

GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Subject: Art and Design

A level

Summer 2024

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Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.[1]

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

[1] ***Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.***

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Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner | Eduqas

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Executive Summary

Centres typically delivered the first year of GCE A Level focused on skill-building, before introducing a more focused Personal Investigation in the second year. Extended writing within the Personal Investigation was often approached as a standalone element, however other formats demonstrated different levels of candidate engagement and response. Educational study visits were utilised across both components, encouraging personal engagement and aiding the development of individual projects. Centres encouraged physical and digital sketchbooks in equal measure, with digital sketchbooks particularly prevalent in 3D Design, Graphic Communication, and Photography titles.

The specification emphasises the development of skills to record experiences and observations using drawing or other visual forms. It encourages an appreciation for the significance of drawing, recognising its wide application and how it contributes to the creative process. Drawing was used as a visual tool for exploring primary sources and developing ideas towards the realisation of creative outcomes in many submissions. Effective use of drawing was seen in Art, Craft and Design, 3D Design and Photography. Digital Drawing continues to be a growing trend across all titles.

Component 1: Personal Investigation

Strengths include strong personal engagement exploring a wide range of topics and issues which were meaningful to candidates. Candidates selected a variety of media and techniques and effectively connected this to their research. Effective use of digital drawing processes which aided creative investigations was apparent in some submissions. Strong critical and contextual understanding was also evident, which often informed outcomes. However, shortcomings were observed in areas such as heavy reliance on secondary sources, lack of idea development, and insufficient review and refinement of ideas.

Component 2: Externally Set Assignment

The most popular questions were the themes of ‘Shadow’, ‘Tranquil’, and ‘Gathering’, which provided candidates with the opportunity to explore starting points that resonated deeply, resulting in vibrant and engaging responses.

Candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of using various sources to gather information and develop ideas. Candidates displayed individual creativity and the ability to contextualise starting points effectively. A range of different materials and methods were applied to record observations, and some candidates exploited their time effectively to produce creative bodies of work and outcomes which were often to a high standard realising their intentions. However, there were shortcomings such as unsustained investigations, lacking in meaningful contextual research. In the development of ideas some candidates did not develop these through purposeful experimentation. Critical reflection on ideas and working methods was at times missing in the lead up to the creation of a final piece.

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Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Standards of Assessment	resources exemplar portal by wjec	Exemplar from the range of titles to set the standards for teacher assessment.
Knowledge Organisers to exemplify what evidence might look like for each assessment objective.	knowledge organisers	A bank of sample knowledge organisers to support the learning of AS/A level Art and Design.
Assessment Bands	mark scheme	It is important to apply the command words from each band when assessing candidates work, such as Sophisticated, Good, Reasonable, Some and Limited.

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ART AND DESIGN

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A LEVEL COURSE STRUCTURE

Moderators reported that whilst a limited number of centres deliver the AS qualification, those who do achieve high standards and candidates are often taken through to A Level. Moderators reported the following regarding the structure of A Level courses:

- On the whole, centres delivered a 2-year programme of study where the building of skills formed the basis for the first year before candidates were introduced to Component 1 and moved onto a more focused, personal investigation in the second year.
- Within Component 1, many centres approached the extended writing as a standalone element, often as an illustrated essay, closely linked to practical enquiry. On occasion, other formats were presented and where this was the case, these often demonstrated a greater level of engagement and stronger personal response.
- Centres introduced Component 2, Externally Set Assignment in February and adapted schemes of learning to allow time to address the component.
- Across both components, many centres took advantage of educational study visits, either to galleries, museums or other places of interest. Personal engagement with these sources was often encouraged and from these, candidates developed individual projects and starting points.
- Across both components, physical and digital sketchbook-making was encouraged in equal measure. Digital sketchbooks were often used by candidates to undertake research and reflect on the development of their own work. These tended to be used more widely in 3D Design, Graphic Communication and Photography titles.

DRAWING

The specification requires 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 into the creative process across disciplines. Drawing skills should be an integral part of all courses and across each title to ensure candidates 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.

We draw for many different purposes. One important purpose for drawing is to record from first-hand observations or experiences. This is not the same as drawing from photographs or from images produced by others. 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. 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.

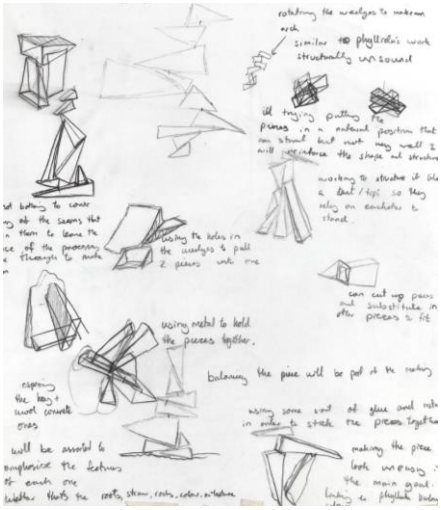
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Within many submissions, drawing was used as a visual tool for exploring primary sources and developing ideas towards the realisation of creative outcomes. Moderators highlighted the following as a result of centre visits:

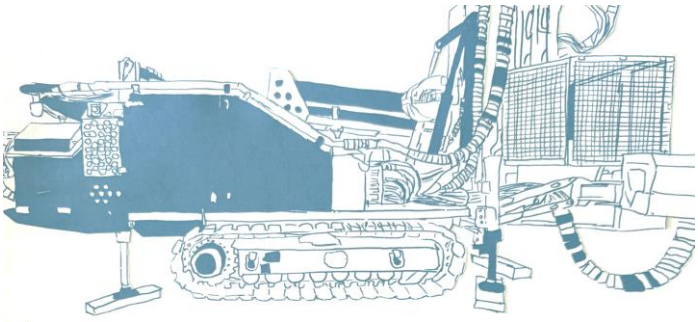
- Purposeful drawing was demonstrated by candidates across all titles. This was often based on drawing from life and primary sourced photographs of first-hand experiences (including gallery and museum visits).
- Effective use of drawing skills for various purposes was seen in Art, Craft and Design, 3D Design and Photography submissions. Candidates used drawing for planning shoots and 3D creative making to visualise their intended shots and outcomes.
- Digital Drawing continues to be a growing trend across all titles.



Example (above): *a series of thoughtful studies produced at the start of an investigation showing the candidate exploring their theme.*



Example (above): *drawing used as a form to test ideas and to problem solve in preparation for 3D creative making.*



Example (left): *digital drawing in response to the city and 'cluster'.*

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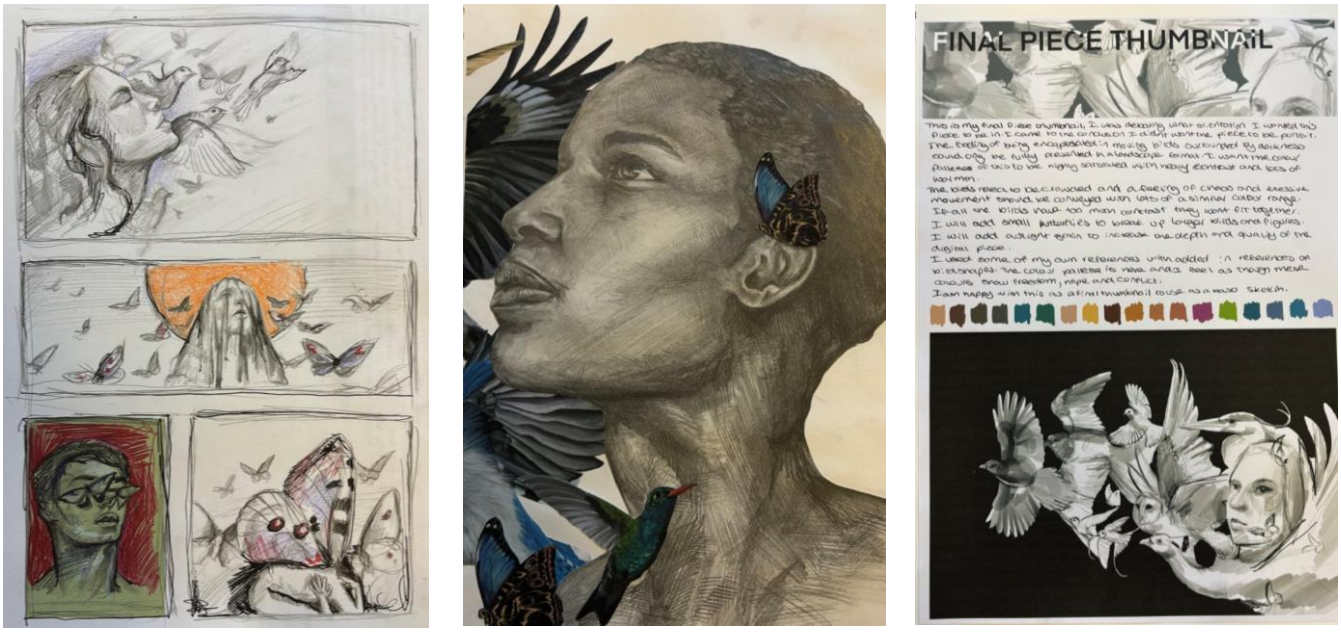
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COMPONENT 1 PERSONAL INVESTIGATION

Overview of the Component

Component 1: Personal Investigation | *Strengths:*

- Candidates demonstrated strong personal engagement, exploring a wide range of topics and issues that were meaningful to them. In doing so, candidates were not afraid to tackle difficult topics.
- Candidates visited a range of locations including museums, and galleries which provided strong foundational elements for their investigations, adding authenticity and depth to their study.
- Candidates utilised a vast variety of media and techniques, linking their work to researched artists, craftspeople, and designers.
- Candidates demonstrated strong critical and contextual understanding in their investigations, which often informed the outcomes that concluded their enquiries. In addition, reflective recording including sampling, testing, and written annotation on work as it progressed contributed to the development of effective outcomes.
- Candidates demonstrated strong written ability, with well-developed extended writing, essays, and learner statements. These were often integrated into sketchbooks which contextualised/informed the creative making processes and effectively explained the purpose of their lines of enquiry.
- Sketchbooks and investigative sheets were put to good use. These were visually exciting and often showed methodical approaches to study.
- Effective use of digital processes such as digital drawing packages, CAD and AI tools (Photoleap, for example) aided creative investigations. Digital sketchbooks were also put to good use, documenting the creation and development of ideas and creative processes.



Example (above): a series of media experimentations, demonstrating testing (in the form of thumbnails) and thoughtful annotations as work progresses towards a final resolve.

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Component 1: Personal Investigation | *Shortcomings:*

- On occasion, candidates relied heavily on secondary sources, sometimes resulting in outcomes closely resembling those sources, lacking originality and personal expression.
- Candidates were less successful when written work was descriptive or evaluative instead of analytical. As a result, investigations were not explored in sufficient depth to aid visual lines of enquiry and creative making.
- In some cases, idea development was lacking, with final outcomes emerging directly from the last area of experimentation rather than showing a sustained and personal creative journey.
- At times, candidates did not sufficiently review and refine their ideas, use of materials, and skills, which resulted in less sophisticated outcomes which did not always fully realise intentions.
- The penultimate and final stages of development sometimes lacked refinement and cohesion. As a result, some submissions did not adequately develop ideas towards a final outcome, or final outcomes sometimes appeared from nowhere.
- The selection and presentation of work was sometimes lacking, with discrimination not being applied. Candidates would have benefited from selecting from their most relevant and successful areas of study. On occasion, all work completed throughout the qualification was presented, not all of which was relevant or significant.

Component 1: Personal Investigation | *Suggestions for improving achievement:*

- Provide opportunities and encourage candidates to explore primary sourced research and materials to inspire originality and personal expression.
- Provide opportunities for candidates across all abilities to engage in drawing for a range of purposes to inform the creative making process and idea development.
- Encourage candidates to research the work of others in sufficient depth to provide analytical and evaluative contextual analysis to inform ideas and the creative making process.
- Encourage candidates to develop personal visual lines of enquiry through observing, testing and recording to lead to a thorough, clear realisation of ideas and sophisticated outcomes.
- Provide further opportunities for candidates to continually review and refine their ideas, materials, and skills.
- Remind candidates to exercise discrimination in selecting and presenting their work, focusing on the most relevant and successful areas of study.

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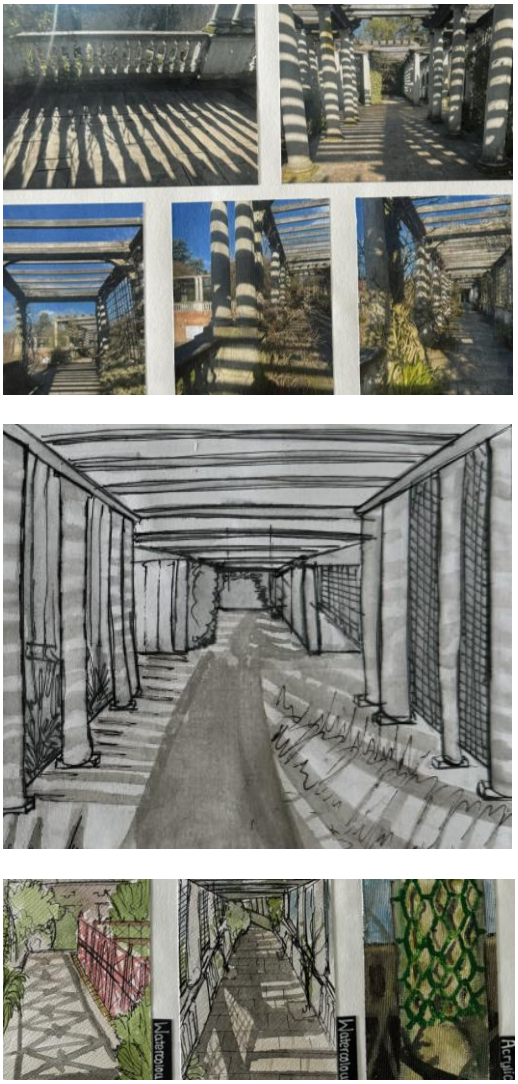
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COMPONENT 2 EXTERNALLY SET ASSIGNMENT

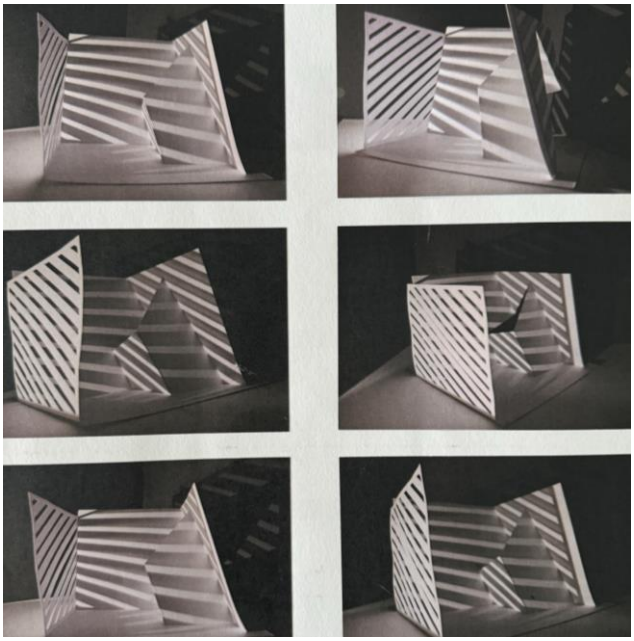
Component 2: Externally Set Assignment | *Strengths:*

- Candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of how to use various sources, including primary sources, to gather information and develop ideas. Often, this contextual awareness supported the depth and relevance of their investigations.
- Candidates showcased strong evidence of recording ideas in a coherent order, documenting observations, and personal intentions effectively.
- Submissions displayed individual creativity, thoughtful responses to themes, and the ability to contextualise starting points effectively, resulting in a broad range of outcomes that demonstrated personal experiences and interests.
- Candidates utilised a range of different materials and methods to record observations, finding new and innovative ways to express their ideas.
- Candidates responded well to the given themes, producing a varied range of ideas. Submissions were presented in a clear, logical order with strong planning evidence for final outcomes.
- Candidates exploited their time effectively throughout the Externally Set Assignment to produce creative bodies of work and outcomes which were often to a high standard, realising their intentions.

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Example (above): drawing informed by primary sourced imagery.



Example (above): experimental 3D structures exploring the starting point 'Shadow'.

Component 2: Externally Set Assignment | *Shortcomings:*

- In some cases, investigations were not sustained, with initial explorations and experiments lacking thoroughness and critical depth.
- Some submissions lacked meaningful contextual research, both in quality and quantity. This sometimes affected candidates' ability to develop and extend their visual lines of enquiry and present outcomes of quality.
- The development of ideas, variations of, and new possibilities were sometimes lacking. At times, candidates did not develop their ideas through purposeful experimentation, and an over-reliance on secondary sourced imagery and research was seen.
- At times, there was a lack of critical reflection on ideas and working methods, leading to weaker creative making and final outcomes. Planning, testing, and the refining of ideas were sometimes missing in the lead up to the creation of a final piece.

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- The consideration of final presentations was at times, lacking. Some candidates did not fully consider the format of their submissions which resulted in outcomes not always matching the strength and ingenuity of earlier idea generation and sampling.

Component 2: Externally Set Assignment | *Suggestions for improving achievement:*

- Encourage candidates to develop sustained visual lines of enquiry and investigations to fully explore and extend ideas.
- Provide candidates with opportunities to research the work of others in sufficient depth to provide analytical and evaluative contextual analysis to inform ideas and creative making.
- Encourage candidates to fully interrogate their starting point as well as materials to be used. In doing so, candidates should demonstrate the development of a range of ideas in order to refine their creative making and achieve higher quality outcomes.
- Encourage candidates to research and record primary source materials that will inform the development of ideas and the creative making process.
- Provide further opportunities for candidates to review and critically reflect upon their own work regularly, allowing time for refinement to take place to improve the quality of creative making.
- Prompt candidates to sufficiently plan for the 15-hour Sustained Focus Period in the lead up to realising their visual investigations.

Component 2: Externally Set Assignment | *Most popular questions:*

Across centres, the component 2 starting points were covered fairly evenly, demonstrating a diverse range of artistic exploration. However, it is worth noting that the themes of *'Shadow', 'Tranquil'*, and *'Gathering'* stood out:

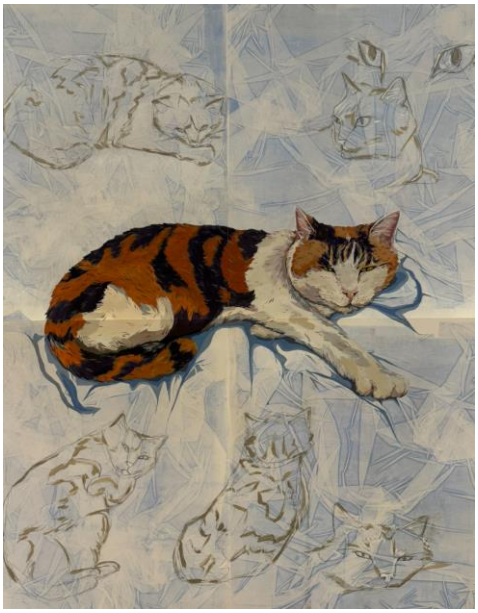


Example (above): a response to the starting point 'Shadow'

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Example (above): a response to the starting point 'Gathering'



Example (above): a response to the starting point 'Tranquil'

These themes provided candidates with the opportunity to explore starting points that resonated deeply, resulting in vibrant and engaging responses. Many submissions showcased not only artistic skill but also demonstrated thoughtful and comprehensive introductions to their work, setting the stage for a thorough examination of their creative process.

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Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.
Tel: 029 2240 4304
Email: artanddesign@eduqas.co.uk
Qualification webpage: AS/A Level Art & Design

See other useful contacts here: Useful Contacts | Eduqas

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