GCE A LEVEL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

ART & DESIGN
A LEVEL

SUMMER 2022

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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 & DESIGN

GCE A LEVEL

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COMPONENT 1 – PERSONAL INVESTIGATION

General Comments

INTRODUCTION

It has been pleasing this summer to return to almost normal arrangements for assessing GCE Art and Design. It seems that our moderating team, and most teachers they met during moderation visits, have welcomed the opportunity to re-connect with professional life beyond the boundaries within which we have worked during the last few years.

The adaptation of removing the Externally Set Assignment (ESA) from this summer assessment has worked successfully. It enabled candidates to focus on bringing their Personal Investigation (PI) to a fully developed conclusion and reduced the assessment load on teachers. However, moderators confirmed that the momentum created by the ESA, which is a different kind of assessment from the PI, was missed and we look forward to its return in summer 2023. The ESA assignment will be released in Centres on 1st February 2023 and will follow the usual format.

Extending the window for Visiting Moderation was also necessary this summer to take account of any possible disruption that might have been caused by the pandemic. Fortunately, there were only a few incidents that necessitated changing planned visits and the usual timetable will be back in place next summer. The slightly earlier date for completion and marking of PIs seemed to cause few problems, given that candidates had been allowed about ten additional weeks to conclude their work.

CENTRE MARKING AND MODERATION

Assessment arrangements, put in place for the previous two summers, certainly raised the profile of Centre assessment. It may also have caused Senior Management Teams and other colleagues to consider more carefully how assessment is dealt with in art and design departments. We have long experience of art and design teachers being centrally involved in assessing the work of students, albeit supported by a robust external moderation process.

To support Centre-based assessments, additional resource materials were published by WJEC Eduqas. These were designed to explain, in further detail, how art and design staff might go about assessing the work of their students to ensure the continuing validity, reliability and manageability of their marking. The need for standardisation within and across school and college departments was emphasised in an attempt to produce centre assessed grades that were fair and consistent.

The resources developed to support centre assessment might have helped art and design departments review previous processes and produce more effective and efficient approaches. It was intended that, alongside new resources, greater attention should be given to online marked exemplars to provide an external reference framework for teacher assessment.

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Other support materials, namely Knowledge Organisers, published in the form of eight A4-size resource sheets, provide students and their teachers with a concise explanation of what each AO is about, together with additional resource sheets dealing with *Producing written responses*, *Learner Statements*, *Drawing* and *Raising achievement*.

A series of four *NEA GCE AS/AL Art & Design Walk Through* Powerpoints, recently produced by WJEC Eduqas and primarily for students, is another major resource. It provides comprehensive explanations and exemplars that have the potential to extend understanding of assessment in art and design.

In general, centre marking was reasonably accurate and mainly within tolerances. However, there was a minority of centres where extravagant assessment was encountered with near full marks being awarded for submissions that were certainly not of exceptional standard.

The overall standard of *Personal Investigation* submissions was considered by moderators to be similar to that of 2019 when external moderation was last in place, and some considered them to be of higher standard. This is a commendable outcome, considering the challenges that teachers and students have faced during the intervening years.



It is disappointing to report that, in a very small minority of centres, moderators and team leaders had to conduct their assessments under conditions that were not conducive to accurate marking. They were frequently disturbed by staff and students passing through the area in which they were working and were not afforded privacy to discuss assessment issues. In stark contrast, the great majority of centres provided a suitable environment in which moderation could be conducted quietly and carefully. This was sincerely appreciated.

DRAWING

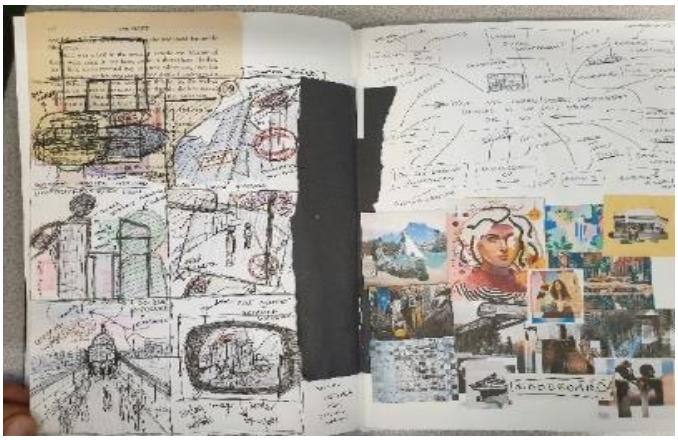
The specifications require candidates to develop skills to ‘record experiences and observations, in a variety of ways using drawing or other appropriate visual forms. They should be encouraged to appreciate the significance of drawing in the widest sense by recognising and reviewing how it feeds the creative process across disciplines. Drawing skills should be an integral part of all courses and across each title to ensure students are able to confidently use this fundamental aspect of the creative process. This should also strengthen their practice, support progression, and prepare them to meet the demands of higher education and/or the creative industries.

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We draw for many different purposes, just as we write for different reasons. One important purpose for drawing is to record from first-hand observation or experience. This is not the same as drawing from photographs or from images produced by other people. Drawing from direct experience is not simply an act of recording what is seen with technical accuracy. It requires, from the person drawing, a personal response and an element of interpretation of the subject being studied. It is important to recognise that the central purpose of this kind of drawing is concerned with observing, investigating, reflecting and seeing. It is essentially a process rather than a product. We draw to explore, research and visualise ideas, develop possibilities such as in problem solving, designing or composing, and to explore and express emotions and feelings

Within certain submissions, drawing was used as a visual tool for exploring primary sources and developing ideas towards the realisation of creative outcomes. It was initiated through mark-making activities and further developed and refined through careful observation and increasing recording skill, promoting visual research and understanding.

Some centres had a particularly rigorous approach across different aspects of the subject area and drawing was very much part of this. For example, students spent most of the first term just focusing on observational studies of primary sources using a range of wet and dry media, with plenty of opportunity for exploration and discovery. There were certain candidates who showed a mature understanding of the purpose of drawing and established an effective balance between recording from primary and secondary sources.





Example of drawing used in a Photography submission

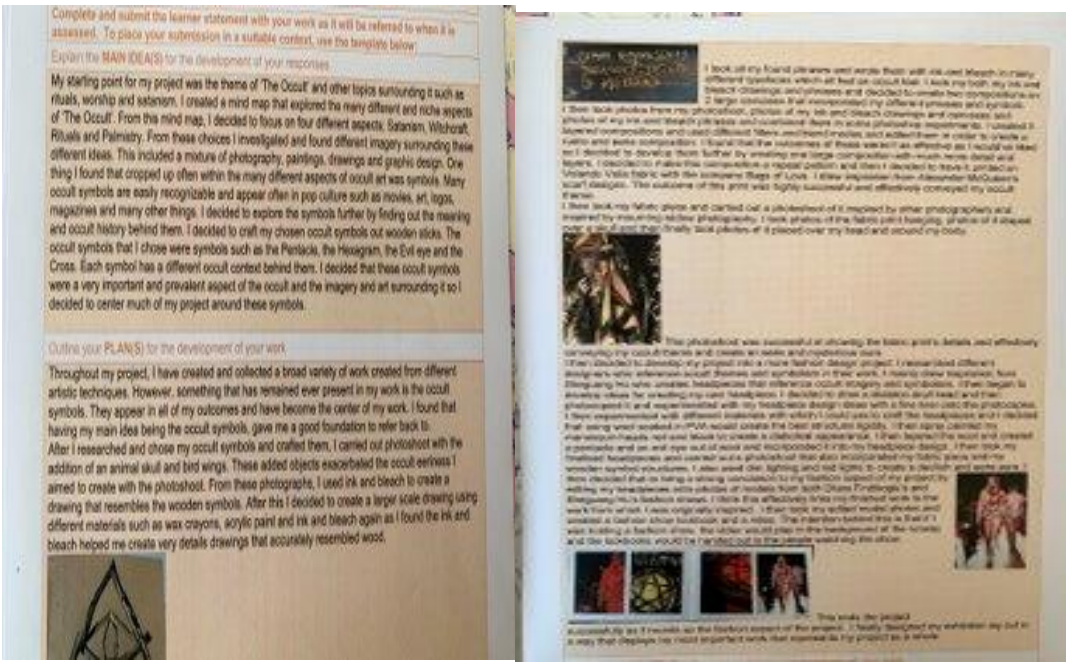
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LEARNER STATEMENTS

Learner Statements are a compulsory requirement to accompany each AS and A Level unit/component. Their main purpose is to enable candidates to consider and communicate the thoughts and actions that underly their submission. The Learner Statement is important for three reasons: first and foremost, is its value to students in providing a positive incentive and helpful framework to undertake initial and continuing planning of the unit. Secondly, its use to the teacher in providing a concise outline of a student's plans for the unit so that guidance can be more readily provided. Thirdly, it can be invaluable to a moderator in assessing the work, enabling them to quickly familiarise themselves with a candidate's intentions and of progress towards their realisation. It should be regarded as an ongoing planning tool, undertaken for the student's own benefit. It can be tackled at the start of a unit, reappraised during its development, and then at the conclusion of the study. When perceived merely as a form-filling requirement, completed at the conclusion of the course, it is of little benefit and there were many such examples seen again this summer.

However, there were also many centres in which these were fully completed, explaining clearly how objectives had been approached. They were very useful in getting the candidates to formalise how and why they had approached their work and, in many examples, they were really useful documents in backing up the candidate's sketchbook. However, some were overly detailed and too descriptive at the expense of being informative. Candidates who had considered the true purpose of the Learner Statement were more measured in their approach, demonstrating that they had genuinely thought about the planning and development of their submissions. Very good practice was seen in a centre where a diary approach was used and the Learner Statement admirably fulfilled its purpose as a tool for progressively clarifying intentions and analytically reflecting on progression.

Completing Learner Statements digitally was very popular, with relatively few centres completing them in handwritten form. Some candidates included images of their work with their text and this helped clarify the creative path followed when the submission came to be viewed and analysed. Many centres made profitable use of Learner Statements to introduce the candidate's theme, encouraging them to use quite sophisticated language and images to consolidate their written response.


Complete and submit this learner statement with your work as it will be referred to when it is assessed. To place your submission in a suitable context, use the template below:

Explain the MAIN IDEA(S) for the development of your responses

My starting point for my project was the theme of 'The Occult' and other topics surrounding it such as rituals, worship and satanism. I created a mind map that explored the many different and niche aspects of 'The Occult'. From this mind map, I decided to focus on four different aspects; Satanism, Witchcraft, Rituals and Palmistry. From these choices I investigated and found different imagery surrounding these different ideas. This included a mixture of photography, paintings, drawings and graphic design. One thing I found that cropped up often within the many different aspects of occult art was symbols. Many occult symbols are easily recognizable and appear often in pop culture such as movies, art, logos, magazines and many other things. I decided to explore the symbols further by finding out the meaning and occult history behind them. I decided to craft my chosen occult symbols out wooden sticks. The occult symbols that I chose were symbols such as the Pentacle, the Hexagram, the Evil eye and the Cross. Each symbol has a different occult context behind them. I decided that these occult symbols were a very important and prevalent aspect of the occult and the imagery and art surrounding it so I decided to center much of my project around these symbols.

Outline your PLAN(S) for the development of your work

Throughout my project, I have created and collected a broad variety of work created from different artistic techniques. However, something that has remained ever present in my work is the occult symbols. They appear in all of my outcomes and have become the center of my work. I found that having my main idea being the occult symbols, gave me a good foundation to refer back to.
After I researched and chose my occult symbols and crafted them, I carried out photoshoot with the addition of an animal skull and bird wings. These added objects exacerbated the occult eeriness I aimed to create with the photoshoot. From these photographs, I used ink and bleach to create a drawing that resembles the wooden symbols. After this I decided to create a larger scale drawing using different materials such as wax crayons, acrylic paint and ink and bleach again as I found the ink and bleach helped me create very details drawings that accurately resembled wood.

Images combined with text to explain progression of ideas in a Learner Statement

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A LEVEL COURSE STRUCTURES

A limited number of centres now deliver the AS qualification, 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 shorter term, motivating factor for candidates. The majority of Eduqas centres delivered a full A level only this year 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. Moderators found that the A Level course had been delivered as follows:

- In general, centres delivered a 2 year course where the building of skills formed the basis for the first year before candidates moved onto a more focused, personal investigation in the second year.

- In year 12, skills building activities introduced candidates to new processes and analytical skills in many centres. As in previous years, 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 from centre-to-centre.

- It was evident that centres made full use of the extended opportunity to develop candidates' creative making in the absence of the externally set assignment (ESA). Similarly, some centres used the extra time for extension activities designed to further their investigation, often realising a range of outcomes in different media.

- Where it was possible, study visits were used across centres, either to galleries or as a means of resourcing visits to places of interest. Where this was not possible, some centres made use of virtual gallery visits to initiate and stimulate ideas and to investigate potential working processes. Personal engagement with these sources was encouraged and candidates then developed individual projects and starting points. Digital platforms were often used to ensure that, even in the pandemic, candidates could still access resources and creative influences.

- Many centres approached the extended writing component as a standalone element, often as an illustrated essay, closely linked to practical enquiry. Where other formats were used, such as illustrated blogs and journals, they often demonstrated a greater level of engagement and stronger personal response

- Physical and digital sketchbook-making was encouraged in equal measure, with candidates using their physical sketchbooks to draw from life, test a process and make quick, but relevant, annotations. Digital sketchbooks were used to undertake research and reflect on the development of their own work and tended to be used more widely in Graphic Communication and Photography titles.

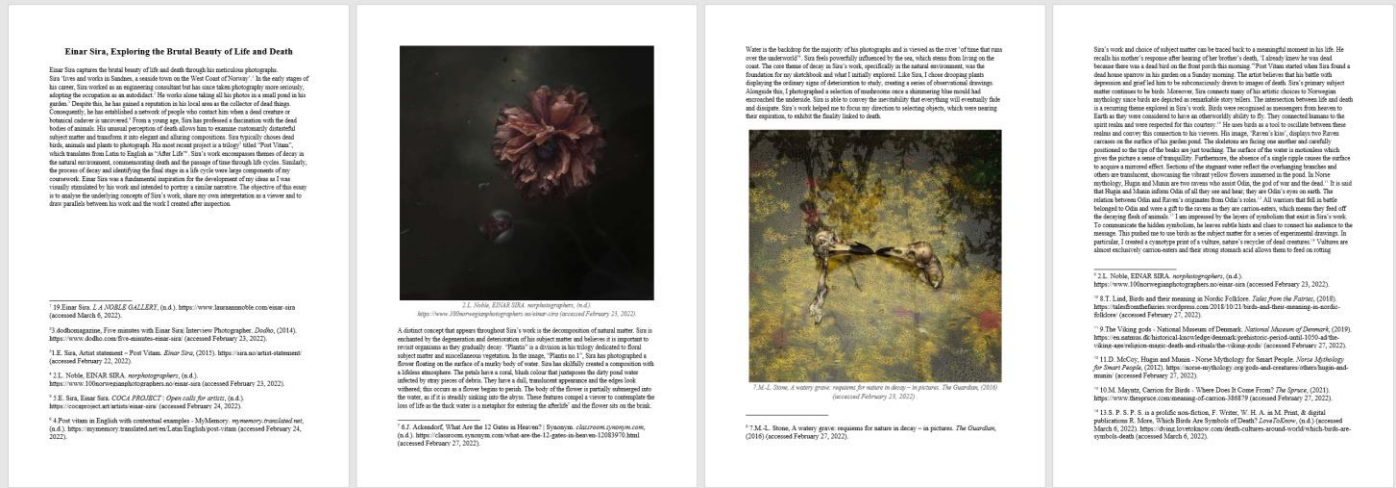
Component 1: Personal Investigation

Written element within the Personal Investigation

As in previous years, centres employed a variety of strategies to enhance candidates' critical analysis, with many favouring it as a standalone written element. In the majority of submissions, examples of extended writing were based on the contextual understanding of artists, designers and craftspeople which then enabled a comparison between two or more practitioners followed by candidates presenting their own opinions. It was positive to see within submissions, that extended writing was often used to influence the development of creative making.

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Many candidates considered the presentation of the extended writing component to reflect the subject matter which they had explored. Frequently, the written element was in the form of a word-processed illustrated essay which was then bound as a booklet. It was interesting to see other formats considered as part of the creative making process, as discussed below.



Einar Sira, Exploring the Brutal Beauty of Life and Death

Example of illustrated essay format (above).

Often, centres encouraged candidates to present their written element in line with the creative making that had been produced. For example, a 'textiles book' and a 'collaged concertina' mini outcome was observed. Here, it was evident that the presentation and audience was really considered by the candidate and carefully planned for. In another example, the candidate used their extended writing to inform a typographical piece which then supported the development of their creative making (below):



Example of written component taking the form of a visual, typographical piece and which went on to inform 3D creative making in Art, Craft and Design (above).

On occasion, centres used the Learner Statement to present the extended writing element. In a minority of cases, written submissions did not progress past evaluative commentary or, at the lower range of marking, simply a step-by-step account of how the investigation was undertaken. Some candidates relied on paragraphs within sketchbooks as a means of addressing the extended writing requirement.

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Strengths

- Candidates often demonstrated high levels of analysis when approaching the written elements of the qualification. Artist research was often pertinent, personal and contributed to development of investigations. Candidates across the different specialisms demonstrated a good knowledge of vocabulary for their specialist area, which enhanced their annotations.

- In spite of the pandemic and national lockdowns, the range of artists explored online and at first hand during gallery visits remained broad. Generally, candidates were genuinely analysing the work of others and it was clear how those reflections impacted visual lines of enquiry.

- It was positive to see that candidates had explored a range of individual and personal responses. Social, political and community engagement of some submissions was seen where candidates actively engaged socially within their environment.

- Many submissions showed evidence of exceptional visual investigations. These were often informed by the style and processes of others, but candidates also used them to develop techniques of their own towards the realisation of personal ideas.

- Candidates made good use of the additional time to really develop their drawing skills and were able to demonstrate a high level of observational drawing within their visual investigations. This was often successfully documented within sketchbooks and visual notebooks.

- Evidence of reviewing and reflecting on creative making and experimentation was a strength in many centres, with candidates using this to further the development of their ideas.

- Exploration of techniques and processes was clearly a strength within the majority of centres. Creative making, when informed by relevant artists, designers and craftspeople, was exploited well to develop personal responses.

- Sketchbooks were visually exciting and there was a lot of experimental mark making that formed the basis for ideas, before then being effectively refined.

Shortcomings

- On occasion, it was unclear as to how the extended writing element supported the development of practical making. The quality of written evaluative and critical analysis tended to be underdeveloped and too descriptive.

- Although candidates documented a breadth of contextual references, the rich potential this source material might have had in developing personal responses was not seen; fewer more in-depth references might have led to more sophisticated developments and conclusions.

- Candidates narrowed their lines of enquiry too early in the investigation and followed one idea through to realisation. As a result, some outcomes tended to be underdeveloped with no exploration of alternative ideas before developing final outcomes.

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- The progression of ideas was not always thoroughly explored; the penultimate stages of development were sometimes rushed or not fully realised, with final outcomes quite often appearing from nowhere.

- On occasion, a lack of selecting and presenting was evident with discrimination not being applied. As a result, all work completed throughout the qualification was submitted, not all of which was relevant or significant.

- Not enough time was spent reviewing and refining creative making in the lead up to producing final outcomes. Insufficient consideration was given to evaluating progress and looking to improve creative making and refining outcomes further.

- Candidates produced work in the style of artists, designers and craftspeople which often saw personal responses too closely resembling the contextual sources from which they originated. This could be made more purposeful had candidates applied the approach of the practitioner to their own visual lines of enquiry.

Suggestions for improving achievement

- Ensure that foundation/skill building activities do not restrict candidates' needs to develop their own personal lines of exploration.

- Make greater use of Learner Statements to organise and plan investigations and developments.

- Advise candidates to follow a more logical investigation and further link their material exploration to their theme.

- Provide opportunities for candidates across all ability levels to engage in drawing for a range of purposes, including opportunities to observe, test, record, and plan.

- Encourage candidates to consider more carefully the penultimate stages of development in order to achieve higher quality and more sophisticated outcomes.

- Organise further opportunities for candidates to review and reflect upon their own work regularly. This would be advantageous at mid and penultimate points of investigations.

- Remind candidates that they should be selective when preparing/presenting their work for assessment/moderation to ensure all elements and outcomes are relevant to intentions.

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