

PREPARATORY PERIOD

The Externally Set Assignment is an important element within the assessment process and it is essential that its validity, reliability and integrity are well understood, together with an appreciation of the valuable learning opportunities it offers.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the delivery and assessment of these Art and Design examinations that requirements are strictly adhered to and it must be recognised that this is not solely the responsibility of examination board personnel.

In all circumstances, the authenticity of all work submitted for assessment, including preparatory study undertaken away from the Centre, must be unquestionably the candidate's own work. As far as possible, this should be supervised by a member of staff. Where work has not been closely supervised, suitable measures should be in place to ensure that the character and quality of work is equivalent to that produced under supervision.

Several strategies can be used for this purpose, such as:

- requiring the candidate to carry out similar work under close supervision and comparing standards with work that has been produced unsupervised;
- conducting a viva with the candidate to question the origin and development of work to determine authenticity;
- asking the candidate to provide evidence that unsupervised work is authentic.

To avoid misunderstanding or embarrassment at a later stage, some centres establish these strategies contractually from the commencement of the course. All work produced for the Personal Creative Enquiry and for the Personal Investigation and all preparatory work for the Externally Set Assignment must be subject to the above procedures to protect the integrity of the assessment system.

SUSTAINED FOCUS WORK

This period is 15 hours for the Externally Set Assignment under examination conditions.

Due to the enormous variety of approaches adopted by candidates in tackling the Sustained Focus Work period, it is neither possible nor desirable to detail specific procedures for the conduct of the sessions.

Instead of setting out regulatory details, centres are required to observe certain general principles which, as well as rigorously protecting the integrity of assessment procedures, will provide the necessary flexibility to accommodate the plethora of media, techniques and processes that are utilised by candidates across the various endorsed areas of the examination.

These range from ancient technologies, such as fired ceramic work, to the digitally processed new media of our present age.

1. The first and probably most important of these principles takes account of the educational value of Sustained Focus Work. We all have to operate within fixed time constraints in our everyday lives and in the workplace. The 15 hour period provides candidates with the opportunity of experiencing what it is like to work under certain constraints and within a predetermined time frame. Maximising this opportunity calls for detailed advance planning and preparation to ensure that it is a positive learning experience.
2. The second principle, therefore, is that the 15 hour period must be properly planned. This advance planning should be undertaken by each candidate in close consultation with their teacher. The planned period(s) must take account of organisational factors that might include:
 - resources, equipment, workspace that will be required;
 - time taken to carry out the various procedures and associated processes such as washing, printing, cleaning, drying and firing.

If necessary, the 15 hour period should be split into shorter periods to allow supplementary work, such as the preparation of screens, the drying of clay work and the cutting of mount boards to take place outside the 15 hour period.

3. This leads to the third principle which is that the 15 hour period should make best use of a range of the candidate's abilities so that it is a valid test of important competencies and represents a suitably high level of challenge. It is not desirable that narrow or relatively undemanding tasks such as the labelling or mounting of work or digital printing of photographs should occupy much, or any, of the time allocated.
4. Finally, the work completed during the 15 hour period must be clearly identified in the body of evidence presented for moderation.

Although the assessment of the Externally Set Assignment will take full account of all work submitted, the moderator will need to take into consideration what the candidate has been able to produce under the controlled conditions of the Sustained Focus Work period.

In most circumstances, the 15 hour period will be arranged so that the candidate is able to bring their work to a conclusion during that time but, in certain exceptional cases, such as the application of the last glaze to a ceramic piece, the work will be finalised shortly after the Sustained Focus Work period has ended.

It might be necessary to remind candidates that the outcome of the Externally Set Assignment does not have to be a finished piece of work, but that they should complete enough to demonstrate their ability to take the assignment through to a resolved conclusion.