthetic and functional effect in response to your design brief/design area
- ◆ creatively and skilfully demonstrating understanding of appropriate design elements in response to your design brief/design area
- ◆ giving a justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of decisions made and the aesthetic and functional qualities of their portfolio with reference to your design brief/design area

The design portfolio has three sections.

Section	Marks
Section 1: process	40 marks
Section 2: skills	50 marks
Section 3: evaluation	10 marks

Your teacher or lecturer will let you know if there are any specific conditions for doing this assessment.

Design portfolio assessment task

In this assessment, you have to:

- ◆ select a design brief together with your teacher or lecturer
- ◆ produce relevant and focused 2D/3D investigative research and compile relevant and focused market research appropriate to the design brief

Your investigative material may include:

- images that are directly relevant to your design brief
- investigation of appropriate materials, techniques and technology

Your market research should include existing designs that are relevant to your brief.

- ◆ produce a single line of focused development showing visual continuity with your investigative material and market research
- ◆ refine this single line of development and produce a design solution which maintains visual continuity with your development work

Your work should show creative and skilful use of appropriate:

- materials, techniques and/or technology
- design elements and aesthetic and functional effects (for example, aesthetics, style, layout, function, safety, balance, ergonomics, wearability, target market, visual impact, visual elements)

- ◆ reflect on and critically evaluate your design portfolio. Give a justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of:
 - the decisions you made when working through your design portfolio
 - the aesthetic and functional qualities of your design portfolio, with reference to your design brief

You must use the Qualifications Scotland template for your evaluation. There is no word count for the evaluation but you must not exceed the space provided on the template.

Presenting your work

You can present your work in a variety of ways. However, the overall maximum size for your design portfolio must not exceed three A2-sized, single-sided sheets or equivalent. The design portfolio must fold to a size not exceeding A1 for submission to Qualifications Scotland. All work selected for your portfolio must occupy its own space on the sheets. Attach your evaluation to the first sheet. It should not overlap any other work or extend beyond the three A2 sheets or equivalent.

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	We've clarified that candidates should 'compile' their market research rather than 'produce' it. We've added further information about supervision and control on page 2. We've changed references to 'SQA' to 'Qualifications Scotland' throughout. We've made changes to the format and layout of the document to improve accessibility. What you need to do differently ◆ ensure you use the most up-to-date version of this document ◆ be aware that candidates need to compile existing images for their design portfolio market research ◆ read the new information on page 2	September 2026

Note: you are advised to check [Qualifications Scotland's website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

Security and confidentiality

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