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# **GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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## **ART AND DESIGN A LEVEL**

**SUMMER 2019**

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:  
<https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?!=en>

### **Online Results Analysis**

WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

### **Annual Statistical Report**

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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# **ART AND DESIGN**

## **GCE A LEVEL**

**Summer 2019**

### **General Comments**

#### **Introduction**

Eduqas A Level in Art & Design has seen rapid growth since the introduction of the reformed specification in 2015. The qualification was first awarded at AS Level in 2016 and then at A Level in 2017. Centres have had four years in which to adapt, apply and embed both the A level and AS specifications, which are now well established; and most teachers and lecturers are familiar with the requirements.

The central purpose of moderation is to align internal assessments with standards that are established by a team of experienced, professional assessors immediately before they undertake moderation visits to centres. The performance of each moderator is carefully monitored through an assessment exercise conducted over two days at a standardisation conference and by a systematic cross moderation process. Feedback from the moderation visit is provided in the form of both verbal and written reports and through the final marks that are awarded.

It is hoped that this report will be seen as an opportunity to share considered, objective judgements with fellow professionals that might enable centre staff to review their planning, delivery and assessment, if they decide that this might be necessary.

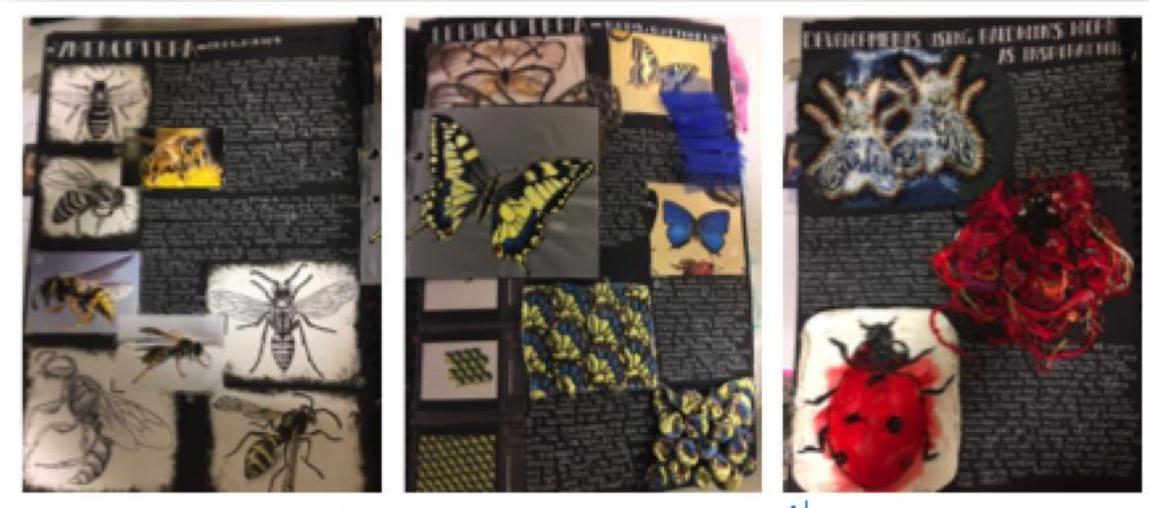
#### **DRAWING**

The use of drawing as a compulsory requirement for each AS and A Level assessment component is seen as a helpful means of improving planning, development, reflection and refinement of ideas. It is therefore disappointing to note that in some centres drawing merely consisted of a copy or pastiche of the work of an artist with no evidence of how this helped to develop or improve the candidate's own work. In some instances, there was a paucity of good investigative drawing and the almost total demise of authentic sketchbook study, even by Fine Art and ACD candidates. In many cases it appears that drawing from first-hand and observation is fast disappearing and that, even when there is evidence of drawing, it is almost exclusively from photographs.

In contrast, there were imaginative and ingenious responses and it was apparent that the exploration of investigative drawing was embedded into all the subject titles at some Centres. A good range of drawing for different purposes was seen particularly in ACD, Fine Art and 3D Design titles. These comprised compositional sketches and/or thumbnails, as well as rough sketches of 3D work. The most successful submissions used appropriate drawing strategies to help explore ideas, techniques and media.

This exploration of investigative drawing techniques appeared to be a main focus of the initial foundation period and this was developed further in PI to produce truly dynamic and explorative investigations. Artist workshops appeared to be embedded into this framework along with peer reviews and on-going reflections and evaluations of progress.

Drawing had been used for different purposes to interrogate a subject matter. In one Textile Design example, a candidate had explored insect forms extensively, enabling them to identify patterns and shapes in the form of the insect through sensitive and analytical drawing. This translated to some highly skilful and innovative textiles responses, where there was evidence of deep understanding and originality in the outcomes.



*Textile Design – an example of extensive exploration through sensitive and analytical drawing*

These investigative and exploratory drawing strategies within the A Level, were used as a tool for recording and also for exploring ideas. Candidates produced drawings from an array of sources, including educational visits. Good use of drawing for photography was also witnessed as candidates used studies to plan for editing, shoots and the consideration of presentation.



*Fine Art – example of investigative drawing*

## LEARNER STATEMENTS

Increasingly centres are paying greater attention to these due to the fact that they establish a better working framework and help clarify thinking and planning. However, there are vast inconsistencies with regard to the use of the learner statements, with some centres making very effective use of them, whilst they are a mere form filling exercise in others.

In the best examples the Learner statement is used from the very beginning of portfolio development, and candidates regard it as a planning and reviewing tool. Approaches vary, with some centres encouraging their candidates to complete more than one version as a record of how their ideas and work has developed and progressed. In other centres candidates include regular updates onto one form, which over the length of the course becomes an extensive, detailed and highly informative document. When used correctly it becomes apparent that candidates value its existence and regard it as a significant part of their development as young artists. Learner statements, when completed in detail, negated the need for an additional end of unit evaluation.

When Learner Statements were used purposefully, they acted as a very good summary of candidates' thoughts, intentions and ideas. They also gave a real insight into the candidates thought processes and the development of their investigations. However, some tended to be focused more on techniques and materials rather than on the underlying concepts behind the work. Nevertheless, there were good examples of concepts and themes being clearly expressed and candidates had benefitted from having to produce a very formal and structured analysis of their work.

Worryingly, in some centres the Learner Statement was the vehicle for providing the only evidence of extended writing for the Personal Investigation, where it was obviously apparent that it did not address the extended prose definition. However, it should be recognised that when Learner Statements were used to initiate ideas and plan forward development of enquiries and investigations; this aided the moderation process and contributed significantly to the structure and focus of submissions.



*PI (Textile Design) incorporating AOs and images into Learner Statement*

## **COURSE STRUCTURES**

A limited number of centres now deliver AS, but those who do achieve high standards that are subsequently taken through to A Level. In some centres, AS is seen as an essential building block ahead of A level, and as a motivating factor for students. It is used to build knowledge and understanding, and to familiarise candidates with the structure of a unit of learning and with assessment objectives.

The majority of Eduqas centres delivered a full A level only and there is no blueprint to be followed on what constitutes the best structure because different, but equally successful methodologies have been devised and continue to be developed. On the whole, moderators found that usually the course had been delivered as follows.

Year 12 comprised the development of skills and introduction of new processes, alongside cultivating written analytical skills. Many of the Eduqas centres visited were tertiary colleges, and so provided a foundation style course in Year 12 to ensure that candidates received similar experiences. The level of independence allowed to students varied between centres. All candidates had started on their Personal Investigations in Year 12, the majority after or around Easter. In some centres, candidates included both Year 12 and 13 work in their PI portfolio, which in many instances led to a very impressive body of work, which was highly competent, mature and refined.

Study visit are widely used across centres, either to galleries or as a means of resourcing visits to places of interest.

However, some moderators have been struck this year by the stark contrast between centres that have really invested in accessing contextual sources at first hand, compared to centres where there was no evidence of candidates making any gallery visits during the entire course. Not surprisingly, those candidates that made several visits on their own initiative show an enthusiasm and confidence that is on a different plane to those who seem to have made none.

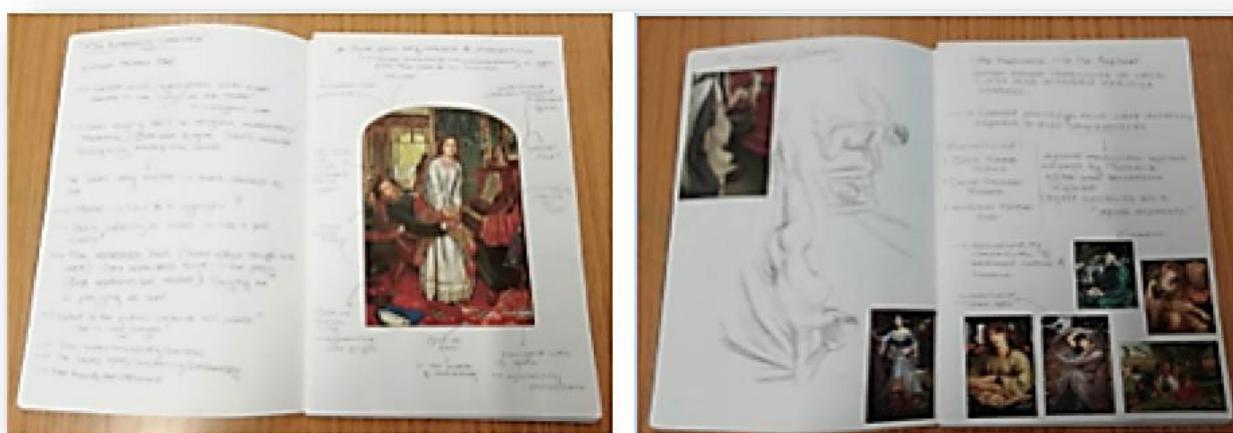
## **ADVANCED LEVEL - OVERVIEW**

Moderators noted that successful A Level submissions were mature and showed real depth and focus. Many candidates had chosen interesting and highly personal themes to explore, with a good balance of critical analysis of sources, as well as skilful handling of techniques and media. This strength was in no small measure due to the sound foundation skills established at both AS Level or in the first year A Level course. The ESA often represented the most successful element within the submissions, with candidates showing the culmination of their skills and understanding.

## Component 1: Personal Investigation

### WRITTEN ELEMENT WITHIN THE PERSONAL INVESTIGATION

As in previous years, centres employed a variety of strategies to enhance candidates' critical analysis, with many favouring the use of Blooms Taxonomy to encourage higher order questioning skills. In a minority of centres some relied on annotation within sketchbooks as a means of addressing the extended writing requirement, which is not continuous prose.



*An example of a preliminary sketchbook leading to a written essay.*

One centre had used the format of a gallery guide to present the extended writing element. The candidates produced a pamphlet or leaflet describing themselves and the themes of their work as if they were providing information for a visitor in a gallery exhibition of their work. E.g. "Eleanor Smith is a young artist based in Yorkshire who works in the medium of textiles. She is inspired by natural forms and the seasons" This provided an interesting format, for which candidates had taken time to research, edit and present information, yielding imaginative results.

Many candidates considered the presentation of the extended written piece to reflect the issues which they had investigated. Frequently, the written element was in the form of an essay and stronger candidates took the opportunity to explore an issue in some depth.

There were a number of submissions where candidates collated the commentary from their Personal Investigation into an essay format, with images, which made the evidence clear and appropriately sequenced. Other candidates produced essays, which focused in more detail on contextual references; the best examples of these were where candidates had linked their options and knowledge to their own making and were able to critically reflect upon this. Work was generally presented in quite an orthodox way, with little innovation seen in this element.

The essay format worked well in giving articulate and coherent writers the chance to be expansive about their chosen artists, designers or craftspeople and the links to their own work. In one example, a candidate was very concerned with the way in which architecture affects how people feel; for example, the awe a person experiences when they see a beautiful building, or the contrasting feelings of failure induced by particular social housing estates. This led to extensive site visits where he recorded his own photographs and drawings, initially on paper, which were of some quality. These were linked to contextual sources such as the work of Ian Murphy and Ben Kafton, which inspired the creation of paintings on concrete slabs and tall sculptural pieces and incorporating abstract shapes.

His passion for architecture was made so clear at the beginning of the Extended Writing that it was fascinating to read how his reaction to buildings such as the South Bank and the Barbican in London progressed from his initial drawing work into quite a different sphere and use of materials.



*Left: Compare and contrast essay style documents, with good critical analysis  
Right: Photography – Example of Extended Writing in the form of a booklet*

## Strengths

- Visits to galleries and exhibitions, especially those initiated personally by candidates, had a huge impact on achievement across all the Assessment Objectives, inspiring a breadth and variety of outcomes and a wealth of very accomplished, intriguing approaches.
- One of the strongest features of work was the use of subject language and appropriate terminology when candidates were analysing contextual sources as well as reviewing the development of their own ideas. Candidates across different specialisms demonstrated a good knowledge of vocabulary for their specialist area, which enhanced their annotations. Some candidates demonstrated a high level of critical analysis and understanding of context and meaning, particularly in fine art, resulting in very mature and thoughtful comments.
- One centre encouraged candidates to record preliminary contextual references in a sketchbook, enabling them to sketch, take notes and include images prior to writing a formal essay. Such an approach enabled them to source, select and refine their research in a both visual and written format, creating strong and intelligent connections to their own work.
- A graphic communication candidate explored transgender issues by responding to a number of recent and past political scenarios. They explored sensitive issues via interviews with friends and produced a range of photographs which explored stereotypes and questioned responses. This culminated in a series of poster prints and a textile pieces that allowed the candidate to use creative platform to express sensitive views.

- The most successful submissions addressed challenging themes with investigations into explorations of gender and sexual orientation noted in all disciplines. Contemporary issues, such as knife crime, as seen in one graphic communication submission, enabled candidates to reflect with deepening perception that facilitated far wider learning than aesthetic skills alone. Gallery visits and other first-hand visits, such as artist, designer or maker workshops, enhanced the submissions by opening up new possibilities for candidates.
- Where there were personalised and individual starting points, this made Personal Investigations more interesting and engaging. A variety of topics such as 'Connected but still alone', 'The effects that technology have on society', 'The contrast of a serenely sleeping face to the nightmares being experienced within' and 'The story behind immigration', were some examples of themes that had been explored.

### **Shortcomings**

- Drawing for the purpose of gathering visual and tactile information and for visualising ideas was, at best, underdeveloped and often totally lacking. There was far too much concern for drawing as an outcome rather than a process of creative enquiry. So-called sketchbooks comprised exclusively of finished pieces rather than serving as visual diaries/notebooks.
- A lack of development, reflection and refinement, particularly at the penultimate stage, with outcomes appearing suddenly. This was a shame as in a few instances, some accomplished outcomes were seen, but significant aspects of creative development had been omitted.
- Extended written elements that were too descriptive, giving biographical accounts of artists' or designers' works. There was limited indication of a personal response to these contextual sources and scant evidence of analytical commentary or attempts to compare and contrast sources.
- It was regrettable in some centres to see no evidence of gallery or exhibition visits. This resulted in a lack of conviction and confidence in the analysis and evaluation of contextual sources and also had a negative impact on achievement in creative practical enquiries.
- Even when primary source material was easily accessible, some candidates overlooked opportunities to utilise first hand experiences to inform their work, and favoured secondary sources.
- A general need for greater selection of work prior to presentation, in many instances portfolios contained numerous sketchbooks, workbooks and design sheets which made sequential development of ideas difficult to follow.
- Candidates made extensive notes, and regularly reviewed their progress in some detail, however this had little impact on their practical work, which remained repetitive and unrefined, showing limited understanding and an inability to transfer learning to different contexts.

## **Suggestions for improving achievement**

- Review and reflect upon own work regularly. This would be good to do at mid and penultimate points. This helps ensure that good ideas are developed, and less strong ideas are rejected.
- Develop drawing skills and use drawing in a wide range of contexts to plan work, to develop ideas and to hone and improve hand-eye coordination and skill.
- Produce more detailed contextual studies, making connections with, or comparing the work of, artists, designers and/or makers in greater depth. Focusing less on the essay format, which is often useful for moderation purposes, but in many cases just repeats what is already present in sketchbooks.
- Instead of stubbornly adhering to the same idea from the outset, be creative and consider other possibilities. Experiment with different ideas, layouts and compositions. Candidates could imagine that they are professional practitioners and that their clients expect to see different designs before accepting a final solution.
- Place greater emphasis on the use of primary contextual sources so that candidates develop confidence and fluency in presenting considered personal analysis and evaluation, such as comparing and contrasting relevant examples through direct engagement during a gallery visit.
- Use examples of artists' and designers' sketchbooks (perhaps some by staff members) to exemplify good practice in drawing for different purposes.

## Component 2: Externally Set Assignment

### Strengths

- The ESA often represented the most successful element within the submissions, with candidates showing the culmination of their skills and understanding. Submissions were easier to follow, as the developmental stages and planning leading to fully resolved outcomes were easily identifiable, despite the shorter timescale.
- The ESA tended to illustrate candidates' true personal interests, as they seemed to develop ideas further in response to their chosen assignment. There was a tendency to source and select more contemporary and personal contextual sources as a means of developing their responses, resulting in outcomes, which showed a greater variety in ideas, media and scale.
- Another strong feature of this component was the variety and range of techniques and processes which candidates explored. Some of the processes, which candidates experimented with showed a degree of inventiveness and originality; and candidates often extended and developed their knowledge further from the processes they had developed within their Personal Investigations.
- One candidate had explored a range of starting points in response to Question 6 Fractured, which included fossils, shells, crystals and examples in nature, in addition to pottery and ceramics. The candidate visited a museum to investigate historical influences and studied preserved Egyptian artefacts as well as making cultural references to the art of Japanese Kintsugi. The work of Livia Marin and Ah Xian also informed her work and she explored a range of techniques using resin, ceramics and photography.



*Response to Q6: Fractured*

## Shortcomings

- Planning for the controlled assessment was not always thorough. There was sometimes disparity between the quality of creative making within preparatory works and resolved pieces.
- In weaker submissions, penultimate stages of development were rarely in evidence, as were alternative compositions for the final outcome.
- In some submissions, the process of development was not explained or evaluated beyond a few introductory notes and the final evaluations were often missing, resulting in work seeming to appear from nowhere and therefore becoming less meaningful.
- More reflection on work as it progressed might have produced deeper and more sophisticated meaning and purpose in submissions. The review of work is a very important aspect of the creative process which enables essential reflection and refinement to take place.
- In some cases, there was a pre-occupation with developing ideas and concepts with a disregard for how best to refine and communicate these to produce resolved outcomes of quality.
- Some of the themes selected and interpreted by candidates were overly complicated and presented difficulties in accessing relevant primary visual and contextual sources.
- Poor time management was sometimes a key factor in limiting the success of final outcomes. Not enough attention given to ensure sufficient preparation is undertaken before tackling the 15-hour focused period.
- Some candidates did not make effective use of the preparatory period resulting in work that had not been developed or refined. In most instances this was due to poor time management in terms of spending too much on research and too little to develop, reflect upon and refine work. Consequently, outcomes were not sufficiently resolved.
- Time-restrictions sometimes resulted in more focused, but perhaps under-developed designs and outcomes.
- There was evidence of repetitive development of ideas that showed little evidence of refinement. In such cases, candidates often reviewed their work in detail in writing, but failed to transfer this understanding to their practical responses.

## Suggestions for improving achievement

- Make better use of the fifteen-hour examination period, by planning thoroughly beforehand. Some candidates produced detailed timetables of what they intended to do, whilst others had produced a mock-up to ensure that their intentions were achievable.
- Ensure effective time management, so that each assessment objective is equally addressed.
- Prevent ESA work from becoming overly cautious and predictable; in some cases, exciting and creative work in the sketchbook can be discarded in favour of safer and less exciting outcomes.

- When considering starting points for their investigations candidates should be mindful of practical factors such as how and where they are going to obtain their visual research. Some candidates might have more carefully considered the quantity of work required to evidence ongoing improvement and sophistication in outcomes.
- In some submissions, time management was an issue affecting the even coverage of the assessment objectives. Candidates could be encouraged to manage their time more carefully across the preparatory period, planning how they might use the time available and the utilising the checklist for learners to ensure a well-balanced response.
- In some submissions, less literal interpretations to the chosen theme and the development of alternative options that express personal meaning would be beneficial.
- More thorough preparation for the 15 hours of sessions, including the exploration of materials, drafting of alternative compositions and layouts; and detailed planning pages to express personal connections to the theme, styles and influences. In depth reflection on ideas and plans to lead to refinement ready for outcome(s)
- Take stock of work at the penultimate stage. Spend time at this stage reflecting on ideas and planning out the set time period carefully. Develop personal work and ideas, do not rely on an already produced image or idea that features earlier on in your work.

### **Most popular questions**

Most were fairly evenly covered across the centres, though 'Agglomeration', 'Fractured' and 'Persona' were very popular. These stimuli gave candidates the opportunity to explore themes that were close to their hearts and responses were presented in a lively way. In the best submissions there were thoughtful and fulsome introductions to the work and detailed final evaluations.

In 3D Design there was an outstanding and ingenious response to Q5: Agglomeration, which comprised a modular design of finely polished wooden blocks. These blocks had magnetic bases and could be moved around in different arrangements in order to encourage the spectator to directly engage and be creative. This was linked to the idea of urban agglomeration where the movement of people was investigated, as well as their interaction with one another. Each individual piece of the final structure could be linked to the changing movements of both the singular person, as well as the mass. This stemmed from the use of brutalist forms, along with the idea of how modular design can be like a puzzle, with sculptures that can be moved around in different formats. The model inventively brought together notions of static agglomeration in contrast to the constant movement larger settlements provide and how the two complement and interact with each other.

*3D Design Response to Agglomeration - Outcome and supporting sketchbook page samples*

An interesting response by a Photography candidate, who in response to 'Bike Ride', bought an old bicycle and then proceeded to document his bike journeys, using photography, film and mixed media; curating and presenting it as below.  
The tablet on the rack played the films from his expeditions



*Photography: an interesting response to 'Bike Ride.'*

The image below illustrates a response to the theme 'Paper'. The candidate fully explored the properties of paper, with focused contextual research and experiments with paper burning and soaking, crumpling, construction and embossing undertaken, resulting in an installation which imaginatively combined paper and laser cut wood.



*An imaginative and innovative response to 'Paper'.*



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