



GCE Examiners' Report

Art and Design
GCE
Summer 2024

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 unit.

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	WJEC 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.wjec.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 WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.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.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC 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.wjec.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 WJEC 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 WJEC

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Executive Summary

The diversity of projects and the depth of contextual understanding demonstrated by candidates have been highlighted as some of the strongest features of the Personal Creative Enquiry. Observational drawing has been enhanced, and candidates have explored a wide variety of interesting and exciting topics. The evidence of multidisciplinary and multi-modal ways of thinking, problem-solving, and visually communicating ideas has been clear.

One of the weakest features has been the limited development and exploration of ideas in some projects. A small number of centres have adopted a prescriptive approach to AO1, limiting candidates' opportunities for exploration and production of a diverse range of work. In some centres, observational drawing has been lacking or entirely absent.

Media testing and reflective recording has been limited in scope in some cases, hampering the depth of explorations and the quality and refinement of the final work. Some candidate work has been overly teacher-led, limiting personal ideas and responses.

In terms of the Personal Investigation, the most effective submissions viewed the extended writing element as an ideal opportunity to successfully communicate the personal nature of their investigation, using sophisticated analytical language. An additional strong feature was the impressive technical ability combined with creative execution. The quality of annotation was generally high, providing useful information and insights into candidates' thoughts, ideas and intentions.

In less successful Personal Investigations, poor time management resulted in candidates spending too long sourcing and investigating a variety of contextual references, to the detriment of idea development and technical explorations. There was also a lack of clarity and coherence when presenting the final response, which showed little consideration and awareness of the proposed audience. Furthermore, insufficient idea progression and poor recording skills, with overly optimistic teacher assessments, was also evident in some submissions.

The creativity and originality displayed in responses to the Externally Set Assignment was commendable. This was often complemented by a high level of technical skill, resulting in conceptually strong and visually compelling final pieces. In the most successful submissions, candidates developed unexpected and interesting lines of enquiry, personalising their responses.

However, in less successful submissions, the selection of contextual references was often irrelevant or not studied in sufficient depth to impact the creative process. The selected media and techniques were not adequately explored to fulfil their creative potential, and explorations did not develop beyond the initial concept. Some candidates struggled to fully develop their ideas within the given timeframe, leading to rushed or incomplete final pieces.

Whilst there are many strengths in the current approach to the Personal Creative Enquiry, Personal Investigation and the Externally Set Assignment, there are also areas which require attention and improvement, to ensure all candidates can develop personal ideas and fully explore creative skills.

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	Identify the assessment band first, matching the descriptors to the candidates work. Next consider the appropriate mark from the band. It is important to revisit exemplar materials for reference, when assessing candidates work.

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UNIT 1: PERSONAL CREATIVE ENQUIRY

Overview of the Unit

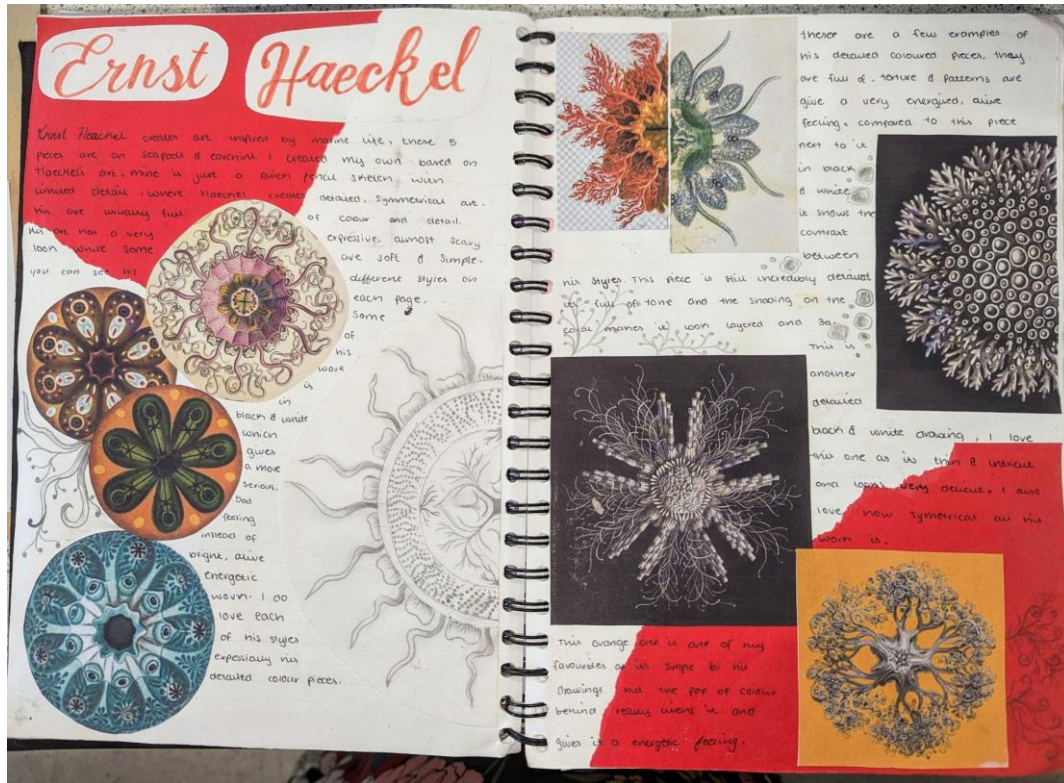
Many Centres carried out a thorough foundational and skill building unit before candidates carried out more personal and self-led work. Moderators reported that a high proportion of students self-selected their subject matter and that this often led to excellent levels of engagement, maturity and focus. Many Centres explored a good range of skills and a variety of different media. This helped to support and encourage students to find their strengths before they then conducted their own self led practice and experiments.

Many Centres made use of gallery, exhibition or location visits as well as guest visiting speakers and makers to initiate and stimulate ideas and to investigate potential working processes. Personal engagement with these primary sources was encouraged and often sustained in nature; with candidates developing individual projects and starting points from these sources.

In some Centres, after the foundation phase, a series of live briefs or projects were set and candidates worked within the parameters of these themes. Some Centres encouraged candidates to respond to a number of the externally set assignment questions from the previous year and to explore these in their projects. This gave them some insight into the set assignment process and the nature and character of these themes.

In some Centres, candidates across the cohort worked on the same theme. Some Centres who did this supported the production of personalised outcome work, whilst in others the outcome work was similar across the cohort. Where work was similar across the cohort, individuality of expression was somewhat limited and outcome work tended to be both underdeveloped and realised.

- It was noted that contextual sources that were explored were relevant and diverse in nature and were often considered at start, mid and penultimate points of study. Sometimes a visiting artist, maker or designer had inspired deep engagement with their work and influences. Where this was seen, it had galvanised and enhanced the engagement of candidates with research, processes and ideas.
- Many moderators reported that creative making was a particular strength in the PCE. Many candidates demonstrated a variety of techniques and showcased their creativity. Their projects displayed innovative approaches and a strong grasp of different mediums and methods. The ability to experiment and take risks in their work was evident; with candidates using a range of formats to present work from handmade sketchbooks, to digital portfolios, QR codes to websites and video blog recordings.
- Learner statements were generally handled in a very thorough manner being sustained, detailed, informative and evaluative in nature. It was noted that there was an increase in the effective handling of these this year. Moderators commented that candidates clearly explained their themes in detail, made connections to artists and other contextual links in their statements and reflected on the positives and areas for development well.
- Moving image explorations and analogue and digital photographic processes were in evidence in photography units but also in units of art, craft and design, textiles, graphic communication and fine art. This was clear evidence of multidisciplinary and multi-modal ways of thinking, problem solving and visually communicating ideas.
- Testing of mixed media processes was strong across some units leading to interesting and diverse outcomes at the culmination of projects. Many moderators reported that a high level of technical skill was demonstrated in the outcome work of many candidates and that planning of these outcomes was often detailed and comprehensive in nature.



Example of the impact that contextual source selection and explorations can have on the development and refinement of creative outcomes in a unit of ACD PCE work.

- Moderators identified that one of the weakest features of the PCE was the limited development and exploration of ideas in some projects. While the initial concepts were often strong and personal, there was sometimes a lack of depth in the investigation and experimentation phases. This resulted in final pieces that, although meaningful, could have benefited from a more comprehensive and sustained exploration of the themes and techniques involved.
- It was noted that a small number of Centres adopted a prescriptive approach to AO1 which limited candidates' opportunities for exploration and production of a diverse range of work. In some Centres, contextual sources were not always studied in enough depth with links between research and own work being superficial.
- In the main, observational drawing had clearly been encouraged by most Centres, however, there were still a number of Centres where drawing from life and for different purposes was lacking or entirely absent.
- Moderators reported that, in the work of some candidates, there was lack of or very limited reflective recording and also absence of any final evaluations to enable reflection upon the progress, development and culmination of projects.
- In some cases, media testing was limited in scope with not enough variety being experimented with and explored. Consequently, at the culmination of studies, these candidates had limited options when it came to the production of outcomes and this hampered the depth of their explorations and the quality and refinement of their final work. Some candidates did not realise their initial intentions within their projects.
- A small number of moderators reported that, in some cases, candidate work was clearly overly teacher-led with no deviation from selected artists, materials and processes. Where this was seen, personal ideas and responses were very limited in nature and outcomes were often uniform in nature across the sample.
- Some moderators noted that some candidates gave limited consideration to the range of different possibilities, formats and ways of presenting outcome work. In these instances, the first idea was used and opportunities for development were missed.
- In a small number of Centres, AI tools were used with little or no acknowledgment of how and why they were being used. This use of AI sometimes took place at the expense of personal development, idea generation and imagination; with candidate work being under developed as a result.



Textile investigations and own photographic location images were used by this PCE candidate to inspire and influence their own painting composition and explorations.

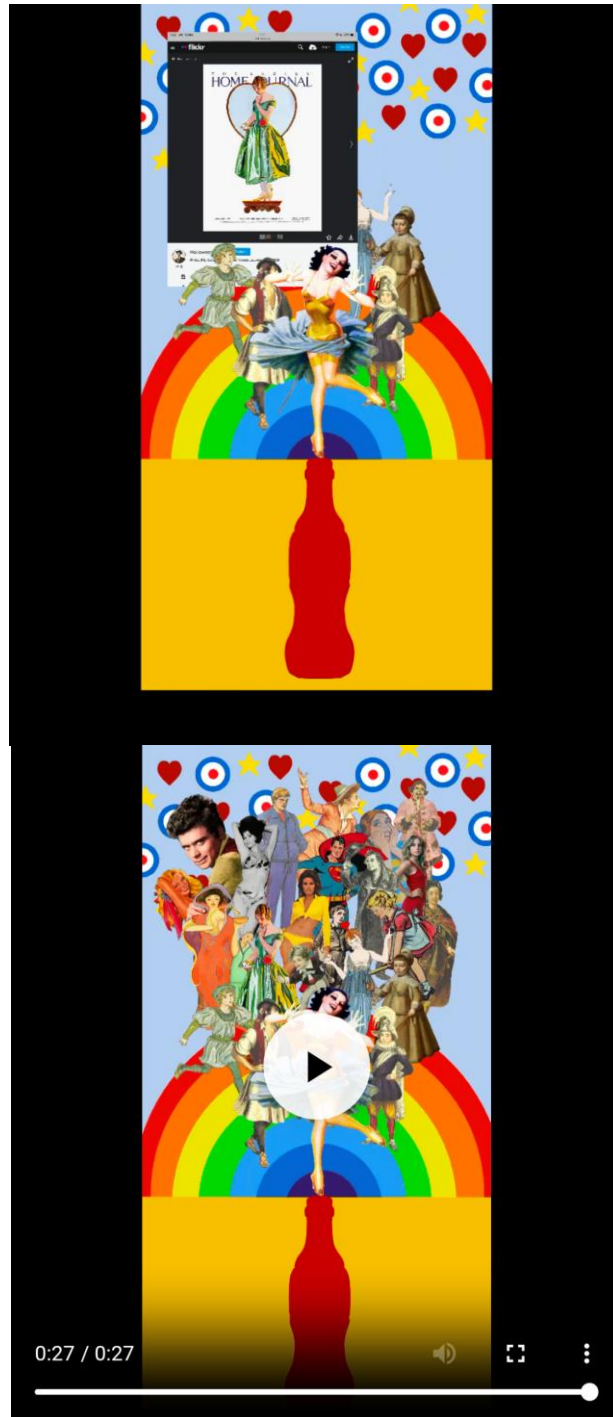
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT

- The provision of opportunities for candidates to meet external speakers, attend site or studio visits, observe the natural world and conduct museum or gallery explorations to instigate and stimulate ideas for contextual references and practical work.
- The continued and enhanced provision of opportunities for candidates to carry out a range of observational drawing studies and drawing for a range of purposes within the disciplines: photography, textiles, graphic communication, 3D as well as within fine art and art, craft and design.



Some thorough, meaningful and detailed planning in evidence with colour swatches and small creative making tests and drawings in evidence in this unit of PCE work.

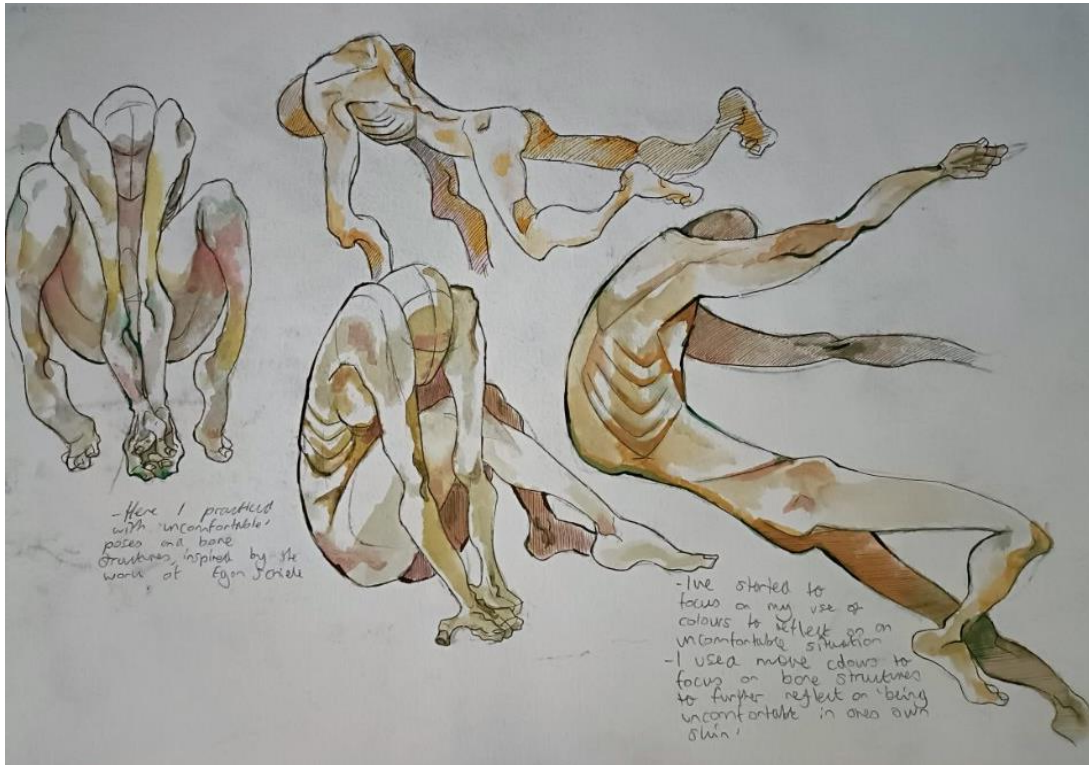
- The embedding of opportunities for a multitude of media testing within all discipline areas so for example within art, craft and design this might be clay and modelling media, various pen and pencil types, mixed media materials, paint varieties, inks and digital techniques or within 3D this might be paper, cardboard, plastics, metals, wood, organic and non-organic materials and digital tools.
- The provision of opportunities for candidates to have appropriate timeframes allocated by Centres. In Centres where the PCE was under developed there had often been an under allocation of time. Candidates being given sufficient time to plan and develop each phase of their projects is key to sustained projects. With Centres providing clear timelines and adequate time for each stage, candidates can focus on their work and maintain quality throughout.
- The continuation of visits to museums, locations, events or sites as an opportunity to draw from observation and to take personal photographs.
- The embedding of opportunities for clearer and more detailed documentation of the planning of outcome work with a range of potential ideas and formats being considered before the final stage of creative making work is carried out.



The use of a video timeline capture to record the processes of the creative making work in a collage enabled this candidate to demonstrate the development and refinement of their work to good effect in an ACD unit

- Where appropriate, the continued support for and incorporation of contemporary presentation techniques that resonate with students and utilise new technology, such as QR codes, VR and AR spaces, digital installations and 3D printing. These methods made some outcomes extremely engaging and accessible, allowing for interactive and dynamic presentations that capture the audience and clearly communicate ideas.

- The embedding of opportunities for a diverse range of media to be handled, tested and explored by candidates in order to ensure that they then have access to a wide range of skills when they move into penultimate and final stages of working processes.



This Fine Art PCE candidate responded to the work of Egon Schiele and explored the use of drawing, colour and form to reflect upon the idea of being 'uncomfortable in one's own skin'.

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UNIT 2: PERSONAL INVESTIGATION

Overview of the Unit

Moderators commented on increased intellectual confidence and practical competency as progress was made through the Personal Investigation and culminating in the Externally Set Assignment. However, some centres identified an increase in candidate absenteeism and lack of motivation as being a significant factor in this year's submission.

From the evidence seen moderators believed that in the majority of instances all assessment objectives had been given equal prominence. Many moderators commented on the strength of the responses evident in Assessment Objective 1 with candidates thoroughly analysing a wide range of relevant contextual sources leading them to generate personal evaluations that showed considerable understanding of purposes, meanings and contexts. However, a few identified weaknesses within assessment objectives 2 and 3 due to a lack of clear idea progression and poor recording skills.

Moderators identified that in many centres, teacher assessment did not reflect nationally agreed standards. In these circumstances teacher assessment tended to be optimistic, and on occasions overly generous. In such situations it was apparent that centres did not have a full understanding of the mark scheme descriptors and/or were unaware of the published exemplars and other support materials available on the website.

Building on last year's experiences, many more centres had adopted digital platforms as a means of recording idea development which existed alongside physical sketchbooks. 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. The use of AI was apparent on occasions as an investigative tool for developing ideas.

Comments on individual questions/sections

With regard to how candidates approached the Personal Investigation no preferred route was identified, as diverse and equally successful methodologies had been encouraged and devised. In the most successful submissions, the PI facilitated candidates to discover and develop their own personal means of expression through the effective communication of their own ideas.

In the strongest submissions candidates made effective use of primary references available within their local environment and beyond. Unexpected and diverse locations, such as antique centres, aquariums and livestock markets were often used as a rich source of visual reference. These self-directed visits to easily accessible locations often resulted in a strong level of candidate engagement and personal response, and of issues which were significant to them.

Many centres organised effective visits to local and national galleries and museums, which had a positive impact on candidates' responses. Direct experiences of artefacts and images not only increased candidates' contextual awareness and understanding but also fostered independent critical thinking and personal engagement in the subject matter, which was then applied to their own practice.

In the most effective submissions candidates viewed the extended writing elements as an ideal opportunity to successfully communicate the personal nature of their investigation using sophisticated analytical language. These investigations were often sustained throughout the PI and positively contributed to the momentum and quality of the enquiries and final outcomes (Image Rhian Morgan)

A strong feature of the PI was the impressive technical ability in evidence combined with creative execution. Candidates often revisited skills learnt during their PCE and applied these effectively to new contexts as they developed their portfolios. The focused exploration of media and process was a strength in many centres with candidates making informed and intelligent use of their selected methods. Many candidates demonstrated confidence and ingenuity in exploring and applying various techniques leading to highly crafted and intriguing outcomes.

Candidates made effective use of sketchbooks as a means of documenting their creative journey. The most successful books were visually exciting and represented the most successful part of many of the submissions. Idea development was thoroughly explored and documented, providing a valuable insight into the candidates' intentions and experiences.

The quality of annotation was generally high, providing useful information and insights into candidates' thoughts, ideas and intentions. Analytical commentary supported the creative process, and clearly informed and enriched progress.

The most successful submissions thoroughly documented idea development providing an ambitious and coherent body of work which clearly communicated successfully realised aims and intentions. Many considered the audience's experience and curated their responses accordingly, by creating interactive installations, sensory environments or identifying site specific locations in which to present their work.



An ACD example of a candidate considering how to curate and display responses

In less successful submissions poor time management resulted in candidates spending too much time on sourcing and investigating a variety of contextual references to the detriment of idea development and technical explorations.

As numerous references had been identified, candidates did not always critically analyse and evaluate these sources in sufficient depth to allow for mature and sophisticated interpretations. Submissions lacked the critical reflection and the rigorous understanding required of the A level specification.

In some instances, the depth of idea development and technical exploration was lacking. While the initial concepts were often strong and personal there was a lack of rigour in the investigation and experimentation phases. This resulted in final pieces that although meaningful were not fully resolved and would have benefited from a more comprehensive and sustained exploration of the themes and techniques involved.

Providing evidence of purposeful drawing in submissions remains a challenge across many titles, and especially in Photography where, annotation was seen as the main method of recording ideas, providing insights and communicating intentions. Similarly opportunities for purposeful primary drawing was often absent in other titles, with candidates depending on poor quality or secondary images. Photographed imagery was often submitted as the only form of visual reference and used as the main inspiration for drawing.

In weaker submissions there was limited evidence of candidates actively reviewing their work and reflecting on their progress. If present, critical reflection was seen as an exercise and had little impact on the creative process, resulting in unresolved and unrefined outcomes.

There was a lack of clarity and coherence when presenting the final submission, which showed little consideration and awareness of the proposed audience. As a result, candidates' intentions were often indecipherable and key meanings overlooked.

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EXTERNALLY SET ASSIGNMENT

Overview of the Unit

Many identified how the ESA submissions represented the culmination of candidates' progress within the course, showing increased intellectual rigour and practical expertise.

It was noted that a strong feature of the ESA, was the creativity and originality displayed by candidates in response to the set themes. Many produced innovative and imaginative interpretations, showing a strong ability to think outside the box and to push the boundaries of their artistic expression. This creativity was often complemented by a high level of technical skill resulting in final pieces that were both conceptually strong and visually compelling.

It was felt that in the majority of instances all assessment objectives had been equally addressed within the submissions, and that teacher assessments on the whole were in line with nationally agreed standards.

Comments on individual questions/sections

In the most successful submissions unexpected and interesting lines of enquiry were developed from the given starting points with candidates interpreting their chosen theme in unpredictable ways and personalising their responses.

Candidates sourced and explored a diverse range of contextual references, often through direct experiences by visiting exhibitions, galleries, and undertaking interviews. These direct contacts were often the most effective and had the greatest impact on submissions.

Contextualising the selected starting points was a real strength throughout the submissions seen this year. Candidates showed a mature comprehension of their sources and how to use them effectively to support the purposes of their submissions.

Submissions showed evidence of extensive skilful experimentation with different techniques processes and media, which were well documented and regularly reviewed resulting in fully resolved and highly competent outcomes.

Many submissions showcased strong evidence of candidates coherently recording ideas, and documenting observations, experiences and insights which were relevant to their personal intentions. Some very high-quality visual studies were seen where a breadth of drawing approaches had been adopted, providing vigour and excitement to submissions. Observational and investigative studies greatly enriched the initial research and had a positive impact on final outcomes.



An example of using Henry Moore’s sheep studies as inspiration for several sketchbook pages of observational studies as a response to “Resurgence”

One of the strongest features of the ESA work was the diversity and intrigue of the 5-hour exam outcomes. Candidates worked to their strengths which was clearly reflected in their sketchbooks and digital portfolios. The projects exhibited a natural flow and a genuine sense of discovery highlighting the candidates' engagement and creativity.

As in the PI the presentation of outcomes was a strong element of many ESA submissions. Many students had carefully considered the presentation of their outcomes, making it an immersive experience.

In less successful submissions insufficient consideration had been given to the selection of contextual references, which were often irrelevant or not studied in sufficient depth to have any impact on the creative process. In a few instances too many references had been selected resulting in superficial analysis and a lack of critical understanding.

Selected media and techniques were not adequately explored to fulfil their creative potential. Explorations did not develop beyond initial concept and were not reviewed and refined with sufficient rigour to impact on practical outcomes. Often the penultimate stages of the preparatory work were weak or absent, resulting in unresolved outcomes. Deeper reflection on ideas and working methods would have resulted in better documented creative processes and strengthened final outcomes.

A lack of quality primary references and a reliance on secondary imagery resulted in superficial investigations where any drawing as research often stemmed from personally derived photographic imagery, resulting in static and lifeless images. More development of ideas from first hand research rather than depending on second hand research would have resulted in creating stronger and more purposeful outcomes.

One of the weakest features of the ESA work was the uneven quality of final outcomes due to time management issues. Some students struggled to fully develop their ideas within the given timeframe leading to rushed or incomplete final pieces. This occasionally resulted in a lack of refinement in the work, which detracted from the overall impact and effectiveness of their artistic responses.

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@wjec.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [AS/A Level Art and Design \(wjec.co.uk\)](http://www.wjec.co.uk/AS/A-Level-Art-and-Design)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

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WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk