



Higher
coursework
assessment task



Higher Art and Design, SCQF Level 6

Expressive 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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Contents

Introduction	1
Instructions for teachers and lecturers	2
Marking instructions	4
Instructions for candidates	8

Introduction

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

The expressive 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 a design portfolio and a question paper.

This expressive 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 expressive portfolio

The expressive 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 expressive portfolio assessment task, teachers and lecturers must ensure that they have the necessary skills and are aware of the requirements of the assessment.

The expressive 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 expressive portfolio in response to an expressive theme or stimulus. 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 expressive portfolio.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates can seek clarification regarding the expressive 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 expressive 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 expressive portfolio must not exceed three A2-sized, single-sided sheets or equivalent. All work selected for the expressive portfolio must occupy its own space on the sheets. The expressive portfolio must fold to a size not exceeding A1 for submission to Qualifications Scotland. 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.

More 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 expressive 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 for the expressive portfolio

Section 1

Expressive portfolio – process (40 marks)

Candidates provide evidence of their ability to:

- ♦ respond to their theme or stimulus by producing relevant and focused investigative research including 2D/3D analytical drawings and/or studies
- ♦ use this to demonstrate a single line of development and produce a final piece

Mark range description: producing relevant and focused investigative research including 2D/3D analytical drawings and/or studies appropriate to their theme or stimulus and their line of development

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

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

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

Section 2

Expressive portfolio – skills (50 marks)

Candidates provide evidence throughout the expressive portfolio of their ability to respond to their theme or stimulus by creatively and skilfully using:

- ♦ appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology
- ♦ appropriate visual elements and expressive effects

Mark range description: creatively and skilfully using appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology for visual effect in response to their theme or stimulus

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 using appropriate visual elements and expressive effects (for example, composition, focal point, perspective, viewpoint, lighting, mood and atmosphere, symbolism) in response to their theme or stimulus

0-6	7-12	13-18	19-25
Limited effective creative and skilful use of visual elements and expressive effects	Partially effective creative and skilful use of visual elements and expressive effects	Effective creative and skilful use of visual elements and expressive effects	Highly effective, creative and skilful use of visual elements and expressive effects

Section 3

Expressive 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 visual qualities of their expressive portfolio with reference to their theme or stimulus.

Mark range description: giving a justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of their decisions and the visual qualities of their expressive portfolio, with reference to their theme or stimulus

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

Instructions for candidates

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

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

It assesses the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ producing relevant and focused analytical drawings, studies and investigative research appropriate to your theme/stimulus and line of development
- ◆ producing a single line of focused development showing visual continuity with your investigative research
- ◆ demonstrating the refinement of a single idea, leading to a final piece
- ◆ creatively and skilfully using appropriate materials, techniques and/or technology in response to your theme/stimulus
- ◆ creatively and skilfully using appropriate visual elements and expressive effects in response to your theme/stimulus
- ◆ giving a justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of decisions made and the visual qualities of their portfolio with reference to your theme/stimulus

The expressive 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.

Expressive portfolio assessment task

In this assessment, you have to:

- ◆ select a theme or stimulus together with your teacher or lecturer
 - ◆ produce relevant and focused investigative research in response to your theme or stimulus. This must include 2D/3D analytical drawings and/or studies. It may also include:
 - images that are directly relevant to your theme or stimulus
 - investigation of appropriate materials, techniques and technology
 - ◆ produce a single line of focused development showing visual continuity with your investigative material
 - ◆ refine this single line of development and produce a final piece which maintains visual continuity with your development work
- Your work should show creative and skilful use of appropriate:
- materials, techniques and/or technology
 - visual elements and expressive effects (for example, composition, focal point, perspective, viewpoint, lighting, mood and atmosphere, symbolism)
- ◆ reflect on and critically evaluate your expressive portfolio. Give a justified critical evaluation of the effectiveness of:
 - the decisions you made when working through your expressive portfolio
 - the visual qualities of your expressive portfolio, with reference to your theme or stimulus

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 expressive portfolio must not exceed three A2-sized, single-sided sheets or equivalent. Your expressive portfolio must fold to a size not exceeding A1. 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	Detailed marking instructions section 1, expressive portfolio – process (page 5): description of process reworded to clarify the requirements for investigative research. Mark range descriptions have been simplified. Instructions for candidates (page 9): expressive portfolio assessment task updated to clarify the requirements for the investigative research.	September 2020
3.0	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 ◆ 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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