



---

GCSE

# ART AND DESIGN

8201-8206 Non-exam assessment-portfolio  
Report on the Examination

---

8201-8206  
June 2023

---

Version: 1.0

---

---

---

Further copies of this Report are available from [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2023 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

Whilst this is the second year of awarding for the 8200 specification since 2019, it is the first time since that point that the award has included both components. In addition, although we are moving back towards 'normality' we cannot begin without acknowledging once more the continued efforts made, and massive challenges faced by teachers and students. Yet again, working under many different and difficult circumstances schools have managed to engage their students and enabled them to often produce excellent Art and Design work in response to the specification requirements and across the range of Art and Design titles.

The inclusion of component 2 within the award has been welcomed by many but, from reports, has clearly challenged many students in the current cohort. Many moderators reported conversations with teachers who expressed concerns about the way that students have found difficulties with the pace, timing and demand of responding to the ESA. This was added to by the pressures on resources and time experienced within the rest of the school curriculum. The impact of the pandemic is still being felt. Teachers referred to a lack of student engagement and motivation and an increase in student absence and mental health issues. Often relied upon by teachers to enable significant one-to-one support, attendance at extra-curricular classes was often reduced, and there was clearly an impact related to participation in the ten hour period of formal supervision for component 2.

However, despite all of those challenges all moderators reported many instances of excellent submission across all titles in every part of the country and in overseas centres.

There were fewer errors by centres submitting marks via e-Subs this year. Any changes needed due to incorrect submission often resulted in samples for moderation being changed during the centre visit, but they did on occasions delay the process of moderation quite significantly. Candidate Record Forms were generally completed correctly and Centre Declaration sheets were regularly available for the moderator receive a copy. Where there were mistakes with the CRF, incorrect addition was often the culprit. Centres reportedly appreciated the addition to the CRF in relation to confirming the mark for AO3 against the requirement for evidence of drawing and annotation.

As is so often the case a two-year course during Years 10 and 11 was mostly seen by moderators although in some schools there was still evidence of a three-year course starting in Year 9. Very few examples of two-year courses concluding in Year 10 were reported but where this was the case evidence across the objectives often lacked the maturity or levels of understanding and skill seen in the submissions of Year 11 students.

The basic requirement of the specification for component 1, whatever the title, is that student must submit evidence of one sustained project plus evidence of further studies carried out on the course. Some submissions did not adhere to this and schools should be aware that this runs the risk of students being penalised. This point should be noted by schools who are new to the specification. It is worth reminding centres that a Subject Advisor is available to support each centre and clarify any issues of understanding related to the Specification. Your Subject Advisor's email contact details are available from AQA.

Some centres encouraged students to submit two or three projects, each one fulfilling the requirement of a 'sustained' project. This varied with the nature of the Title chosen. There is no advantage or disadvantage to following any particular model of delivery. With most titles' schools are delivering no more than two sustained projects, with many structuring portfolios that consist of

---

one sustained project and a further selection of work or a 'mini' project. Teachers are clearly recognising that the award is based on quality of submission and not quantity of work produced. Submissions seen have been, in most cases, well-resourced.

Within Portfolio courses there was growing evidence of 'foundation' courses designed to introduce basic principles and practice skills, processes and techniques using a variety of media. These were sometimes followed by more extensive projects based on the study of sources, leading to explorations with a greater degree of personal development and response. Portfolios often concluded with a body of work allowing students to experience timed conditions in the form of a 'mock exam'. The starting points for this type of project were often taken from past ESA papers. Where Portfolio courses appeared overly managed or particularly prescriptive and restricted in freedoms of choice, many comments indicated that students were not as well prepared for the independence of thought and decision making needed for the choice of starting point in Component 2. Many moderators reported a difference in performance between courses that consisted of small task, repetition in content and learning, and component 1 courses where students were encouraged to work towards independence and genuine discovery across the assessment objectives.

In addition, where students had been encouraged to develop an understanding of sources and knew how to use that understanding in developing their own ideas, this prepared them well for the demands of Component 2. Such students often had greater confidence to work independently, to take ownership of ideas and take creative but calculated risks. Moderators also reported increased evidence of students tackling a range of contemporary social and topical issues. In addition to an ever increasing range of contemporary sources evident, the use of phone apps and pads were also commonly reported in both components.

Reports from all moderators were positive in relation to the reaction of students to the range of Externally Set Assignment starting points for each Title. The phrase 'something for everyone' was commonplace and there were only a very small number of reported instances of students not being allowed full access to the starting points. It must be noted that students have an entitlement to access any of the starting points within an ESA paper. Although teachers may be involved in discussing the choice of topic any diversion from this would be considered as malpractice.

Many centres organised the ten hour period over two or even three days. In addition, many centres commented on the pressures of time both to deliver students' learning and for producing the range of evidence for Component 2. Pressures related to the reduction of time available in order to comply with the JCQ requirement to issue marks for both components were often referred to. There were also many reports of a reduction in teaching time in the Spring term due to students being withdrawn for 'catch up' and for revision in other subjects in addition to the pressure for many students, and teachers, who had no prior experience of preparing for the formally supervised period of component 2. In connection with this, it is worth pointing out that there must be an indication made between the evidence produced during the informally supervised period of preparation and that produced during formally supervised period of ten hours.

The requirement for written annotation and evidence of drawing is an Ofqual demand of the specification and is a requirement in both components. This requirement produced a small number of problems this year. Apart from some teachers not applying the requirement, some schools deducted marks where this was not necessary. The support documents available on the AQA website, 'Guide to written annotation' and 'Guide to drawing' should help to clarify any uncertainty, alongside advice from the Subject Advisor.

---

Submissions for both components were presented in a rich variety of ways, both digital and paper based and two and/or three-dimensional, often combining different forms. In relation to some titles there was an increase in evidence presented via the centre's website platform. Whatever the chosen format, many Art and Design students continue to impress with their ability to develop uniquely personal creative responses and with their mature, articulate expression.

The revised format of Teacher Standardisation meetings met with approval from most attendees. This was supported by comments from moderators. There have been many documents included in the Delegate booklet and on line that are intended to support assessment and understanding on the part of both students and teachers.

There were many instances reported where centres' assessment was very accurate. The correlation between attendance at Teacher Standardisation meetings and this accuracy was clear. Where assessment was not in line with AQA standards it was nearly always too lenient. Comments from moderators in relation to generous assessment mostly indicated over marking in the higher mark bands and in particular the band indicated by 'exceptional ability'. There were instances of lenient assessment across all titles. One area that still causes issues is the assessment of the highest band of marking. The mark band defined by 'exceptional ability' is, by definition, exceptional. In many cases where marking did not meet the standards it appeared that the best students' submissions were automatically awarded marks in the highest mark band. We would encourage schools to be very careful when awarding in this mark band and to use the wealth of support material about making assessment judgements that is available in both written advice and exemplars. Making misjudgements in this band can have major implications on the marks of students elsewhere in the cohort.

The integration and links between qualities denoted by each assessment objective produced predictable results. If a student understood the purpose of one assessment objective they often had greater success with others. Students who understood how to use information gathered from a source were able to develop relevant intentions and purposeful ideas. The process of refinement then became a process of gradual personal ownership and purposeful engagement. The result of this level of involvement was a clear set of intentions and coherent personal response throughout the creative journey.

AO1, at its best, exhibited purposeful initial investigations and growing personal responses. When not at its best, sources were referenced with little indication as to how they might be of use. When quantity ruled over quality, moderators reported that submissions referenced many sources but demonstrated few or no links to the students' own development of ideas.

Similarly, the highest attaining responses in relation to AO2 and AO3 evidenced genuine enquiry and investigation together with evidence of a process which was well considered in thought, reflection and refinement. Ideas were considered, refined, and sometimes rejected in light of reasoned judgment. This was in contrast to students who involved themselves in a series of repeated tasks, albeit with a different material, as an end in itself, to the detriment of a notion of purposeful investigation or development.

For some teachers, AO4 continues to be seen as the objective relating to a final outcome. Although any final outcome is always a part of the student's realisation of intentions, this, and the students' personal response, can occur at any point throughout the creative journey.

The range and combinations of materials used by students continues to be exciting, innovative and for ever expanding. The traditional boundaries between titles are being eroded. Throughout both

components and in all titles moderator reports witnessed film making, animation, installations and digital projections. recycled materials, Materials and processes that have traditionally been seen in Design and Technology courses were used in the Three-dimensional design title and there were reports of students winning National Competitions by producing industry standard design work in Graphic Communication and photography. Amongst their many comments, moderators reported a wealth of quality in production and a huge range of experimentation in a wide variety and combination of media. Despite the challenges very many students produced impressive, exciting, creative and personal responses in both components.

### **8201C Art, craft and design: Component 1 2023 Report.**

Component 1 submissions seen in Art, craft and design 2023 continue to be very varied in approach. The most successful are exciting, often purposefully expressive, personal in content, using inventive working process and constructed in a variety of scale and media.

Although there is still a noticeable uncertainty brought about by the pandemic it was clear and refreshing to see most schools were relishing a confident return to full GCSE art and design provision. The past has seen a caution in the way that Art, craft and design courses were structured in terms of content, material use and ambition. As a result, sometimes practice in Art, craft and design didn't reflect the excitement and opportunity the title offers. It was therefore very pleasing to recognise that most centres had developed Art, craft and design courses that fully met the requirements of the title. Submissions demonstrated practice in two or more areas of study and that evidence seen this year illustrated the creative essence of the title. Moderators reported that in the majority of courses seen students had taken an 'art' based approach and this was commonly led by painting and drawing, supported by one or two areas of study, often in either print and/or photography. Students submissions in Art, craft and design can, of course, be 'art' based, 'craft' based or 'design' based. 'Craft', as an optional approach to the title, has rarely been seen and on the occasions where it has been seen, it has been through the inclusion of a 'design' brief approach. It has not been unusual or surprising to see Art, craft and design submissions that are similar to Fine art submissions. The main differences between the two titles is that Art, craft and design offers the opportunity to combine practice across any of the other suite of titles and of course this range of opportunities is apparent in the Externally Set Assignment papers.

Some of the most exciting work seen had been managed in mixed media, where materials and working processes had been combined in very different ways, together with submissions where both two dimensional practice had been combined with three dimensional construction and sculpture. In one school an ESA response to 'Land Sea and Sky' in the form of a very large installation work had been constructed. The narrative behind the work was documented in detail and supported by a video recording air blown movement, light projections and sound. Other examples of the most interesting practice seen included garments made from recycled materials, installation works where discarded furniture had been recycled into reconstructed assemblages. There was an abundance of digital artwork seen in Component 1 submissions managed mainly through Photoshop but also through alternative free online software packages such as 'Blender' for 3D modelling and animation. In work seen students had independently created sophisticated animations and graphical imagery. It was clear that students had ownership of their work. Such examples combined strength of idea alongside the knowledge and confidence to manage materials. In instances where selection and control were lacking the strength of ideas was lost. The Art, craft and design title does produce ideas and issues based responses and where that has been managed well it has been seen to grow from careful selection of sources. Where sources have been carefully selected the creative journey has often been personalised from the outset.

Sources become more than just a reference to artist practitioners and include broader reference to contemporary issues, music and literature. It was very pleasing to see the recognition Art, craft and design courses had awarded to cultural diversity reflecting the student population and regional community of different areas. There was a noticeable sense of inclusion and representation recognised in student work samples. In some of the best practice seen submissions have illustrated a well thought out, methodical approach combined with purposeful self-expression where the essential links between sources, references and working processes are intentional and purposeful in developing personal knowledge and understanding.

Moderators reported that gallery visits, workshops and off-site visits continue to be less common than seen in practice seen pre pandemic and yet where such activities have been maintained or reintroduced the benefits to learning and personal response have been clearly instrumental in positive award through an inspirational impact on the development and creative direction of student submissions at the highest levels.

## **8201X Art, craft and design: Component 2**

Teachers reported to moderators that the Art, craft and design paper provided an accessible platform for imaginative and personal responses for students of all abilities and that the starting points gave students of all abilities a means to respond with confidence. All starting points were responded to with many student submissions seen showing a notable preference for 'Objects', 'Land, Sea and Sky', 'Layers' and 'Our World'. Students of all abilities made reference to the named artists on the paper together with many other relevant practitioners both historical and contemporary. In the best practice seen students had explored the starting points in a highly individual manner and investigated relevant sources with great purpose leading to some very confident and compelling personal responses.

### **Starting point 1: Objects**

This popular and accessible starting point engaged student's thoughts, ideas and observations across all of the ability ranges. Many submissions seen reflected a literal understanding of the theme which was inspired by named artists Paul Cezanne and Chema Madoz. Students also referenced Giorgio Morandi and, in some examples, seen, Dutch vanitas still life painting. Submissions seen illustrated how students were able to discover their own relevant sources quite easily. Students chose their own sources for the objects such as perfume bottles and flowers. Artists such as Victoria Dumesh and Patti Molca were frequently referenced. Students used photography to develop compositional ideas initially and then move towards more traditional methods of working. In many submissions seen students had looked at arrangements of found objects as referenced in the work of named artist Joseph Cornell and also in the work of Lisa Milroy leading to some exciting mixed media assemblages and collages. Students also explored photographic working process as a means of recording ideas and realising intentions.

### **Starting point 2: Mark making**

This starting point appealed to students working in print and ceramics. A little less popular than other starting points, 'Mark making' was frequently researched through engraved ancient ceramic vessels, the line drawings of named artist Henry Moore and through the landscape drawings of Vincent Van Gogh. These in turn led to some exciting pencil and pen studies and mono prints based on landscapes sourced from original photographic recordings and collected landscape

photographs. There were outstanding responses. For example, a student had used the work of Jonathan Yeo and Helen Terry (painting on fabric and textured surfaces) to produce a colourful mixed surface, mixed media portrait of her father. The developmental sketchbook work showed thorough investigation, analysis and experimentation. Moderators also reported some digital mark making imagery inspired by the work of named artist Idris Khan and managed through Photoshop tools combined with scanned pen and pencil doodles. In addition, submissions had been made using pen, ink and painted compositions inspired by Aboriginal art and the decorative artwork of Yayoi Kusama.

### **Starting point 3: Layers**

Layers was one of the most popular starting points on the paper. This starting point generated a very broad and diverse range of working processes crossing many different areas of study. Submissions seen included digital presentation, mixed media, printmaking, photography and painting. Some of the most engaging submissions were visual statements linked to 'issues' based ideas relating to the layers of personal characteristics, and the anxieties felt by young persons. Such exciting and highly individual submissions frequently referenced named artist Lia Cook and considered the idea of what was concealed inside a person. Other digital approaches seen made use of the layering process of Photoshop as a way of working in response to the starting point. Layering as a process, in response to the starting point, was also seen in printing where images had been overlaid to create abstract compositions. Collage and assemblage techniques were also frequently represented. Submissions also contained assembled photographs, objects and handmade studies inspired by Joseph Cornell and Robert Rauschenberg.

### **Starting point 4: Land, sea and sky**

Together with 'Our World' this starting point has been the most popular. The starting point was clearly accessible and comfortable to many students. Moderators often reported the use of original and secondary sourced photographs to generate compositional investigations into landscape. Photography and painting were the main areas of study in such submissions and there were many landscape painting responses seen. Named artists John Constable and Thomas Joshua Cooper were frequently referenced alongside JMW Turner and both Impressionist and Fauve artists. There were also some reflective and highly personal lines of research, enquiry and interpretation recorded from overseas students who used contemporary found images of their original homeland as sources. Working processes seen were mainly two dimensional as painting, photographic or illustrative in manner although there were also large scale installation works related to issues of global warning.

### **Starting point 5: Our world**

The most popular starting point on the paper. The 'open' interpretation of this starting point led to many interesting, narrative based responses in both two and three dimensional formats. This starting point appealed to so many students because it invited in opportunity to make visual comment on how young people see the world they are part of and what that might mean to them. Many submissions seen were autobiographical and sometimes seen as visual diaries whilst others referenced related historical events and people. The starting point gave access to all ethnic groups. Such ethnic groups included recent immigrant families; an opportunity that was reported as well received. Many submissions seen were observational whilst others made visual commentary



on worldwide issues relating to immigration, war, social injustice and social attitudes. References were made to named artist Kirsty Whitlock together with such sources as Natasha Kerr, Louis Boudreault and Martin Luther King. Working formats included painting, illustration, assemblage, photography, sculpture, digital imagery and video.

### **Starting point 6: Recycle. reuse, reinvent**

This starting point proved to be very popular with all ability ranges and responses in terms of working process and combinations of materials were very broad. There were many assemblages and collage based responses and the artist Sally Mankus was frequently referenced, inspiring combinations of photographic, painting and found object artworks. Artists El Anatsui and Marina Debris inspired inventive constructions and garment based responses, some of which were presented as wearable bodices or sculptural forms. One example sourced Rob Dzedzy and Jason Mecier which led to the design and making of a table from found objects, using cad/cam to assist with planning. Another referenced Marina Debris' 'trashion' and created newspaper constructed garments and a dress created from printing sweet wrappers onto Cello tape There were also examples of narrative, issue based works relating to recycling and conservation. Working processes seen combined mixed media, photography, recycled furniture, collage, assemblage, painting and illustration.

### **Starting point 7: Aged**

As an 'open' starting point, 'Aged' was interpreted in an interesting manner through different working processes. Starting point 7 has arguably been the least referenced starting point on the Art, craft and design paper, however the starting point of 'Aged' this year was received enthusiastically. There were predictable investigations into how human ageing could be seen in both photographic and painterly manners together with observations of natural forms slowly deteriorating.

In response to 7(a) 'how the appearance of a person ages over time' submissions were managed mainly through photographic and painterly mediums. Submissions seen mainly referenced original and secondary sources documenting family associations. There were notable references to ethnic diversity crossing historical time periods.

In response to (7b) 'natural or manufactured surfaces that have aged with time' students had looked mainly at growth and decay in the natural world and the effect of the decay of man-made materials such as metals rusting over time. Such examples seen investigated the theme of decay with reference to Pieter Claesz (life and death) decaying flowers, which resulted in the student's own time lapsed photos of dying flowers and fruit.

Submissions related to 7(c) 'Aged' community charity promotional material. Very few responses were reported and those that seen were representative mainly of graphic design posters.

## **LAW Fine Art (8202) Report 2023**

### **8202C Fine art: Component 1**

The majority of Fine Art courses seen were run over two years. The most successful had introduced students to skills and specification requirements at the start, often in the form of workshops or mini projects, and were then structured to encourage individual students to develop

their ideas in a highly personal manner. Work was presented in sketchbooks and/or on large artboards. Starting points and themes were often selected from previous externally set assignment papers. Many courses were planned to enable students to progress from a position of dependence to independence. The most exciting and ambitious work was produced when teachers encouraged individual student responses and supported them in realising their intentions. It was clear that teachers, as well as students, had to be confident about taking risks, facilitating purposeful experimentation and guiding personal creative responses.

Work exploring a range of appropriate media, materials and techniques along with a variety of scale and content was seen. Natural Forms and variations on this theme such as; Sea life, Woodlands, Seedpods and Botanical forms, continues to be a popular starting point as does Portraiture. Other frequently seen project titles were; Architecture, Urban Landscapes, Structures, Identity and Decay. Although drawing, painting and printmaking were most often employed, it was pleasing to see an increase in the realisation of intentions in 3D, with sculptural outcomes featuring in several submissions. Wire, clay and card had been used to make interesting work on the theme of Faces in Trees and the Macabre. The integration of textile techniques, such as drawing in stitch, was also seen in experimental, mixed media pieces. Found materials such as; plastic objects, old mirrors and dried flowers, were effectively used to create inventive assemblages. Digital responses, from primary photography through to animated outcomes, were an unusual and interesting feature seen within one Fine Art course. Printmaking in various forms was included in many portfolios and served to; explore composition ideas, generate images, create pattern designs and support understanding of the work of artists studied. Simple techniques, like press and mono print, had been produced then embellished, moving ideas forward and enabling students to evidence a higher level of technical ability. Lino print had been used to investigate and analyse the work of artists including Käthe Kollwitz, Neil Shigley and Tim Roberts. Highly successful work was seen at a school where drawing was unashamedly placed at the centre of the course. This allowed for a depth of exploration using appropriate media and student outcomes demonstrated a confidence in their expressive, uninhibited recordings. Exciting, energetic and gestural painted responses were seen at a school where the student had documented over time, their commute to school. This practice had led to the production of a mature, confident and extensive body of work. Students continued to be motivated when generating ideas linked to a message or issue, they felt strongly about, for example self-identity, feminism and climate change.

Commonly reported features of less successful student responses were identified in overly prescriptive courses that were described as ‘strongly teacher led’. Shallow, rather than in-depth exploration of ideas and processes was noted as limiting the opportunity for students to address the assessment objectives in the higher mark bands. A reliance on copying from sources instead of interrogating them to inform their own ideas, was noted as unhelpful in enabling students to demonstrate critical understanding.

It was clear that teachers understood the need to mark portfolios holistically. Most teachers had attended standardisation meetings and valued them. Many made reference to the support materials available. Documents and tasks in relation to interpreting the assessment objectives were noted as being especially helpful. Some teachers are still interpreting a personal response to mean a ‘final piece’ rather than a collection of evidence that tells us about the student’s independent and creative journey. In general, marking standards were accurately applied and where they were not, a tendency towards leniency the most common trait reported.

Students had accessed a vast number of relevant sources. These were mostly contemporary creative practitioners discovered on various websites, although art movements like Pop Art and Cubism, were also introduced to inspire ideas. Many schools encouraged students to individually

select appropriate sources and guided their choices by providing lists. Often students made connections with artists from a culture with which they identified. Although less common, other sources of inspiration, such as song lyrics, current issues or a gallery visit, were also seen to inform the development of ideas. AO1 was addressed most successfully when students demonstrated critical understanding by creating personal, practical and relevant responses to sources studied.

In every type of educational setting seen and despite often limited budgets, teachers had ensured that students were able to access materials and equipment appropriate to the Fine Art title. Inventive approaches such as preparing surfaces using cardboard or creating backgrounds with 'free' collage materials, supported students in addressing AO2. Many centres had access to specialist equipment and encouraged trialling and experimentation with selected materials and processes, like oil paint or lino printing. A wider variety of digital software including Photolab, Procreate and Blender along with Photoshop and Illustrator, had been utilised by students at stages throughout their creative journeys. This enabled students to show evidence of consideration of alternative compositions and how their ideas had changed over time. Teachers often commented that students were more proficient in this area than they were and highlighted a lack of subject specific CPD.

No issues were noted regarding the specification requirement for evidence of drawing and written annotation. Recording of insights and observations was seen in many forms and in a variety of appropriate media. Drawing for purpose from brief sketches, plans and storyboards to detailed, intricate, highly rendered studies, was a strong feature in many courses. Photography was used extensively in most submissions seen. Written annotation was seamlessly integrated within the majority of projects, it explained findings, outlined intentions and gave rationale for decisions made.

In portfolios where students had successfully understood and responded to AOs 1, 2 and 3, then the evidence for AO4 was also clear. This was demonstrated at a school with a methodical and organised approach to holistically addressing the AOs.

Through a series of set tasks on the theme of 'Nature', students were able to; develop ideas and critical understanding, set out intentions, experiment, explore and select materials and techniques, make work informed by the work of others, record observations and insights and generate a number of associated outcomes. The same features (and level of attainment) were seen in a portrait project, at a school that had adopted a far less rigid approach. Both approaches were equally valid. Understanding of visual language was evidenced in a diverse range of responses and some exciting and unusual outcomes. Shadow box landscapes, backlit or with short films projected onto them generated a sense of atmosphere. Dramatic large-scale paintings of invented heroic characters had impact and mixed media assemblages effectively combined the formal elements of texture, colour, line and shape.

An increase was seen in the number of visits to museums and places of interest. Trips to Kew Gardens, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, The Emma Bridgewater Factory, The Pitt Rivers Museum and Liverpool World Museum were just some of the experiences that had informed student's creative journeys. Artists working in schools, such as Ian Murphy and graffiti artist Matt Johnson, had also impacted positively on submissions seen.

## **8202X Fine art: Component 2**

In courses where the approach from teacher led to self-directed learning was promoted, students were clearly better prepared for Component 2. Teachers reported that students had struggled with the re-introduction of this component, particularly in coping with time constraints and deadlines, however many students had relished the challenge of working more independently and had produced some ambitious work. Many students had directly responded to the artists and sources named on the ESA. Higher attaining students had been more likely to explore their own pathways and make more independent selections when searching for inspiration which often led to more personal and innovative work. Most schools had met the requirement to label the work produced during the period of formal supervision.

### **Starting point 1: Objects**

This was a very popular starting point as it was open to interpretation and easily accessible. Many students explored the idea of composing and arranging objects, referencing the work of Camila Catrambone and Lisa Milroy. A process of arranging, photographing and then painting was commonly seen. Some students had selected personal artefacts linked to their cultural or religious backgrounds as an inspiration for lino print designs. Others had been influenced by Surrealism to combine contrasting objects and some interesting collaged responses had been made using this approach.

### **Starting point 2: The senses**

This was the least popular starting point but some interesting responses were developed by students exploring colour and light within portraits. Another student had created imagery connected to the theme of ballroom dancing and its impact on all of the senses.

### **Starting point 3: Layers**

Layers had been interpreted in different ways with some students making portraits to reveal layers of personality with other more literal investigations exploring the qualities and potential of materials to create mixed-media, layered landscapes. An interesting response was seen in the creation of undulating clay pieces developed from primary photos of shells using line and form from the work of Peter Randall-Page. Many responses were developed using digital processes, particularly the layering of multiple images from student photographs.

### **Starting point 4: Flight**

References to aeroplanes, birds, insects and hot air balloons were explored in response to the Flight starting point with an especially interesting set of work developed from the interior of an aeroplane, recording the views through the windows. In another innovative response, a student had used a drone to take aerial shots of the landscape and referenced the work of Peter Lanyon as they produced a series of studies using a range of materials. These were then overlaid with acetate onto which the student traced the outline of fields and roads which were then filled with colour to create successful outcomes. Folded paper aeroplanes were a simple start leading to the creation of some interesting, abstracted and complex images.

---

### **Starting point 5: Our world**

This was a popular starting point as it allowed students to make responses about issues relevant to them. Religious reliquary was used to symbolise the objectification of women in certain societies, whilst students seeking asylum had made moving work about their journey to Britain and others explored music and fashion. The pandemic was explored through paintings of NHS workers wearing masks connected to personal experience of parents working within the NHS. The issue of political turmoil and conflict was presented in a collage submission based on the work of Rauschenberg where layers of paint, images of the war in Ukraine and Putin, Johnson and Biden, had been applied to canvas.

### **Starting point 6: Reflections**

Glass and metal surfaces were recorded and assembled in work generated on the theme of Reflections. Portraits framed by mirrors dominated responses to this starting point but some interesting effects created with installations, mirror balls and infinity mirrors were noted. The use of digital effects to create mirrored, repeated patterns was also seen. Inspired by Rita Kirkman's work on reflections in pools of water, a student generated self-portraits from recorded images of themselves and the sky reflected in rock pools.

### **Starting point 7: Aged**

Aged, in particular the hands and faces of elderly relatives, had inspired the creation of highly detailed and technically impressive pencil and biro drawings. Sophisticated analysis in consideration of the beauty of imperfections, was demonstrated in zoomed-in, analytical studies of textures and marks in decaying objects. An uncomplicated but successful creative journey was made in response to the theme of decaying flowers, referencing the work of artist Daniel Green. Studies of flowers as they faded, using a range of media, including etching, were produced. These were developed in to a quadriptych, with two of the panels produced during the 10 hour period of formal supervision.

### **8203C Graphic Communications: Component 1**

Observation and reports show that schools are running structured courses. Most have opted to deliver two or three projects. Courses largely comprised a "foundation", intended to establish knowledge and skills, followed by more student-centred project or projects, often inspired by past ESA starting points. These were intended to improve the progression of knowledge and understanding from a position of 'dependence' to one of 'independence'.

Teachers commented on changes in student attitude and motivation post-COVID, including report of one school struggling with intermittent and persistent absence, particularly in Year 10. Engagement seemed to be lacking but most students were seen to meet requirements for the portfolio and the ESA.

Some Graphic communication courses which evolved from Technology have embraced the creative aspects of the specification and many students have responded with engagement and enthusiasm. Other courses which have transferred from Design and Technology have retained a technology based delivery which sometimes weakened evidence for the range of AOs with marks

that have been awarded too generously for neatness and structure of presentation rather than imagination or content.

Teachers mentioned their concerns about AI and the proliferation of sites where students type in key words and generate designs. One student used this process while replicating an existing piece of work by an established photographer. An alert teacher prevented it.

The return of ESA was regarded as valuable although some felt it tightened portfolio deadlines though this was dependent on school timetabling and resources. Many still included a “mock” experience in their courses.

Popular briefs for portfolios included book jacket/CD insert design, adverts/advertising material for food outlets, architecture/fashion magazines and layouts and postage stamp design. Social issues, mental health, inequality in society were also considered and often taken up enthusiastically for personal investigation. Often these also arose out of students’ own concern in response to themes such as “Identity”. Past ESA starting points were often deployed as briefs.

Moderators noted that the clarity of set briefs and/or student freedom to operate independently within them is influential in meeting the range of AOs successfully than the context of those briefs. Local contexts for briefs almost always enhanced students’ engagement effectively.

The more effective portfolios allowed and encouraged students to research around the central theme of a brief, leading to individuality of development, refinement and personal response. For example, a student seen investigating Paris café culture collected images of Parisian architecture, shops, art, colours and patterns. All informed the development of ideas and the work presented incorporated many atmospheric aspects derived from the sources. In the same centre, students collected music images, posters, CD covers, developing their own interpretations with music festival VIP passes. There was also evidence of T-shirt designs, loyalty cards, collaged wellingtons, framed posters displaying headline acts as well as Instagram-ready images mocked up as an online post. Investigations that incorporated visual and creative sources other than graphic designers or illustrators were often seen to result in livelier responses and personal outcomes that avoided pastiche.

Exclusively digital submissions have become increasingly commonplace. Weaker results were characterised by basic or unimaginative use of filters to pixelate or posturise images or simple use of layer and text arrangement to compose designs. Successful students retained focus on the context, content and intention of their designs when employing colour, texture or lighting in the process of manipulation.

Online presentations in student websites (sometimes including animations) have been seen more frequently this year. This was alongside portfolios presented exclusively in PowerPoint. While appropriate to contemporary design practice, there were instances of students being carried away by the presentation process, sometimes overwhelming and obscuring their evidence by inserting too many links and pages into a site or by simply inserting too many sources, trials and annotations.

Exploring and visualising practical options and locations for posters, locations for designs and mock ups for packaging characterised successful projects. Traditional hand drawn and painted graphic design processes are rare and when they occur, are more often incorporated into digital work. Projects exclusively hand produced are very rare and sometimes weak.

Portfolios were seen to suffer where annotation dominated projects; replacing the practical development and refinement of ideas. Annotation was seen as more appropriate when produced as part of a presentation that might be made to a client, but less helpful when only used to describe the students' actions.

Source analysis and trialling for the purpose of developing ideas was sometimes shallow and could be disjointed, with little focus or direction. Collecting sources and applying different colours or effects as an end in itself has limitations in terms of credit for AO2.

An over-reliance on acquired stock photographs and secondary internet sources which were often not fully identified or acknowledged in the research can impact on AO3 and AO4. Personal response and the students' own development of ideas are important.

Assessment and Moderation.

Observation and reports suggest that marking continues to be generally accurate. However, some moderators reported that there was evidence that some schools do not recognise the exceptional characteristics and consequent rarity of "exceptional ability". In common with other titles, this is the mark band most likely to lead centres into assessment that does not meet AQA standards.

Many positive comments heard and reported about Teacher Standardising and the new support material published in the teacher standardisation delegate booklet.

## **8203/X: Graphic communication – Component 2**

Students were seen to have generally responded well to the ESA, confident in developing their ideas, exploring a broad range of materials and techniques and enjoying the freedom to employ skills learnt in component 1. However, there was a report that suggested that some students had been "guided" to respond to the same starting point. Students have an entitlement to choose from any of the starting points on the ESA paper. Anything other than this may be considered malpractice.

### **Starting Point 1: Objects**

This was a popular starting point and interpreted in many ways. The popular response saw students design a range of packaging to store 'objects'. There were also examples of take-away and burger style packaging where point of sale items had been designed to include packaging, logos and menus.

There was a report of a student who had worked on band memorabilia, referencing Brit Pop and Gorillaz as a resource to produce a poster, CD cover and tickets for an imaginary band. Another student had focused on the World Cup and created posters where the world was black and white and reminiscent of a traditional football.

**Starting point 2: Moksha Patam**

Responses to this starting point varied from designs based on the traditions of 'snake & ladders' to more elaborate boards that included imaginative and additional imagery, such as portraits or decorative borders.

In other samples seen students had visited Chester Zoo and developed their ideas to create jungle or animal themed games. In this instance students designed the board and the box using both primary and secondary sources collected and researched on their trip.

**Starting point 3: Layering**

Students used a variety of starting points for this theme. Samples seen included magazine covers where different layers were used to place objects like vector lines, shapes, and other geometric elements. There were instances of separate parts of an image or drawing having been manipulated and these individual elements combined to create further ideas and individual elements of their artwork.

Layering as a process, gave students the opportunity to develop graphic design through Photoshop layering. Students used simple cut and paste to 'layer' advertising posters and menu designs. In more adventurous work seen students had used the Dave McKean named reference form the paper to inspired well considered combinations and use of a variety of Photoshop tools.

A digital presentation was reported that began with a title page and contents slide of proposed order of work. The artist Jaemin Lee was researched, posters were viewed, followed by personal responses made by way of pastiche, then the creation of more independent developmental studies.

There were reports of very good ideas linked to secondary sources and of using the students' own photography, there were also reports of good use of animation in some responses.

**Starting point 4: Flight**

A range of products were designed around aviation. This varied from in flight safety messages to food and drink containers and airport signage and advertising. Digital photography was used to produce preliminary studies around small aircraft where the locations for these ranged from local airfields to large-scale city airports. One report mentioned a large mural design for an airport where Susa Haejin Lee had been referenced.

**Starting point 5: Our world**

Responses to this starting point produced a broad variety of attainment and ideas. The painter Bridget Riley was researched, and mood boards created to help inspire work further. The ideas were then developed to produce a design for print where the prints were made using unusual items, including vinyl records and sections of trees. These were then digitally enhanced, and logos were added to make them resemble an album cover. In this response thumbnail sketches provided good evidence for AO3.



One report described a student who looked at issues of climate change, creating posters on the theme of reduce, reuse, recycle. They produced stitch-based pieces and used references to Banksy, produced leaflets on climate change and included Clive Russell as a further source. Some interesting techniques used stitch and flower-pressing, being quite unusual for a graphic communication submission.

### **Starting point 6: Paper engineering**

There were very few examples of responses to this starting point reported. In one the student researched the work of various paper engineers to arrive at a solution to promote Paris as a tourist destination. They researched various buildings around the city and looked at existing publicity material as a source for historic and contemporary ways of advertising the city. They settled on the use of buildings with a clear structure. Research was thorough and the Eiffel Tower was selected as an emblem of the city and a 35cm tall card structure in separate sections was constructed as the final outcome. This was completed during the 10-hour supervised timed test.

### **Starting point 7: Aged**

Students often used portraiture as a starting point for responses. Mark Powell and the expressive charcoal portraits of Alison Lambert were effective sources in developing ideas. Students used photography, images of hands and faces and the contrast between young and old family members to develop their ideas contextually and compositionally.

Reported work related to option (b) and included easy-to-follow stages on a PowerPoint presentation, in which students began work with a title page and contents slide of proposed order of work. The artist Douglas Gordon was researched and images were burnt into, referencing his style and technique. All processes and any handmade work were scanned into the presentation to view.

Another student had looked at skulls referencing Van Gogh, vanitas and Da Vinci, to develop a poster on skulls. There were reports of a student who had looked at old and new branding such as Coca Cola. They attempted to show contrasts of design and packaging through the ages.

## **8204C Textile design: Component 1**

Much rich and exciting work was seen taught under the Textiles title this year. The skills specific to this title continue to attract and enthuse many students and a wide variety of approaches to teaching were seen, with fashion and textiles being explored from a design based stance as well as from a more creative Fine Art standpoint. Whilst many teachers still hail from an Art-based background, the transfer of Design and Technology teachers into Art Departments continues. Many Design and Technology teachers choose to utilise their existing skills and teach their courses with an emphasis on garment construction which can lead to strong results. Others have been more open to experimentation and have successfully embraced the wider nature of textiles practice and assessment objectives encouraged under the Art & Design Specification.

Reports informed that most courses began with either a series of skills-based workshops or a tighter teacher-led project designed to develop knowledge, skills and understanding of textile techniques. It was more likely that sources referenced at this stage would be common to all. In successful courses this approach served to build student confidence so that they were better

equipped to move on to more personal, sustained investigations in consequent projects. However, where workshops and short, replicated responses had continued too far into a course, students became restrained by a class narrative and opportunity for personal response diminished leading to work that lacked development and a personal response.

Most courses following their introductions had included a further sustained study within Component 1 and some had managed a third project. There was a huge thematic breadth seen in Component 1 Submissions. Past ESA starting points were regularly referenced for the sustained project and whilst there continued to be much reference to 'Natural Forms', other themes seen included 'Art around the world', 'The human body', 'Aboriginal Dreamtime', 'Urban art', 'Fairground', 'Tea-time' and 'Magic, myth, mayhem & mystery'.

The most exciting courses evolved where students had been given the opportunity to follow personal lines of enquiry from the outset and where they had access to an extensive variety of sources, media and specialist equipment. Financial limitations in some schools impacted on the breadth of work covered and some textile teachers feared that their specialist courses were under increasing pressure.

The assessment objectives were successfully addressed in most courses with strength regularly evidenced particularly in AO1 & AO2. In the strongest submission's students explored artists and designers as part of AO1 to develop their technical skills and created more than just copies of work but instead gained an insight and understanding of how to use and manipulate media. Excellent practice was seen where students recorded and responded to either their own personal experiences and ideas or to direct observation. Occasionally poor choices of AO1 visual references led to ill-conceived and confused outcomes and some courses were seen to rely too heavily on secondary source material. Organised gallery visits appear to be incorporated less frequently than in pre-COVID time and the use of virtual galleries have been utilised to support work where actual visits might have previously taken place. However, many teachers expressed a desire to rejuvenate the use of galleries moving forward and visits had taken place to such places as the V&A, The Natural History Museum and Pitt Rivers, Tate Modern and the Sealife Centre. Locations such as Stourhead Gardens had also inspired, and students had visited local Graduate Fashion Shows to absorb the ideas of young and upcoming designers. Visits and workshops by contemporary practitioners appeared uncommon this year which possibly reflects the financial squeeze highlighted by many.

To evidence the refinement and exploration of ideas and to document experimentation of media there was excellent use of sketchbooks for preliminary and developmental work. Higher attaining students demonstrated a willingness to take risks and a confident depth of genuine enquiry as they illustrated the process and development of their ideas. Sustained sampling and a high number of investigations was a common feature in top end submissions.

Students continue to be excited by the opportunity to experiment with many textile techniques and the diversity possible under this title remains a key attraction. Techniques regularly seen included hand and free machine embroidery, batik, felt-making, silk-painting, weave, macramé, crochet, stencilling, marbling, tie-dye, transfer print, stitch & slash, slash & burn, lino print, reverse appliqué & quilting. Development of toiles or other mannequin-based experiments exploring shape and volume were evident in fashion-based courses, elsewhere students were seen to increasingly employ examples of other media and techniques to augment their work such as digital art, photography, 3-D work and graphics.

Sketchbooks, design sheets and A3 Presentation Portfolios were commonly used to present work. In the most successful examples students understood how to use their books as design journals, filling the pages with rich, varied, textured and colourful experiments. Contrasting approaches were seen to the inclusion of drawing. In some courses a proportion of time was spent developing traditional drawing and painting skills to record observations and skilful, finely rendered studies were a notable element of submissions. Alternatively, in other courses there was less traditional drawing and more use of drawing for purpose with sketches, working drawings, fashion illustrations and drawing with stitch, dye, wire and wax being the norm. Both approaches are appropriate and in successful courses contributed to impressive results. Photography was also regularly incorporated into projects as a means of recording.

Confident use of annotation which was analytical rather than merely descriptive was of most merit within submissions. Observations made directly relating to the processes and ideas of relevant artists and designers clearly identified student understanding. Such observations were seen recorded sometimes with continuous prose but also just as successfully with the use of short statements, bullet points or mind-maps. In some course's annotation was excessive and not necessarily relevant, as students focused more on biographical detail rather than technique or influence.

Students concluded their explorations with a vast array of varying outcomes. Hangings, corsets, capes, headdresses, masks, soft furnishings, lampshades, vessels, bags, outfits and mixed-media assemblages were all seen. At best, work was ambitious and exciting documenting dedicated investigations and pre-planning of the highest order. In the most exciting examples, it was clear that a personal response was evident throughout the submission though some centres still appear to be measuring AO4 in relation to the success of the final outcome rather than considering the complete journey taken.

Students had generally submitted all work produced during the teaching of Component 1 though some would have benefited from a more careful selection of their strongest studies. Visiting moderators also reported that perhaps less volume of work was being created by individual students now in comparison to the years preceding 2020.

## **8204X Textile design: Component 2**

The breadth and accessibility of the starting points contained in this year's ESA was applauded by many teachers and some felt the return of Component 2 had served to enliven their courses giving their students renewed motivation. However, in contrast, there were also many teachers who had felt some trepidation in teaching Component 2 as they had recognised a real decline in their student's pace of work combined with a mood of indifference. It was widely reported that attendance to extra-curricular classes, where previously much exciting work had taken place, was significantly reduced. Strike days, Bank Holidays and PPE's had also taken an impact and some teachers communicated disappointment at what their students had managed to complete in the preparatory period leading up to the ten hours of supervised time.

Many students had taken direct response for their Component 2 submissions from the artists and sources named in the ESA. Higher attaining students had been more likely to explore their own pathways and make independent choices when searching for inspiration which generally led to more personal, innovative and thought-provoking work.

### **Starting point 1: Objects**

This starting point had been less popular in Textiles courses and when selected it was more often by lower attaining students. One student had created three-dimensional fabric cakes in a 'Pop' style and had displayed the work as afternoon tea on a cake stand. In another example Shelley Rhodes had been selected as a source of inspiration and the student had integrated an array of found objects such as shells, pieces of wood and other seashore ephemera into materials and garments. An alternative approach saw students referring more to the theme of 'Objectification' and digital imagery of celebrities had been manipulated, embellished and stitched into fabrics and garments.

### **Starting point 2: Travel and memories**

'Travel and memories' was a very popular choice, with students regularly making use of their own experiences on vacation and basing developments on their own photography. Maps, tickets, quotes from travel writers and brochures were collaged and transferred into mixed-media textile bases. Famous landmarks also inspired. Some students looked to their own cultural heritage and old family photographs were used as a base on which to stitch when creating a 'memory journal'.

### **Starting point 3: Layers**

This was another popular choice. Some took the idea of layers very literally using appliqué, free-machine embroidery and ripping techniques to create abstract textile pieces. Maude Vantours proved an inspiring source as did Deepa Panchamia for those interested in exploring the folding and pleating of fabrics into three-dimensional form. The thread drawings of Sara Rockinger led one student to create hand stitched images onto transparent layers of silk organza. Another student used 'Mod Podge' photo transfers of Vivienne Westwood and the Sex Pistols combined with reverse appliqué and other experimental techniques when adorning and distressing a pair of 'punk' style jeans. There were more thoughtful responses relating to the layers of the personality and layers within society.

### **Starting point 4: Landscapes**

This was a very accessible starting point; many students had taken their own photographs of landscapes within their locality as a primary source. Lots of hangings utilising hand and machine embroidery as well as appliqué were seen in response. Artists and designers referenced included Sue Wademan, Ana Teresa Barboza, Vanessa Barragao and Josef Frank.

### **Starting point 5: Our world**

This proved a strong starting point with lots of interesting work produced in response. One student explored Trade Union Banners and then handmade a large textile banner recording the plight of the NHS. The work of Alice Kettle was prominent in another submission looking at social situations surrounding refugees. There was an excellent response exploring the forgotten impacts of war, Robert Rauschenburg and Kirsty Whitelock were both referenced when a disintegrating WW1 newspaper was created using dissolvable fabric and stitch. Environmental themes and pollution were regularly seen with plastics and packaging used to construct wearable art. The V&A Africa

Fashion exhibition combined with the work of Bisa Butler and Melinda Schwakhofer provided influence for a patchworked corset.

### **Starting point 6: Water**

For this starting point some very interesting responses founded in colour, texture and surface pattern were seen responding to imagery of water. Some explored layering, translucency and weight within their work. One student took photographs of ink swirled in demijohn jars and followed by marbling swirls onto fabric before applying stitch. Another referenced the work of Carolyn Saxby using recycled materials combined with heating and bonding techniques to reproduce a harbour scene captured via their own photography. The paintings of Linnea Strid inspired a bathroom photoshoot where images taken were transferred to acetate and eventually formed cyanotype prints which were incorporated into textile hangings.

### **Starting point 7: Aged**

The options within this starting point were another popular choice. A student looked at the fictional character of Miss Havesham and the work of designers Alexander McQueen and Moschino to upcycle a wedding dress found in a charity shop. The student explored historically appropriate embroidery and embellishment before creating a series of distressed samples. The dress was stained to match the sepia tones of old photographs. Studies of decaying fruits, vegetables and florals were commonly used as an initial source and close up studies of lichen, peeling paint and mould were also utilized. Fashion and costume through the ages was another popular approach with one submission seen focusing on the work of Ellen Mirojnick, the costume designer for the series 'Bridgerton'.

## **8205C Three-dimensional design: Component 1**

Overall, there appeared to be a lot more structure to courses seen than in previous years. Schools understood that time had to be allocated to the whole process of producing work for both component 1 and component 2.

Very little disruption was evident in students' progression through the course unlike in previous years. In the main students exhibited portfolios containing two, three or four separate projects of uninterrupted coursework. Some students submitted an extended project plus additional work, but this was rare. There were issues in some centres with students suffering from mental health and other issues and in some submissions, there were gaps due to absenteeism.

There were many more schools offering Three-dimensional design courses for the first time. These schools had come across to the Art & Design specification from traditional Design and Technology courses. Most schools had coped well with the transition, however, at times it was reported that some schools had not delivered appropriate courses, had not understood the specification, and struggled to use the assessment criteria. Many teachers were unaware of the help and support offered by AQA through online forums, dedicated NEA advisors, travelling Teacher Standardisation Exhibitions and specially designed AQA courses.

A range of sources were used to inspire and develop ideas. First hand visits to museums, art galleries, craft workshops and sculpture gardens inspired students. Visits to schools by practicing

designers and craftspeople gave a real dynamic edge to students' portfolios of work as well as giving ideas and valuable contacts for later development in the ESA. Local, regional, and national collections were visited. Themes based upon architecture, body adornment, clocks, lamps and lighting, natural forms, masks, seating, tiled wall murals, decorative boxes, cast glass and tile murals were reported.

Students created a variety of work using a range of materials, techniques, and processes. They experimented with materials such as wood, metal, plastic, papier mâché, glass, latex resin, found materials, plaster, textiles, natural fibres, leather, clay, and glaze. Techniques including casting in metal and plaster, laser cutting, lathe work, traditional wooden cabinet making, steam bending and joinery techniques were seen in some schools. The use of three-dimensional printers and appropriate CAD systems to programme them was also in evidence. Ceramic skills such as throwing, slab building, coiling, hand building and freeform sculpting were seen in those schools who delivered a traditional clay centred course. Additional skills such as enamelling on copper, casting in pewter and glass slumping were often inspired by specialist craftspeople who came into the art studios to demonstrate their working practices. A resurgence of leather making, and traditional basketry was also seen. Students planned their work by using test tiles, models, and maquettes to iron out any issues in three-dimensions before committing to a full-size piece. Marks were awarded where there was clear evidence of reviewing and refining work as it progressed.

One issue this year has been a lack of evidence of refining in samples from some centres. It was felt that students from these schools had sourced relevant artists, craftspeople and designers but had jumped straight into manufacturing without the necessary refinement and selection of alternative solutions on paper, or digitally. Good submissions had used preliminary sketches, planning drawings, isometric and orthographic projection, observational drawing, and CAD systems to understand structure, form, surface texture, scale, and construction. There was a propensity for students to use cameras to record existing examples of artefacts as well as document the manufacturing process using digital cameras. Annotation was, in many cases, insightful, giving personal feedback on decisions made, materials used, ideas explored, how work was developed, and solutions arrived at. Where teachers had given a clear structure to the conventions of good design, students commentaries were more relevant, particularly in the evaluation of work. The use of writing frames, technical work sheets and Google Translate to assist some students for whom English was not their first language, were innovative.

Portfolio outcomes were often highly original, well made and beautifully decorated. The range of sources used as inspiration gave students real scope to develop personal realisations. Often first-hand observation of existing artefacts gave students an understanding of how processes of design and construction influenced personal outcomes. Museums, art galleries and retail outlets helped students see the relevance of their designs. An understanding of manufacturing process often leading to a client-based solution were integrated into some projects. In most cases there was originality in the use of materials, techniques, and processes. The realisation of teachers that they could still produce product design-based outcomes within this specification enabled students to create excellent outcomes. Outcomes were very often highly personal, thoughtfully designed and manufactured with skill and dexterity with a great attention to detail.

### **8205X Three-dimensional design: Component 2**

Many teachers reported that, because students within schools had no experience of the ESA, this year's cohort struggled to see the urgency in adhering to deadlines. Many schools reported that students had difficulty with the time constraints. Schools that had used past ESA papers as project

titles for coursework portfolios enabled students to understand the structure of the ESA starting points and how to address them.

### **Starting point 1: Objects**

The starting point proved to be popular because of the proximity of the source materials. Students responded to items around the home or school studio and related them to artists and art movements. Recording of objects through photography and traditional drawing helped identify form, shape, colour, and texture. The work of Michael Craig Martin, Peter Blake, Pablo Picasso, and Marianne Hallberg influenced many to produce still life studies and accomplished three-dimensional work. Students used clay to sculpt with, but others used plaster, wood, and sheet metal. Many students used the construction inspired work of Justin Gershenson-Gates to create their own work manufactured from found mechanical items. Students used various fixing methods to join small pieces together. The designer Coco Frankie was also used as a source to create pieces made from acrylic sheeting.

### **Starting point 2: Puppets**

This successful starting point created some imaginative themes allowing students to explore their ideas innovatively. They used a range of sources including historical examples of marionettes, as well as puppets from stage and screen. The use of stories and myths to generate ideas was seen in many examples. The added use of humour and satire allowed students greater freedom and often gave the work a personal touch. Named artists on the paper were used as sources of inspiration as well as Kara Walker, Jim Henson, the Aardman animation workshop and Matěj Kopecký. The Warhorse production also led to some good articulated constructions. Materials varied from traditional wood carving to studies in clay and plaster. Some attempted to construct using foam sponge, latex resin, and polymer clay. Experimentation with textiles to produce clothes was varied in its success. Bright coloured paints were in abundance relating the work back to Punch and Judy shows. Outcomes ranged from traditional articulated hanging puppets to hand puppets and innovative Jack in the box constructions.

### **Starting point 3: Layers**

Layers was a hugely popular starting point in many centres. Mind maps gave variation of ideas and consolidated learning. Some students could experiment with just the physical concept by experimenting with the practice of layering different art media whilst others represented layers of a personality by experimenting and showing diversity within our culture. Artists referenced included David Knopp, Alexander McQueen, Antoni Indisco, Anna Barlow, Zaha Hadid and Dale Chihuly. First hand studies of natural and manmade forms included onions, fennel, maize, tree bark, layered cakes, weathered posters, and sheets of wood. Work was created using layers of card, wood, plastic, acrylic sheets, different clays, willow withies and papier mâché. Outcomes were often creative and included steam bent wooden lamps, highly glazed ceramic layered cakes, mixed media bodices made from paper, multi layered graffiti wall art and ceramic murals of decaying and distorted urban buildings. Multi layered laser cut cityscapes were seen as well as delicate jewellery designs made from thin sheets of layered acrylic.

**Starting point 4: Flight**

This was another popular starting point with students being inspired by a range of first-hand sources including aeroplanes, helicopters, kites, and birds in flight. Stories, myths and legends of flying creatures, mythical beasts and Icarus encouraged students to be creative. The idea of movement was popular. In some samples multi layered photography isolated studies of wings in flight, groups of feathers and rotating helicopter blades. Trips to local airfields, airports, zoological gardens, and specialist bird parks gave students a greater range of ideas. Apart from those on the question paper students used other sources including Santaigo Calatrava, Terence Coventry, Guy Taplin, and Geoffrey Dashwood. Observational studies were variable in their quality with higher achieving students using drawing methods to explore alternative solutions and ideas on paper before committing to a full-size piece. Outcomes varied with solutions seen made from wood, clay, acrylic sheet, plaster impregnated bandage and polystyrene. Wooden sculptures of birds, hanging mobiles, murals for the walls for airport lounges, designs for a clubhouse for a gliding club and suspended model planes for a child's bedroom were all seen.

**Starting point 5: Our world**

This starting point gave students enormous scope to develop personal responses. Investigations into several themes and world issues were seen including the role of the NHS during and after the COVID pandemic, global warming, pollution, the damage to the environment, social inequality, homelessness, the arms race, and the current refugee crisis. First hand studies of nurses on strike, rubbish on beaches, industrial buildings, busy traffic, dirty rivers, and canals etc gave a sense of involvement and engagement with issues. Newspaper headlines, images and text often helped students identify key elements. Weaker students often used secondary sources which were often not fit for purpose and gave rather predictable outcomes. Written commentary often indicated a personal understanding of themes as well as highlighting local problems and personal points of view. Artists incorporated into students work included Alice Fox, Lucy Ann Wray, Laurie Simmons, Tracey Snelling, and Courtney Mattison. Realisations were personal and considered. Responses included lighting made from recycled wood, birdhouses made from plastic bottles and milk cartons, stained glass panels of groups of North African refugees, wall panels based upon marine scenes and Gaudi inspired sculptures made from recycled broken tiles and concrete.

**Starting point 6: Bags**

This was not a common choice for students. Of the examples seen, students focussed on the materials used in their construction and then focussed on the sources. Students used named sources on the paper to gather initial ideas but then progressed on to look at others such as Lulu Guinness, Mulberry, Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Gucci, Versace and Fendi. Most students used secondary sources to gather ideas, but some students went to local museums or to see collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum or ethnographic collections such as those at the Pitt Rivers Museum and the British Museum. Students recorded through written annotation and first-hand photographs taken in local department stores and their own collections. Drawing was in evidence but with little real investigation into shape, form structure or constructional detail. Solutions included decorated glazed clay bags, bags made from waste denim, woven constructions made from recycled materials as well as heat treated forms made from thermos formed plastic.



### **Starting point 7: Aged**

The open-ended starting point was very popular with students. They concentrated on a few themes - aging in humans and animals, the decay of plants, fruit, flowers and trees and the rusting of metal and machinery. The accessibility to sources meant that many students went out and about to take first hand images. Moderators were highly complementary of the use of traditional drawing where students recorded surface detail, texture, and colour. Alternatives were explored and a real engagement with sources was seen. Recording through written annotations was often informed and pertinent. Students often charted decay over time through the digital photography of decaying flowers and fruit. Sources included Joseph Cornell, Rosamund Purcell, Sam Taylor-Johnson and Derek Jarman. There was a sophistication in the depth of analysis here which enabled realisations to be brave and exciting, as well as personal: they showed a confidence and strong understanding of visual language, looking at the beauty of imperfection.

Those students following a product design-based course found plenty of sources to use as well as a range of designers who construct furniture from aged and recycled materials. Designers such as Eileen Gray and Donald Deskey were used for form and shape. A few students took existing discarded pieces of furniture and repurposed them or distressed them to look aged. Others took upcycled or recycled wood and built their own work: benches, tables, lights and lamps and decorative boxes were all seen. Students took photographs of distressed buildings, industrial complexes, factories, and farm outbuildings to gain first hand sources. Moderators reported that students often lacked the necessary refinement in their work prior to manufacture. In some cases, there were references to contemporary theatre productions but often this key element was not addressed. Scale models in wood, clay and found materials were produced in the timed test period. In response to the brief one or two students had visited possible sites to display their work. Some had included connections with elderly neighbours, family, and friends. A few had visited care homes and interviewed residents to get ideas. Collected photographs, artefacts and mementoes were seen and used as part of the design.

### **8206C Photography: Component 1**

Last year's comments suggested that evidence submitted for the Photography title was sheltered from the effects of remote learning and absence of specialist equipment due to the previous period of pandemic disruption. This year moderator comments point to a similar pattern apart from observations about the evidence for responses to component 2. Some moderator comments indicate that students struggled with the challenge of timing and pace for their submissions. However, the overall picture was of continued innovation, continued increase in the numbers of students taking the award and many references to the high quality of some submissions.

Moderators often describe two ways that the Portfolio is delivered. One is through a series of taught skills task throughout the entire length of the course and the other is through a process of dependence to independence. The latter process recognises that students need to be equipped with a practical and conceptual 'tool kit' in order to articulate and subsequently realise their intentions. Both models of delivery start with an introduction to a variety of camera and software skills through small set tasks. The more successful model of delivery recognises the 'soft' skills linked to developing ideas through consideration of sources and the importance of these in demonstrating a personal creative response through ownership of the process. The risks involved in a delivery that is heavily teacher led are that the student flounders when faced with the ESA and the challenge of unaided work in component 2. Comments related this and indicated that students did not fully understand the refinement of ideas throughout their creative journey. Repetition

substituted for informed change and students were not able to recognise the nature of purposeful decision making or a personal response.

There were very many positive comments on the practice found in the Portfolio Component. However, despite the elements that were lacking in some submissions there were plenty of comments that echoed an appreciation of both attainment and endeavour. The standard of expertise and innovation was often applauded. Comments reflected innovative practice, thorough understanding of photographic principles, emersion in the media and descriptions of the high standard of student attainment and achievement seen at moderation. The range of technique, the variety of materials, the range of contextual reference and the standard of skills is continuing to expand and impress.

The assessment of evidence by schools was often accurate and where it did not meet AQA standards it was usually lenient. In general, the Portfolio met the specification requirements, but it is worth emphasising that all Portfolios must contain further studies in addition to evidence of a sustained project. As with other titles in the Art and Design award, caution should be taken when considering an award of marks in the mark band describing exceptional ability.

In general, there is no problem regarding the specification requirement for annotation. The evidence this year, as with observations made in both 2019 and 2022, suggests that in many cases, large amounts of annotation are produced but that some of it is of little use in assessment terms. As has been said in previous years, without considering of the relevance of the annotation, there is a risk of losing the time and opportunity for producing valuable evidence of visual understanding and analysis. There were some instances of schools deducting 4 marks unnecessarily. Judgements like “there was appropriate annotation but not enough” or “there was annotation, but it wasn’t well written” are not relevant. If the annotation meets the criteria for AO3 then marks should not be deducted.

Regarding the requirement for evidence of drawing, whilst moderators commented on many cases of the constructive use of drawing in expanding creative practice, they also commented on the lack of understanding and value that evidence of drawing can offer to photographic practice. The requirement for evidence of drawing is an Ofqual requirement, but whatever form drawing takes, the activity should be relevant to the student’s learning and contribute to AO3; recording an observation, an insight or an idea. There are many instances of photographic practice in the real world of creative practice that incorporate drawing as an activity within the planning, production and content of images. Schools should not treat the requirement for drawing as a ‘tick box’ exercise but should exploit the added value it offers to students for learning and creating.

In relation to the evidence of photoshoots in thumbnail form in either component, it is worth emphasising that the evidence needs to be accessible. Many moderators commented on the difficulty in being able to see the images presented because of their size. Moderators will want to see photoshoots as evidence of viewpoint, composition and consideration of camera control as part of the assessment across a number of objectives.

Innovative practice sometimes embraces traditional materials and there were reports of dark rooms being built to expand the opportunities for students. In addition, the techniques and processes linked to the production of Cyanotype and the use of pinhole cameras were regularly reported. Innovative practice was also evident in software associated with animation and the creation of GIF images and in the ever expanding range of materials used in mixed media responses. Installations using still, moving and projected photographic images are also seen more often. This often reflects

the use of the media seen by students in their chosen sources and in their experience of musical and theatrical performance.

## **8206X Photography: Component 2**

ESA starting points were very well received and all were responded to by some students in the cohort. Comments from teachers indicated that the starting points were inclusive and that there was a choice available and appropriate for ability level. However, the identification of evidence produced within the separate periods of supervision was not consistently adhered to. This again is an Ofqual requirement and would need to be indicated at the moderation visit if not already done so.

Some schools were under the impression that the requirement for drawing in AO3 applied only to Component 1. In those cases where there was no evidence of drawing four marks were deducted from AO3.

### **Starting point 1: Objects**

This was a popular and accessible starting point. A broad range of objects were used, from the mundane to the unusual. In some cases, mechanical objects chosen were linked to the drawings of Jim Dine and the prints of Michael Craig Martin. Personal possessions were easily accessible so there were lots of memorabilia, make up and school items. There were examples where personal objects were used in an installation and other instances where collected objects were carefully chosen for colour and shape and lighting used to arrange and photograph a still life group. The resulting attainment levels varied greatly, from basic levels of response to ambitious and skilful submissions.

### **Starting point 2: Ident**

The responses to this starting point were few but many of those that did respond were innovative and thoughtful. Many of the responses involved the moving image, either through animation or film. This starting point then offered students the opportunity to create storylines and animations were often both surreal and humorous. The responses demonstrated students' awareness of the links between photography and television and film media.

### **Starting point 3: Layers**

This was a very popular choice. The accessibility of sources that used software to exploit the potential of layering clearly influenced the creative choices made by many students. Predictably most evidence of manipulation was produced digitally however there were many interesting reports of physical layers being used. Some examples of this referenced paper cutting, the creation of layers of shadows and the use of silhouettes. Other interesting examples explored the notion of emotional layers within portraiture, using symbols and text.

**Starting point 4: Flight**

This was not such a popular choice and there were not many reports of exciting responses. This was a natural choice for students who were interested in and had access to aeroplanes at airports and aerodromes. Sometimes the resulting technical challenges were too difficult and didn't match the ambition. Other interpretations drew inspiration from aspects of movement involved in 'Flight'. Visits to a zoo provided subject matter to record the flight of various animals and birds with a variety of success. Successful submissions were seen using close up camera techniques to study texture and pattern in feathers and wings.

**Starting point 5: Our world**

This starting point was very popular and gave students opportunities for a very broad range of approaches and responses. Many responses expressed personal cultural connections and there were many examples reported where issues of personal interest were explored. Those reported included topics such as mental health, issues around social media, climate change, cultural inequalities, sexism, the role of the NHS and the pandemic. The qualities in responses varied. Although some lacked depth, many were very well researched, thoughtful and demonstrated a level of maturity in relation to the topics chosen. Other approaches used artists such as Robert Rauschenberg to provide ideas for graphic responses that could be equally expressive and thoughtful.

**Starting point 6: Low light**

This topic was popular with students who were particularly interested in the technical issue around taking photographs in low light conditions. For those who had a good understanding of the camera controls or access to studio lighting this allowed them to display their technical competence alongside their development of ideas from sources. Many sorted their own sources but many also used the sources given. This resulted in many images taken of cityscapes at night and in wet conditions that offered reflections and unusual lighting conditions. There were reports of other offerings that creatively used available light from items such as fridges, televisions, candles and fairy lights. Sometimes these were used in portraiture with a 'pop' of colour or alterations in saturation of colour.

**Starting point 7: Aged**

Popular responses to this topic often concentrated on the aging features of hands and face of elderly relatives. Other responses recorded the changes that happen during the process of decay in fruit and flowers whilst the containers used by Joseph Cornell led to exploring objects and ideas connected with changes through the generations. This starting point offered students an opportunity to consider how aging manifests itself and can be expressed through images.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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