

Additional notes for planning the 15 hour Sustained Focus Period (SFP) that concludes Unit 3 Externally Set Assignment (ESA) in Photography

Photography is one of seven titles within the [AS / A Level Art and Design Specification](#), and it is important to recognise that there must be parity of opportunity and challenge across each of the seven options within the SFP. In other words, a digitally produced outcome in Photography should be just as engaging, demanding and require as much time and application in production as, for example, a painted figure composition produced in Fine Art or a fashion garment in Textile Design.

To achieve this, thorough and detailed planning of the SFP is required and this should be undertaken well before the end of the Preparatory Study period. As part of the planning, candidates should consider each timetabled session during the SFP to ensure they are making best use of the time available and not spending too much or too little time on each stage. Account should be taken of resources, such as space, materials and specialist items that are required for each session of the SFP. Some sessions may need to be rescheduled for individual candidates due to the nature of the activity.

The document, [Externally Set Assignment Guidance](#), provides four generic principles that should underpin the planning of the SFP. These principles take account of the widely differing processes and outcomes by which the ESA is brought to a conclusion by candidates. This includes Photography submissions that can be as varied as film, video, animation, darkroom and digital photography. Consequently, the organisation of the SFP often needs to be customised to the requirements of each candidate.

Certain candidates, particularly those who, in the past, have worked mainly with digital media and whose subject matter has been taken largely from the environment to produce standard print outcomes, may need to consider broadening their approach to the SFP in order to make creative and productive use of the full 15 hours which are conducted under examination conditions.

At this stage in their Advanced Level studies, candidates should be aware of the demands made on professional photographers who are often required to respond to very detailed briefs within severe time constraints, including producing work within a studio environment using specified subject matter.

Studio photography can enable candidates to demonstrate their ideas and skills in controlling variations of lighting, composition and viewpoint, as well as the usual combinations of aperture and shutter speed, to meet specific requirements. With some thought and ingenuity, the subject matter, including live models, selected for studio work can be purposefully linked with environmental sources. Studio work can include the production and use of headgear, make-up, body adornment, costume, props and sets.

Photographic images can be used expressively to create photomontage or be combined with other media and printed on **textured** surfaces to produce mixed media, collaged or constructed outcomes of varying scale in two and three dimensions. These possibilities may be extended and enhanced when combined with discriminating use of digital manipulation software such as Photoshop.

Professional photographers are frequently required to combine their photographs with graphic imagery and / or text and present their work in particular formats such as in newspaper and magazine layouts, zines, web pages, illustrated books, information posters, packaging, exhibition designs or installations.

Photographers often creatively combine static with moving or projected images and other two and three dimensional visual imagery in order to attract attention, present persuasive information, address issues or promote products or artefacts such as fashion items.

The above examples can take responses in Photography beyond the predictable and often limiting Photoshop manipulated digital prints. They have the potential to enhance contextual awareness, broaden the range of creative outcomes and address the question of what Photography candidates can produce within the 15 hour SFP.

Some useful reminders for organising the 15 hour SFP.

Centres must ensure that the SFP is conducted strictly under examination conditions for the duration of the 15 hours, giving due attention to the following references.

From Teachers' Guide

How should Unit 3 (Externally Set Assignment) be conducted? (page 23)

(Page 24) It is NOT recommended that sustained focus work be conducted over too many short sessions spread out over more than a week, as this is likely to disadvantage candidates, due to loss of continuity. The practice of arranging the sustained focus period sessions so that they take place during the normal allocation of lesson time could disrupt the application of candidates. As its title suggests, the period should be sustained and focused and appropriate timetabling arrangements should be made to facilitate this. Three to five hour sessions arranged within one week might be regarded as the norm.

Frequently asked questions

Q23: Are candidates allowed to listen to music or access the internet during the controlled sessions? (page 36)

A23: Candidates are not permitted to listen to music. Candidates are not permitted access to the internet. All preparatory work must be checked including all electronic storage devices to ensure only preparatory work is loaded on the storage facilities that are to be used in conjunction with a PC or laptop. Internal centre intranet systems can also be used as long as access to the internet is switched off (page 37).

NB. Any software programmes to be used in the 15 hours should be identified in the preparatory work and planning document (Learner Statement or another appropriate format such as adapting a timesheet). Systems must be in place for the checking and monitoring of preparatory work before the start of the first session and at the end of each session.

Q24: Can candidates have access to their work once the controlled sessions begin? (page 37)

A24: From the end of the first controlled session candidates must not have access to any preparatory or final outcome work outside supervised sessions. At the conclusion of the focus period, learners are able to select, present and evaluate their material ready for centre marking.

NB. This means that, outside controlled sessions, candidates cannot have access to any work produced during the 15 hours, whether electronic or physical. At the end of each session, all preparatory material and outcome/s must be held securely to ensure that it cannot be accessed.

Reference might also be made to the following sources.

AS / A Level Specification

Summary of Assessment Unit 3: Externally Set Assignment (page 3)

2.3 Unit 3 Externally Set Assignment (page 16)

3.2 Assessment arrangements (Unit 3)

Conditions for the Externally Set Assignment, Unit 3 (page 44)

Formats for submissions (page 45)

Teachers' Guide

How should Unit 3 (Externally Set Assignment) be conducted? (page 23)

Frequently asked questions above (page 36 / 37) including question 22 and 25 below.

Q22: What are the regulations with regards to the 15 hours under examination conditions? (page 36)

Q25: What are learners to do in the 15 hours under examination conditions, especially within Photography, Fine Art (Film Making) and Contextual Studies titles? (page 37)