



A-LEVEL ART AND DESIGN

7201-7206/ART/U Report on the Examination

7201-7206
June 2022

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2022 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.
AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General

The majority of teachers welcomed the requirement for one component this series, though many expressed that they missed the additional stimulus and focus provided by the Externally Set Assignment.

A number of teachers welcomed the single component as an opportunity for students to work in more depth. The extended period of study also provided opportunities to push ideas further or to produce related finished outcomes.

Moderators expressed their appreciation of the professionalism and dedication of art teachers and the efforts of students, when responding to the specification in successive Covid related lockdowns.

A diversity of approaches to the specification was seen in schools and colleges, across all six titles. Work seen in centres was a vibrant and rewarding celebration of student achievement. Students' enjoyment of art and design and their engagement with sources, ideas and materials, led to successful investigations and outcomes that were personal and on occasion, challenging and revealing.

The required written material was most often in the form of an illustrated essay. Some students presented continuous prose alongside practical work in sketchbooks or on mounted sheets. A variety of other formats were seen, including thoughtfully designed concertina booklets that were attractive to see and handle. A textiles student produced the written material on corset shaped sheets that were presented in a made-up box. Successful examples of the written material provided a rationale for the practical work, additional evidence of analytical and critical understanding, and insight into students' thinking.

Well illustrated essays were helpful in aiding understanding of students' intentions. However, this year there were more examples in which responses to contextual sources were intuitive rather than informed, and more descriptive than analytical. In these examples, explanations of how contextual sources helped students to develop their own work were either confined to a brief final paragraph, or were absent. There was an increase in written material that described what had been done and which provided no evidence of analytical and critical understanding.

The majority of students were able to demonstrate their awareness and understanding of the four Assessment Objectives in both the practical and written work. However, in a small number of centres, students followed the AOs in numerical order. The AOs overlap and are not intended to be a methodology.

In a number of centres, students included additional work from early in the course that had no connection with the Personal Investigation. This sometimes happened when students' work was set up for an end of year exhibition. Where sketchbooks included unrelated earlier work, it was most helpful when the start of the investigation was identified clearly. This year, there was an increase in the submission of additional work.

AO1

In the majority of schools and colleges, teachers presented students with a wide choice of starting points that provided them with opportunities to respond to the specification. Starting points from

previous years' question papers were also used or adapted. Some students devised their own starting points which did not always provide sufficient scope for the development of ideas.

Students resourced their responses from fieldwork, manufactured and natural objects and specimens, and the human figure. Close observation was seen in successful work. Some students produced atmospheric responses to particular places or environments in which the character of a place, light, weather, time of day, or human activity, were important. The cultural identity, decay or regeneration of a particular town or city provided a starting point for some of the work seen. Students living in, or with access to coastal locations, were adept at finding a variety of stimulating source material that included found objects, environments, and processes such as erosion, weathering and pollution.

Some students responded to Covid-19 related issues which included isolation, anxiety, mental health, family, and relationships. Time spent at home led some students to self-reflection which prompted both searching and more predictable responses. A number of students produced personal responses to issues that included racism, conflict, poverty, pollution and climate change. Sensitivity and empathy were seen in investigations based on mental well-being, care for the elderly, ageing and dementia, and were frequently inspired by personal experience. Responses to issues were often powerful, personal and, in some examples, poignant expressions of students' concerns. Some ideas were developed around issues associated with equality, diversity and inclusion.

Investigation of carefully selected and appropriate contextual sources informed students' understanding of formal elements, visual language, composition, materials and techniques. Sources that were relevant to students' intentions helped successful students to consider different approaches to their starting points, informed the investigation and development of ideas, helped them to develop skills when managing materials and techniques, and enabled them to develop their own personal language as work progressed. Where students understood the value and purpose of referring to contextual sources at different points in their work, it had a meaningful impact.

Teacher guidance was most often pivotal in the selection of sources that were appropriate to a student's intentions. Some students investigated examples that had little or no connection with their starting point or initial ideas. Some of the sources were of doubtful quality, produced by artists about whom there was little or no information from which to gain understanding of the work. It might be helpful and productive if artists identified on Instagram or Pinterest were followed up by searching for their websites or links to galleries where there are likely to be further examples and information about the work. This year, more references were made to work produced by black artists and photographers including, Bisa Butler, Kehinde Wiley, Jamel Shabazz, and Tschabalala Self.

Many students began their investigations by exploring and responding to contextual sources. Others began their work with initial studies from source material and identified relevant contextual material at different points in the development of ideas. Whilst some students selected examples that demonstrated different approaches to the chosen starting point, others appeared to make a random selection of sources. There were examples of programmed sketchbooks in which students produced double page spreads of reproductions, occasionally intricate copies of work by other artists and biographical notes culled from the Internet. Extreme examples included as many as eighteen *artist pages* followed by very little evidence of producing their own work. Students often demonstrated more skill and control when copying work by others than they did in their own work

and there was little evidence of learning. Marks are not credited for the number of contextual sources referred to. Appropriateness and evidence of understanding and learning are important.

Although many students learn from making copies of contextual sources, it is a mistaken belief that this is a requirement, necessary to provide evidence of *making a response*. Students should develop their understanding of art and design from investigating work produced by other artists, photographers or designers. They should demonstrate their response by providing evidence of learning and understanding in the ways that the sources inform their own work.

Moodboards were most often indiscriminate collections of images that showed little evidence of purpose or selection. Where it is appropriate to include a moodboard, teachers might direct students to learn from examples produced by designers, in which a few carefully chosen images are juxtaposed for a particular purpose.

There were many successful examples of sketchbooks, workbooks, mounted sheets of studies, which provided clear evidence of focused and purposeful investigation and development. Outstanding work was seen. It is commendable that in some of the less successful submissions, students worked diligently to address all four AOs.

Sketchbook pages were often prepared with purpose other than decoration by laying grounds to work on. Students used a variety of materials that included fruit juice, watercolour, acrylic, household emulsion, shoe polish, linseed oil, coloured inks and dyes, PVA, shellac, wax and coffee. In contrast, unnecessary title pages decorated with elaborate hand-lettering and pages painted-over for no purpose, detracted from the work and occasionally overwhelmed it.

Evidence of analytical and critical understanding was seen in students' responses to contextual and other sources, in their preferences, choices and decisions as work progressed, and in meaningful connections between images by setting one image against another. Successful written material provided additional evidence in the informed analysis of contextual sources, in selecting and managing information and images, in making comparisons and connections, and in providing a rationale for the practical work. It is important that logs, journals and reports, also provide evidence of analytical and critical understanding.

Successful examples of photography included in-depth photoshoots in which students explored composition, lighting and camera settings. These were supported by evidence of the selection of images and post-shoot analysis and reviewing. Advanced camera skills were seen in a number of centres. Some examples revealed knowledge and understanding of dark-room processes and techniques.

Moderators reported that, this year and particularly in fine art, there was more evidence of risk-taking and speculation when developing ideas and realising intentions.

Digital techniques and software programs were used skilfully and effectively to edit and manipulate images in photography and to develop and refine ideas and produce outcomes in graphic communication. A variety of software packages, applications, and secure web-based platforms were used to develop ideas and to present finished outcomes. In both fine art and textiles design, digital media were used to record observations, to combine images and to explore pattern. In three-dimensional design, students used drawing packages to develop ideas in architectural design, product design and furniture design. Successful examples of animation and moving images were seen in both photography and graphics.

Successful electronic sketchbooks were thoughtfully organised in formats that were accessible and easy to navigate. There was evidence of improvement in their management and presentation. Selection is an important consideration. One example of an otherwise very successful sketchbook comprised 700 pages. Secure web-based applications provided some students with opportunities that otherwise were not easily available.

Photographs of models wearing fashion items, visualisations of architectural designs and public sculpture set in the environment and, advertising, environmental graphics and signage visualised in public spaces, provided evidence of contextual understanding and brought alive students' work.

AO2

The majority of students demonstrated their abilities to select resources and to purposefully explore materials, techniques and processes that were appropriate to their intentions. Developing and honing skills enabled students to articulate and refine their ideas. In the majority of centres, exploring appropriate materials and techniques was successfully integrated into the process of developing and refining ideas. Under the guise of experimentation, some students explored an unnecessarily wide range of materials with little regard to their intentions.

Traditional media were seen alongside installations that included found objects and materials, and both still and motion images. Successful installations included evidence of a mature understanding of relevant contextual sources. There was a slight increase in the number of examples of film/video and motion graphics. On occasion, short films were accompanied by sound effects that contributed to the atmospheric images. In one centre, photography students some of whom also studied graphics, used a web based application to create short animated sequences and motion graphics to introduce and format their electronic sketchbooks.

Reviewing work and progress enabled students to advance their work and refine ideas. Students' abilities to review their work were evident in their choice of materials and techniques and in the ways that possibilities were explored.

In successful work, it was clear that students understood how to refine the management and handling of materials and techniques, and improve compositions, designs and layouts. Students refined their ideas in sustained studies, working drawings, diagrams, thumbnail sketches of compositions and layouts, fashion drawings, design roughs and scamps, maquettes and models. Students also made skilful use of electronic media to manipulate and refine ideas, layouts and compositions.

Successful examples of fine art provided evidence of reviewing and refining ideas in exploring and refining the handling of appropriate materials and techniques, and in the progression of pushing and manipulating abstract and figurative compositions to a logical and cohesive outcome. Installations included drawing and photography that provided evidence of planning and refining ideas. Confident and accomplished examples of printmaking were seen, including drypoint, screenprints and collagraphs. There were some outstanding relief prints but many examples were crude in design and execution, occasionally at odds with other examples of a student's work.

In illustration, design for print and publishing, branding design and packaging design, students explored both traditional and electronic media to refine their ideas, exploring alternatives and making adjustments to scale, space, colour combinations and layout. Decisions about appropriate typefaces for different purposes and contexts, and the cohesion of the design, were important.

Although students' understanding of type has steadily improved, even when producing otherwise successful work, some students are unaware of the importance of margins.

Textiles students produced samplers exploring a wide range of materials and techniques and used both traditional and electronic media to produce accomplished fashion drawings which provided evidence of emerging possibilities and the refining of ideas. Fine-tuning and confident decision making was seen in drawings and samplers which successfully documented the progress of refining the chosen idea.

In three-dimensional design, students explored materials, processes and construction methods to produce maquettes and models. Ideas were refined using traditional drawing and illustration media and techniques, CAD and other drawing and three-dimensional modelling software, to make adjustments and improvements to their chosen idea. Consideration of aesthetic and functional elements was important in successful work.

In photography, evidence of reviewing and refining ideas was seen in choices and decisions in contact sheets, across several photoshoots, and in electronic images and hard prints at important points in the progress of the work. Image manipulation, adjustments and enhancements both electronically and in the darkroom, were well documented in successful work.

A03

A broad range of approaches, materials and techniques were used to record ideas, observations and insights, and well developed observational and recording skills were seen in successful work. There were many examples of accomplished drawing for a variety of intentions and for different purposes. Fine, sensitive, surgically observed studies from both natural and manufactured objects were seen alongside large-scale, vigorous and expressive responses to objects, both natural and built environments, and the human figure.

Highly attuned recording and observational skills were seen in initial responses to source material and in sustained analytical studies that revealed shape, form and structure. Close scrutiny of plant-forms, vegetables, cell structures, shells, fossils, bones and fish skeletons, demonstrated purposeful and meaningful recording that provided a starting point for the development of ideas in some of the work seen.

A substantial investigation that included accomplished drawings, paintings and drypoint prints of birds, feathers and flight, led to an engaging large-scale painting and a triptych in response to a dead parrot.

Delicate pencil and biro drawings and prints, and large expressive charcoal drawings, led to a design for a bodice based on the distinctive petals found in artichokes.

Sketches, drawings and photography produced on location, provided source material that led to successful paintings, printmaking, textiles and illustration. Inspired by the glider paintings by Peter Lanyon and landscapes by Richard Diebenkorn, a student used drone photography and studies of cloud formations to produce a personal response that included a successful series of etchings and a confident large painting.

The fluent line drawings of buildings produced by Ruth Allen and fashion designs by Junya Watanabe, inspired a student who used applique and lycra to produce a successful fashion outcome based on pyramidal structures.

Photography was used as a recording tool by many students, either to provide source material in textiles, painting, sculpture and printmaking, or to document the process of developing and refining ideas in installations. Diagrams were used to plan photoshoots and studio lighting. They were also a valid additional method of planning and recording in three-dimensional design.

Successful students demonstrated their appreciation and understanding of scale, whether planning a large painting, sculpture or construction, or designing within the limited space of a stamp or a playing card. It was important in some fine art submissions to produce drawings on a larger scale, especially when working towards a large scale outcome.

When students were clear in their intentions, their ability to reflect critically on their work and progress was evident in the choices and decisions as work progressed. Changes in direction, choices in favour of one thing over another and rejecting ideas or solutions, were evident in the practical work in the way that one image led to another.

The majority of students included annotation that supported evidence of reflection seen in the practical work. When successful, this additional evidence of recording provided helpful insight into students' thinking and a rationale for their choices and decisions. In some examples, unnecessarily copious annotation outweighed the practical work.

In the required written material, successful students demonstrated their understanding of specialist language and terminology when recording ideas and observations about their own work and work by others, and when explaining connections between contextual sources and their own work. It is a specification requirement that students **must** document in a bibliography or a list, the sources they used in production of the written material.

AO4

Moderators reported that outcomes were less successful than in a normal year and that a higher than usual proportion of work lacked cohesion. However, the extended period running to the end of the course revealed a maturity and confidence in many submissions that was comparable to the Externally Set Assignment in which students often produce their most successful work. Successful students demonstrated their abilities to develop their own personal language when developing and refining ideas which led to realisations in a finished outcome or related outcomes.

Accomplished paintings, printmaking and sculpture were seen. Successful oil and acrylic paintings provided evidence of high levels of understanding of formal elements and composition in both abstract and representational work. Inspired by the work of Andy Goldsworthy, a student produced a series of related works that included photography, site specific sculpture and a short film.

Highly developed skills in managing and handling materials enabled students to produce outcomes that were assured and controlled or expressive, gestural responses. There were possibly more successful examples of printmaking seen this year. Accomplished and sensitively handled drypoint etchings based on buildings in Oxford, were seen alongside successful screenprints.

Installation took a variety of forms and were the result of in-depth investigations and a mature understanding of appropriate contextual sources. Successful examples included evidence of understanding and reflection when developing ideas and realising intentions. The landscape and work by Gabby O'Connor and Miguel Rothschild provided inspiration for a series of long, flowing seascapes on paper and fabric that twisted and moved through space and across panels and the ceiling.

Memories of a grandparent inspired one student to create a carefully considered corner of a room that included memorabilia associated with him. The installation included visual and other material related to his experiences as a coal-miner and to the demise of coal-mining. Close attention to detail, the handling of evocative still and moving images and the depth of enquiry, contributed to a successful realisation.

Successful examples of illustration revealed students' drawing abilities in responses that used both traditional and digital media. Well observed scenes in Manchester provided material for ideas that were realised in a boxed set of illustrated postcards and a poster design. Scenes from different times of day, in different seasons and from different eye levels, included a carefully posed figure stylishly dressed in seasonal fashion and handled in a manner that was informed by Art Deco travel posters.

In depth investigations led to examples of branding and rebranding which showed originality, evidence of thinking and understanding, which enabled successful students to manage formal design elements into coherent and cohesive designs. The importance of awareness and understanding of design purpose, context, and communication, was evident in successful work. A suite of designs to identify and promote a tram system resulted in a comprehensive package of advertising, a customer guide, a network map, livery design and a short promotional film.

Entirely typographic minimalist packaging designs for cosmetics, confectionery and promotional *give-aways* were unusual realisations in which the character of type, spacing and layout, shape and form, were carefully considered in both monochrome and colourful outcomes. In the majority of successful outcomes the relationships between type and image, brand identity and consumer information, were managed with awareness, understanding and skill. Evidence of learning from contextual sources was clear.

Machine and hand stitch were used to produce successful examples of textiles illustration and embroidery. Garments, fashion and accessories, wall-hangings, printed textiles and installations used a variety of traditional and found materials. Relief printing, screen printing and digital printing were seen in fashion outcomes and in wallpaper, furnishings and interior design.

In one centre, textiles students produced interesting and successful designs that included a rich variety of fashionwear. Outcomes were extended by designing and producing accessories that included purses and clutch bags decorated with designs in embroidery, applique and stitch. Responses included garments, millinery, scarves and bags, that resulted in cohesive design packages.

Issues that directly affected students' wellbeing or reflected personal experiences resulted in meaningful outcomes. A response that focused on a student's struggle with spinal issues produced a personal body of work informed by Victorian corsetry, the V&A corset collection, and work produced by Alexander McQueen.

Successful examples of three-dimensional design included jewellery, ceramics, furniture, architectural design and product design provided evidence of students' understanding of context, function and aesthetics. Where students gained understanding of formal design elements, line, shape, form, structure, space, from their course and from investigations of appropriate contextual sources, they were able to apply that knowledge when developing their ideas. In architectural design and product design particularly, it was often evident that students had an understanding of materials, processes and construction methods but less understanding of aesthetics. When students were able to identify design elements and understand the rationale in examples of architecture or product designs, they were more likely to produce successful work.

Environmental issues were considered in some of the work seen. Inspired by examples of eco-friendly dwellings, one student produced an in-depth investigation that led to the coherent development of ideas. Realisation of a low-level dwelling composed of three joined circular constructions embedded in the landscape, was in the form of a graphic visualisation and a skilfully produced architectural model. Some examples were speculative and concept driven, as seen in a design for a bridge over a local waterway. A substantial investigation of animal and human vertebrae included sensitive and articulate drawings in a variety of media. The design proposal included a digital presentation, a visual of the bridge in situ, and a carefully crafted model.

In photography, traditional, digital and electronic media were used to realise intentions in a single image or a series of related images. Projection was used in some examples of installation, most often accompanied by finished digital prints. A high proportion of the work seen was entirely digital. Although the majority of students used digital cameras and produced electronic workbooks, many examples included prints that were of high quality and large scale. Careful selection and connections between images were evident in successful work. In some of the work seen, students demonstrated camera skills and their understanding of manual settings by recording ISO, aperture and speed, at least in some passages of the work. Understanding of ambient lighting, depth of field and composition, made an important contribution to successful work. Studio lighting and photoshoots were carefully considered and there was evidence of thoughtful planning in annotated diagrams, sketches and workflow schedules.

Images produced from well chosen locations and, those with human interest were often powerful, dramatic and atmospheric. Very personal ideas were seen in responses to world issues and personal experiences. Interesting work was produced in response to *Surveillance* and *Time*, and some documentary photography communicated a thoughtful and reflective narrative.

Successful installations included still images, a variety of projection techniques, constructions, and the creation of immersive environments. Some installations, assemblages and embellished images, were less successful than the photography the realisation was based on. On occasion there was a tendency for teachers to credit marks leniently in all four AOs for the presence of an idea, when evidence of understanding and skills in managing photography and image-making did not support the proposed marks.

Interesting and engaging examples of motion images were seen in film/video. A substantial investigation into relationships and disassociation led to a series of accomplished prints and a looped video of a telephone conversation shot in monochrome with a static camera, deliberately degraded visually and without a soundtrack. The viewer, as an intruder to the private, silent conversation, was drawn in to read the subtle changes of facial expression and lip-read the one-sided conversation.

A documentary film/video about time, explored the character of a neighbourhood street occupied by a variety of shops, cafes, restaurants and other businesses. Shoppers, retailers and business owners were invited to participate and in one sentence to say how long they had been in the street and what they thought of it. Filmed to represent an eighteen hour period, skilfully framed shots with a stationary camera were combined with zoom and panning to make a fluent and thoughtfully edited production that was visually engaging across the time from early morning to late at night.

Moderators reported a continued improvement in the organisation and presentation of electronic files. It is important that files are in a logical order and easy to follow. Successful realisations were supported by evidence of several photoshoots and discrimination when selecting images. Developing and refining by editing, cropping, image manipulation, altering exposure, and consideration given to composition, were important in successful examples. High standards of presentation were seen in the majority of centres. Annotation was often informative, helpful, and provided additional evidence of reflection. Some students produced annotation that was illegible.

Administration, marking and moderation

Marks from the majority of centres were received by 31 May. Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) and Centre Declaration Sheets (CDSs) were completed in advance of the moderation visit. A small number of CRFs were not signed by teachers or students, and some did not match the correct samples. There were some arithmetical errors and transcriptional errors between CRFs and mark submission. It is important to check that marks are entered accurately. Errors identified at moderation can result in an amended sample which is both inconvenient and time-consuming.

Moderators commented on teachers' overwhelmingly positive approach to moderation and were grateful for the warm reception they received in the majority of centres. Arrangements for viewing the sample were generally carefully organised which eased the moderation process. In many centres, displays were outstanding. The majority of centres arranged the sample in rank order or provided a map. Where space was limited, teachers were inventive in making best use of what was available. In centres where work was laid out on tables, the clear separation between sets of work, space to view samples and a suitable work surface were helpful.

Labelling was usually very clear but there were exceptions where students' ownership of sketchbooks, finished work, and work displayed on walls or panels, was not easily identifiable.

The majority of moderators reported that they were provided with a quiet, private, well-lit space to work in. Teachers are reminded that moderation is a confidential process and moderators should not be required to work in public thoroughfares. Where work was displayed in corridors, centres created no access zones for students. This was appreciated by moderators.

In the majority of centres, marking was accurate or broadly in line with the AQA standard. Discrepancies usually occurred when teachers credited high marks to their most able students when evidence matched criteria in a lower mark band. In some centres, marks credited in the 21-24 mark band were lenient but in the appropriate band. It is important to note that where evidence in the sample does not support the higher marks proposed by the centre and the sample is out of tolerance, regression can impact other marks. Moderators reported leniency in the application of the assessment criteria, particularly but not exclusively in the 9-12 mark band. In the majority of centres, marks were either broadly in line or close to the AQA standard.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.