ART & DESIGN

Key messages

- The Assessment Objectives are not discreet units and each should be seen to form a holistic part of the creative process. Some candidates had labelled the pages of their supporting portfolio with a specific assessment objective, for example 'page 1 as Assessment Objective 1', for their recording etc. Whilst the signposting of work in this way can be useful to enable candidates to reflect on their work to see where they have met the assessment criteria, it does not accurately capture how the creative process is rewarded. Some submissions did not show the continuity between these objectives.

- The over reliance on downloaded images was problematic and sometimes limited individuality. Candidates should be encouraged to observe directly from source where possible. This should include detailed observational studies using a range of media in addition to photography, to explore the theme in depth. The use of candidates' own photography to investigate a topic and to gather images during the initial stages of the creative process is encouraged, but it should not be used in isolation.

- Where photography is included candidates should label this work to clearly distinguish between their own photographs and those images that are taken from secondary sources, such as downloaded from the Internet or from books.

- The Internet can be a valuable source for researching information and candidates sometimes rely on using a search engine as a method of research. However this can often undermine the personal vision of the candidate and the individuality of their work.

- The development within some of the supporting work would have benefited from being more focused and systematic. It sometimes remained unclear how work seen in the supporting portfolio had informed the final outcome. At times the final outcome appeared to be a larger version of an initial idea rather than the result of a series of investigations by the candidate.

General comments

Most candidates produced responses within the Fine Art area of study, which included their own supporting photography. There were fewer candidates who chose to submit work relating to Graphic Communication, Three-dimensional Design and Textiles and Fashion, but sculptural or design approaches and outcomes were apparent in the work.

The most successful submissions demonstrated carefully edited work that followed the natural sequence of the creative process. Other presentations contained heavily over-lapped work, which was insufficiently fixed to the supporting sheets, making candidate achievement unclear. Where final outcomes were larger than A2 in size, or were three-dimensional and fragile, centres submitted good quality photographs showing a clear and thorough representation of the work. In some submissions, the communication of achievement would have benefited from candidates presenting their themes more clearly.

Many candidates produced creative, thoughtful and sustained submissions in response to their chosen themes which had been built on best practice. For many, investigation of the works of other artists and practitioners had a positive impact on the development of ideas and direction of work. This broadened the candidates' knowledge of the practices in art and design within the wider context. For some, their developed and resolved submissions demonstrated maturity and a genuine sense of personal commitment.

The ability to select and creatively render materials was apparent. A good selection of two- and three-dimensional media was used to manipulate image, design, and sculptural forms. To ensure quality in their

candidates' work, some centres had provided skill building workshops to develop their practice with media and processes. This enabled stronger responses to the 'Explore' of Assessment Objective 2. However, the success of the work depended on the candidates' ability to manipulate these new skills through their recording and development of ideas. Centres who had taken their candidates to artist studios or exhibitions to do research encouraged observation from first-hand examples. Stronger candidates were able to select the most relevant experiences from this to inform their ideas and make connections. For others, this did not always help to further their work and the research collected from these visits sometimes gave a generic feel to the supporting sheets.

Many submissions contained photography as their tool for gathering visual stimulus instead of other observational methods such as drawing or painting. In this work, much of the exploration and development was carried out using digital media and manipulation. The most successful and informed work demonstrated methods of recording from both traditional media and digital processes.

Where photoshoots were used effectively, models were either hired, sourced, or were friends. Appropriate photography equipment allowed high quality photographs to provide a source of influence for further work. Thoughtful lighting helped to create atmospheric and individual images, which benefited subsequent ideas executed in other media.

Higher levels

The work at the high level was creative and original and reflected excellent technical competence with media and processes. These submissions were well structured to effectively communicate achievement. The portfolio work clearly related to the final outcome to demonstrate the clear understanding of the assessment objectives. Each part of the creative process was thoughtfully explored and candidates demonstrated an effective use of visual language.

Topics were carefully considered to ensure excellent depth of investigation. The supporting sheets contained relevant first-hand observations recorded through strong photographic images and an accomplished use of media. A range of in-depth studies were made through the rendering of drawing and painting in pastel, graphite, inks, pencil, paint and collage during the initial stages of recording. This formed a strong body of research from which to develop.

Ideas were creatively refined throughout the development process. As the work progressed, further visual material was recorded, and the works of several appropriate artists and cultures were investigated. Candidates analysed their work and the connections made with other practitioners led to personal and intelligent outcomes. The excellent application of media, composition and colour was informed through the analysis of the artists' examples. The supporting work demonstrated the candidates' ability to take risks and to try things out as the work evolved, with the aim of discovering new effects.

There was an understanding of the relationship between concept and materials, and how to communicate ideas through effective combinations of media. Ideas were thorough and developed into individual submissions which realised intentions. The presentation of the work at this level was carefully considered, as was apparent either in the refinement the final image or through the organisation of the supporting work.

Middle levels

There were many examples of engaging submissions in the middle achievement level and candidates made good responses to their topics. This work generally demonstrated the candidates' understanding of how to generate ideas and use visual stimulus to develop a range of responses.

The quality and depth of the supporting work varied greatly. For many, research was purposeful and was recorded from a range of relevant sources. Appropriate visits to exhibitions, museums or from exploring the possibilities within the local environment often provided good starting points for research. Recording was made through photography, drawings, paintings or mixed media experiments. Good quality supporting studies often aided in the success of the final work. However, some candidates were unable to maintain the depth of investigation and quality of observation.

The work of other cultures and of different practitioners was researched by many at this level. The most successful candidates used relevant connections to help further their ideas and stimulate new ways of observing a subject to achieve an individual response.

The final outcomes sometimes lacked the qualities seen in the supporting work where the skills learnt and information gathered contributed less to the final piece. There was sometimes an inability to critically analyse the work when identifying the most promising ideas. Sometimes the chosen media translated less effectively into a different scale, or the image and media were not successfully organised into a resolved composition. If the evaluation had been stronger, candidates would have been able to skilfully communicate the ideas and intentions seen in the portfolio.

Lower levels

The lower level submissions were frequently characterised by a noticeable lack of distinction between the candidates' own images, information from secondary and Internet sources and imagery derived from the imagination. Candidates usually demonstrated an incoherent journey through the mark scheme with the supporting work containing unrelated images, often without reference. Sometimes the starting point was unclear or not apparent.

Many candidates relied on the use of secondary sources, rather than recording from direct observation to explore ideas. The research of other practitioners' work or cultural investigation was either limited, unrelated or not included. Some candidates had a very fixed idea of what they were going to make rather than letting their work evolve through the creative process. Submissions lacked the range of research and the observational work contained insufficient depth for informed, purposeful development.

Technical skills at this level were limited and candidates displayed poor draughtsmanship. Ideas lacked the scope for meaningful exploration of the topic and candidates were less able to communicate alternative ideas. Images were organised with little understanding of the formal elements and without trying out different compositions. Often this work was presented as an incoherent compilation of photographs, artworks and ideas.

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Key messages

- Candidates should not rely solely on the Internet to explore questions as this can restrict individuality. The use of candidates' own photography to investigate the question and to gather images in the initial stages of the creative process is encouraged but it should not be used in isolation. Candidates should be encouraged to make observational studies directly from source where possible, including detailed observational drawings using a range of media in addition to photography to explore their theme in depth.
- Where photography is included, candidates should label this work so that it is clear which are the candidates' own images and photographs, and which are second source, such as downloaded from the Internet.
- The assessment objectives are not discreet units and should be seen holistically. Some submissions had labelled pages on the supporting portfolio with each specific assessment objective, for example 'page 1 as Assessment Objective 1' for their recording. Whilst the signposting of work in such a way is useful as it enables candidates to reflect on their work, to see where they have met the assessment criteria or where there are gaps, it does not accurately capture how the creative process is rewarded.
- Candidates should be more selective and edit their supporting work to avoid overlapping and layering of images.

General comments

The standard of submissions was generally good, with some interesting and thought-provoking concepts explored and some candidates used first-hand observation inventively to inform ideas. Most submissions were in the area of Painting and Related Studies, but a few centres offered submissions with Graphics, 3D and Fashion and Textiles outcomes. There was evidence of an engaged and open-minded approach to mixed media and alternative making methods including photography and installation art.

Responses to all the questions were varied and imaginative, particularly those responding to **Questions 2** and **5**, which were the most popular questions. The control shown in the handling of media was often very impressive and showed a great deal of maturity and sensitivity.

In many submissions there was a sense that candidates were committed to the creative process and this could be seen particularly in the supporting studies. These candidates frequently showed a thorough investigative approach and a willingness to explore and try out new strategies.

Some candidates submitting design responses did not include enough primary research and the supporting studies lacked in-depth exploration to transform ideas and identify the most appropriate materials to use. At times candidates tried to achieve too much and some produced three or more different design products, such as logo, poster, web pages and shop frontage. This meant that their workload felt pressured and they had little time to explore the imagery in-depth and make a suitable design.

Where final outcomes were larger than A2 or were 3D and fragile, centres submitted good quality photographs showing clear and thorough representation of the work.

Higher levels

Candidates worked from first-hand sources exploring interesting angles and perspectives. Pathways became more conceptual in approach at this level, demonstrating a strong personal feel. There was observation of surface, texture and pattern using a range of media such as pencils, oil pastels, print and paint. Research

using candidates' own drawings supported their outcomes, alongside research into the work of other relevant artists. These candidates demonstrated very good development of ideas and manipulation of images with the ability to both personally evaluate and demonstrate critical thinking.

At this level candidates were able to work through an idea and respond to their experiments by adding further research material, either in terms of improving their visual stimulus, combining media or developing the concept. The ideas were well thought out, the materials were well considered and the final outcomes demonstrated excellent technical skills. The submissions were mostly consistent at this level across the assessment objectives.

Mid levels

At this level candidates were often less confident at exploring different media and some candidates would have benefited from more compositional experimentation.

Mid level submissions generally consisted of good observational work and candidates often used drawing techniques and photography to initially gather images exploring the chosen question. Some of the work here was sensitive and often showed a good use of media. However, these submissions often lacked evidence of progression and development through media exploration and manipulation of images, to fully developed ideas.

There was some playful use of materials and consideration of the surfaces used to place the imagery on. For example, some responses to **Question 2: Undercurrent**, used tracing paper and semi-translucent surfaces well to explore the idea of overlapping time, movement and gesture. This form of experimentation could have been built on and developed in more depth to fully inform the outcomes. More analysis of their own work and that of other artists could have benefited this stage of the development for many candidates.

Lower Levels

At this level many candidates did not carry out in-depth investigation and recording of visual stimulus to support the development of the idea and there was an over reliance on secondary-sourced material and photography. There were greater inconsistencies between the assessment objectives, less exploration of materials and less continuity of relationships between imagery. Often the final outcome was unconnected with no evidence within the supporting pages. Observational material was limited and therefore the final outcomes lacked integrity. Many of the submissions at this level contained drawings of objects in slightly varied positions and combinations and the final outcome was often a repeated image but in colour or a different media.

There was little in terms of visual development seen at the lower levels and there was almost no exploration of alternative or mixed media or subject matter. Artist research, when included, often did not inform development and candidates would have benefited from more self-analysis to support composition ideas, media use and the ability to review and refine their work before producing the final outcome in the timed test.