



---

# **GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

---

**GCE  
ART AND DESIGN  
AS/Advanced**

**SUMMER 2023**

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:  
<https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?!=en>

### **Online Results Analysis**

WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

### **Annual Statistical Report**

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Page</b>
General Comments	1
Unit 1: Personal Creative Enquiry	4
A Level – Standards and Course Structures	12
Unit 2: Personal Investigation	13
Unit 3: Externally Set Assignment	17

**ART AND DESIGN**  
**General Certificate of Education**  
**Summer 2023**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

**General Comments**

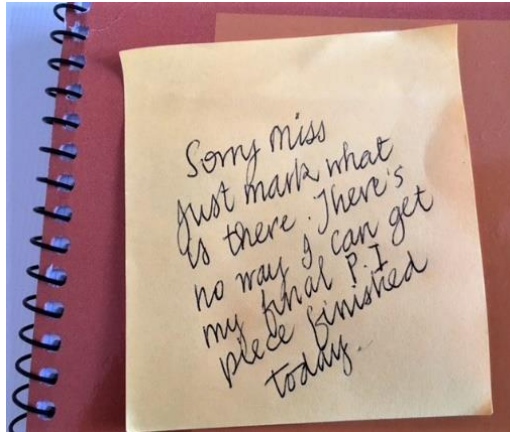
Since the current Specifications for GCE were launched in Autumn 2015, we have experienced changes in the educational environment we could not have previously imagined. With pandemic restrictions now an ordeal of the recent past, we have returned to at least a semblance of normality in terms of re-establishing all the assessment components in GCE art and design. As we resume our time proven procedures, the lasting impact of Covid 19 on our candidates, continues to be a source of concern.

As our experienced team of moderators visited Centres this summer, they occasionally became aware of certain changes in what was being presented for assessment. These included a reduction in the amount of portfolio evidence submitted, less focus on assessment criteria and inability to meet internally-set deadlines. Of course, there isn't much that is new in these findings, it's just that we saw more of these features than we are accustomed to. It's important to emphasise that these possible residual effects of Covid 19 were not seen in most Centres visited, neither were they evident across every candidate in a sample within a Centre.

So how might these issues be addressed by teachers with the small minority of candidates that could be affected? In terms of the amount of work presented for assessment, there is no fixed requirement, provided the evidence is such that it fully meets all assessment criteria. The emphasis, as always, should be on quality, not on quantity. Reference to the many online exemplars will provide a useful guide to what might be a suitable amount. Certainly, the response should not be one of 'padding out' thin submissions with reproduced images and other material that is not the original work of the candidate. Neither should it be a matter of extensively cutting out work from sketchbooks to fill gaps in presentation sheets.

As to the apparent lack of focus on assessment criteria, there is a plethora of resource material that can be used to refresh and sharpen awareness. As well as the generic descriptive bands in mark sheets, the two AO Checklists and Indicative Content for each title, there are Knowledge Organisers and NEA Walk-Through materials in the form of PowerPoints, with audio commentaries that can be used, along with some teacher input, to good effect.

Ensuring candidates meet deadlines has always been a challenge and there are no easy solutions to be offered. However, time management is an important life skill that candidates of all abilities should acquire. The Externally Set Assignment has been re-introduced this summer and its return has generally been welcomed. It is incorporated in our assessment framework to provide, amongst other things, the experience of working creatively within time limits. The ESA is a different kind of assessment than the Personal Creative Enquiry and Personal Investigation and it is vital that its different requirements are respected and followed. Further guidance about the four main purposes of ESA requirements is given in the published teacher guidance document which is available online.



The failure of candidates to present their work in time to meet deadlines can make the task of teacher marking extremely difficult and can have serious consequences, such as disrupting the rank order of a group of candidates. Arriving at fair and accurate judgements requires adequate time for considered comparative assessments to be made and reflected upon before the final submission of marks. It is certainly not something to be rushed, due to late submission of evidence.

There appear to be increasing numbers of Centres switching from entering candidates for GCE Design and Technology to Textile Design and Three-Dimensional Design titles within GCE Art and Design Specifications. This is not always a seamless change, as there are important differences between these specifications that need to be taken fully into account. In art and design there is strong emphasis placed on creative personal responses and the evidence of exploratory processes that lead into these. In general, assessment criteria in design and technology are of a different order. Centres that have undertaken this change and those considering doing so, should study in some detail the online resources that explain the assessment objectives for art and design, as well as the marked exemplars representing 3D and textile design disciplines. Ongoing discussion of assessment criteria with colleagues who are delivering art and design specifications is strongly advisable.

Important changes in certain moderation processes have been introduced this year and we ask for forbearance as we implement these as smoothly as possible. The withdrawal of spoken feedback at the conclusion of moderation visits has been discontinued in order to fully meet regulatory requirements. Although well intentioned, there has always been the possibility of verbal feedback being misunderstood or misinterpreted. To compensate, at least in part, for this withdrawal, more comprehensive written information has been given in the form of extended Centre reports. Essentially, these are intended to provide reasons where and why any adjustments may have been necessary in order to align Centre marks with nationally agreed standards established each year immediately before moderation visits. Additionally, most reports will recognise the strengths identified in the evidence presented for moderation, so that the centre can build on these. They also may include suggestions of where development might be undertaken to further raise standards.

During discussion sessions organised as part of CPD events held during the last year, the 100 or so teachers who attended were asked for their views on current Centre reports. In general, they approved of the *Strongest, Achieved and Develop* comments, but asked that more detail be provided, particularly where Centre marks were adjusted.

Compiling these new style Centre reports to achieve our objective of being as helpful as possible, has not been an easy task and constructive responses from teachers to help us improve them will be appreciated. This should enable us to provide clear and concise feedback that is fully supportive of teachers in their future delivery and internal assessment of GCE art and design.

In the context of providing support for teachers, we wish to acknowledge the distinguished service that our Subject Officer, Mari Bradbury, has given over many years and in different ways to teachers across the UK. She has now taken early retirement from her post, and we wish to express huge gratitude for all she has contributed to our subject and to those who deliver and assess it. We wish her well as she embarks upon new adventures in her retirement.

As we look forward to the future of our subject, yet another challenge is presenting itself – that of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Having successfully harnessed new technologies, from photocopying to *Photoshopping*, we can embrace AI as another opportunity for exciting creative developments. We are aware, of course, of the misuse of such technology and we must quickly establish ways of dealing with this. However, it must not be at the expense of limiting the huge creative possibilities it offers for art and design. The Joint Council for Qualifications has recently published a document that provides a useful source of reference: [\*Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications.\*](#)

## **ART AND DESIGN**

### **General Certificate of Education**

**Summer 2023**

### **Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

## **UNIT 1: PERSONAL CREATIVE ENQUIRY**

### **AS COURSE STRUCTURES**

- Centres often began the year with 'workshop' and 'skill-building' sessions, introducing new media, techniques and materials and focusing on experimentation and testing. This was frequently followed by an individual enquiry, where candidates branched out to develop their personal responses and selected their own topics to explore. Moderators reported that, this year, a higher proportion of candidates self-selected their subject matter, and that this often led to higher levels of engagement, maturity and focus. They also reported that the emphasis upon skill building was strong again; due to the nature of the pandemic rebuild.
- In some Centres, after a foundation phase of skill-building workshops, candidates engaged with a broad theme, set by the Centre, basing their work upon this. Where the theme was suitably broad and engaging, candidates generally responded well to such an approach.
- Many Centres made use of gallery, exhibition, or location visits to initiate and stimulate ideas and to investigate potential working processes. Personal engagement with these primary sources was encouraged and candidates then developed individual projects and starting points from these visits. Moderators noted that in some Centres, location or gallery visits were a feature across the year and that this had effectively stimulated ideas.
- The use of digital and physical sketchbook making was encouraged in equal measure in some Centres, with candidates using their physical sketchbooks to draw from life, test a process and make quick annotations.
- In a small number of Centres, after the foundation phase, a live project or set of projects was set and candidates worked within the parameters of these set briefs.

### **COMMENTS AND ISSUES**

Moderators reported that Centres often encouraged detailed analysis and personal responses to contextual sources and that this was a strong feature of the PCE. In many cases, candidates had made effective use of visits to galleries, museums and locations demonstrating a highly convincing ability to create strong connections between their work and that of other artists and designers. Analytical language clearly showed candidates' understanding and appreciation of the formal elements of art and design. A number of Centres encouraged candidates to make use of reflective models such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and Bloom's Taxonomy to help them structure their written responses to contextual sources.

Several moderators commented that the events of the last few years seem to have encouraged many candidates to create deeply personal work and to engage in unique ways with topics, themes, and approaches. Exploration with a range of 2D and 3D materials was highlighted as being a strong aspect of the PCE, including printmaking processes and experimentation with clay material.

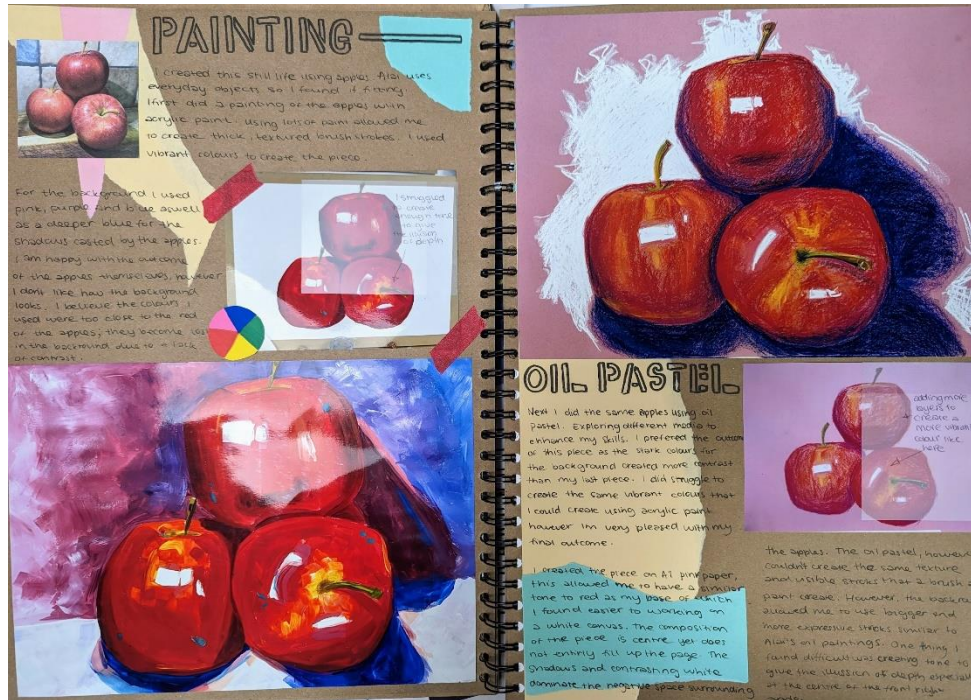
Moderators reported that the use of small sketching-from-life books or the making of hand-bound books for the purpose of recording, had aided some candidates to draw from life more regularly and with increasing confidence. Across the various disciplines, where candidates were encouraged to draw from direct observation, this was a real benefit to the range and standard of the work presented and gave candidates better quality starting points from which to begin their studies and explorations. Encouraging candidates, across ability levels, to carry out observational drawing studies, clearly impacted directly upon the confidence levels of their working practice and the quality of final outcome responses.

Many candidates continued to explore and build upon the full potential of working digitally, discovering and implementing new software such as *ProCreate*, *Microsoft Sway* and making use of QR codes to show development in video form. Digital outcomes were often of a professional standard. Some Centres encouraged a wide variety of interesting final pieces that included personally designed and commercially printed story books, zines and magazines, QR code final pieces, ambitious installation work, website, film and game productions.

Moderators reported that there was good evidence of candidates having access to a wide variety of materials, media and processes this year, with moderators noting that experimentation and testing was a strength. Moderators also noted some interesting and engaging multidisciplinary processes emerging with, for example, photography candidates handling fine art materials with confidence and ACD candidates utilizing 3D processes and skills in exciting ways.

Certain issues were identified by moderators including the logical sequencing of work especially at the penultimate and later stages of development. When using visual boards, candidates who worked in fluid ways and demonstrated logical development of their ideas, tended to produce more refined and sustained outcomes.

Other issues that were identified often related to lack of opportunities to draw for different purposes and, in particular, to draw from life. Where observational drawing skills were in evidence, even with less strong candidates, this was hugely beneficial to hand-eye coordination, idea generation and quality of outcomes.



Example of a variety of media testing in an ACD unit of PCE work.

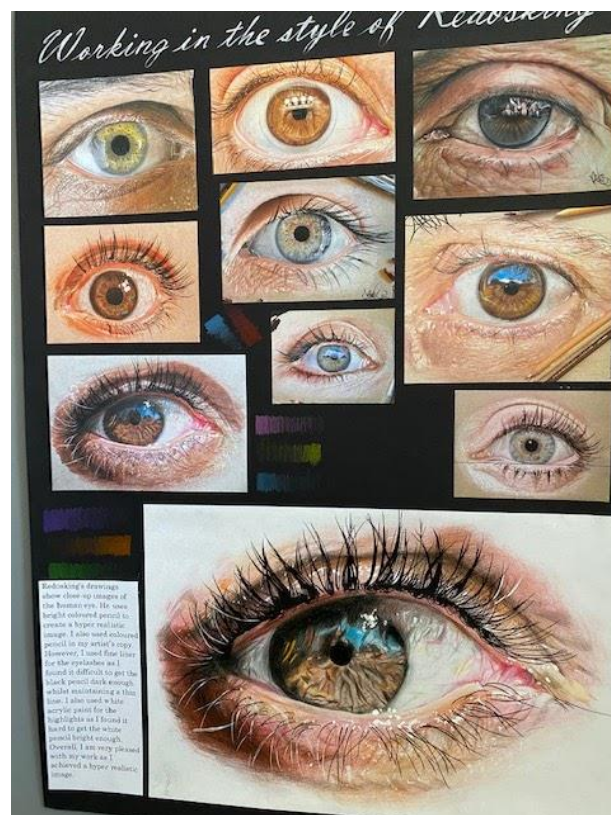


Example of a candidate who made use of a small sketchbook format (A5), in an ACD PCE unit, to inspire quick drawing recording.

## STRENGTHS

- There was evidence of maturity in many submissions. Many responses were personal and discussed difficult topics such as grief, parental illness, mental health, post-Covid trauma and topics related to self-identity.

- Learner statements were generally handled in a very thorough manner. Moderators noted that candidates clearly explained their themes in detail, making connections to artists and other contextual links in their statements.
- Many submissions demonstrated individuality, showing the interests of individual candidates effectively. Personal responses were a real strength of the PCE this year.
- Where candidates had opportunities to draw from life, this benefited the nature of their creative making work throughout their studies and informed the quality of outcomes.
- In some Centres, candidates were encouraged to work in small A5 sketchbooks with this simple strategy improving their drawing skills throughout the year.
- Many Centres gave candidates opportunities to use a wide variety of media to explore different techniques and processes. Stronger handling of 3D processes and media in FA and ACD units was noted by some moderators.
- Candidates often created stronger connections with sources and the analytical language they used was often sophisticated. Development of ideas was rigorous and often detailed.



Example of refined handling of media in an ACD PCE unit.



Example of interesting and purposeful fabric testing and manipulation in a TD PCE unit.

## SHORTCOMINGS

- In some cases, submissions did not contain any observational drawing or drawing for different purposes.
- Drawing and recording on a larger scale, if appropriate and applicable to the theme, was limited and underdeveloped in many Centres.
- The penultimate stages of working processes were not always clear, which meant that the final outcomes appeared suddenly and without enough context or refined development.
- In some cases, Learner Statements were used very thinly or were absent and did not help the candidate to reflect upon their practice or the ways in which their intentions were being realised.
- Links and connections between different parts of submissions were not always made clear, such as through visual or written analysis.
- In some cases, selecting and refining skills further, rather than experimenting widely with different media and techniques, would have been beneficial to the quality of the creative making work produced.







*Evidence of purposeful drawing leading to refined outcome work in clay within an ACD PCE unit.*

**ART AND DESIGN**  
**General Certificate of Education**  
**Summer 2023**  
**Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**  
**A LEVEL**

**A LEVEL STANDARDS AND COURSE STRUCTURES**

In general, moderators considered that standards at A Level had been maintained in line with those achieved in 2022, with candidates selectively building upon the foundations established during the AS course. They showed increased intellectual confidence and practical competency as they progressed through their Personal Investigations, culminating in the Externally Set Assignment. However, many weaknesses were identified within certain aspects of the assessment objectives, especially in AO2 and AO3.

With regard to course structures, there is no ideal scheme to be followed for the A2 course because different, and equally successful, methodologies have been devised and continue to be developed. For this year, moderators found that the A Level course had been delivered as follows:

- As in previous years, the majority of centres started their Personal Investigation (PI) in the Summer of year 12. Using this period of time to effectively consolidate learning experiences by identifying strengths, progressing possible future ideas, and perfecting skills.
- 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 candidate's own work, tending to be used more widely in Graphic Communication and Photography titles. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), as an investigative tool for developing ideas, was evident on occasions.
- A variety of methods was seen in centres' approaches to the extended writing component, with many effectively incorporating it within the body of the submission. The illustrated essay approach remained popular, alongside formats such as journals and digital presentations.
- Many centres welcomed the return of educational visits, making use of galleries and museums, to experience primary contextual references. Candidates also made very effective use of self-directed visits, often demonstrating a stronger level of engagement and personal response. A positive effect of COVID restrictions, seen last year, was the effective use of local amenities. This trend continued, with many centres recognising such facilities as an easily accessible, and valuable resource.

The reintroduction of the Externally Set Assignment was welcomed by the majority of centres, providing additional challenge and opportunities for candidates to pursue new ideas. A minority of centres regarded its reinstatement as an additional time challenge, requiring adapted schemes of learning and adjusting schedules to accommodate the February start date.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

### **General Certificate of Education**

**Summer 2023**

### **Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced**

## **UNIT 2: PERSONAL INVESTIGATION**

### **STRENGTHS**

- Candidates sourced and explored a wide range of relevant contextual references, often displaying excellent analytical and evaluative skills. These references were analysed in-depth, with candidates demonstrating a sound understanding of their purposes and contexts. The most successful responses were often a result of direct contact with a source either through an exhibition, online interview, or studio visit.
- Candidates displayed competent and mature writing skills through illustrated essays, highly detailed Learner Statements, and informative annotation, which enhanced and supported practical responses. In the very best submissions, the extended written element had a direct and significant impact on the practical work, often resulting in surprising and original outcomes.
- Purposeful exploration of techniques and processes was clearly evident across different centres and a range of titles. Candidates revisited skills learnt during their PCE and applied these effectively to new contexts as they developed their portfolios, often mastering these techniques and media to create imaginative and skilful responses. The focused exploration of media and processes was a strength in many centres, with candidates making informed and intelligent use of the methods they selected.
- Explorations and experimentations were effectively reviewed and reflected upon, with candidates using their findings to further develop ideas. Planned peer and self-review opportunities strengthened the overall quality of submissions, peer opinions being obviously valued by candidates and positively influencing the direction and intentions of their work.
- Candidates made effective use of sketchbooks as a means of documenting their creative journey. The most successful were visually exciting and represented the strongest part of the submission. Idea development was thoroughly explored and documented, providing a valuable insight into candidates' intentions and experiences.
- Candidates displayed mature and appropriate recording skills in referencing quality primary sources. Many submissions showed evidence of very high-quality visual studies and a breadth of drawing approaches, which provided vigour and excitement to submissions.
- Highly personal themes and ideas were pursued, reflecting total engagement in their work. Selected subject matter often included social issues, contemporary concerns, and personal experiences. This personalisation of chosen themes often led to imaginative and highly original outcomes.

- The most successful submissions thoroughly documented the progression of ideas, providing a coherent body of work which clearly communicated candidates realised aims and intentions, with consideration of a possible audience.



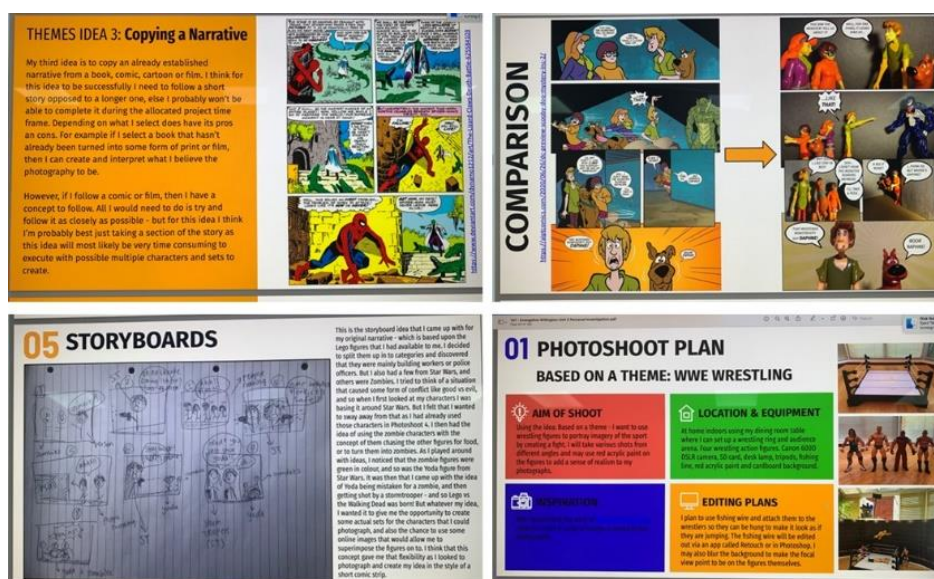
An experimental and interesting use of the cyanotype process to explore portraiture within a PCE unit for ACD.





## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT

- Encourage candidates to research contextual references in greater depth, so that they can demonstrate higher order critical and analytical skills. Focus their responses on artists' intentions, and the contexts within which artefacts were produced, rather than biographical and descriptive commentary.
- Consider alternative methods of presenting the extended writing component; an illustrated essay is not always the most appropriate and creative form to encourage deeper engagement with a subject and fully demonstrate a candidate's contextual understanding.
- Plan and provide opportunities for candidates to review and refine their own work and that of their peers, so that they receive a variety of feedback and have time to reflect on their own progress and the necessary next steps. This would be particularly advantageous at the mid and penultimate points of their investigations.
- Place greater emphasis on gathering quality primary references through appropriate drawing forms, especially in the initial stages of research and idea development. An appropriate drawing approach is required across all titles, and should play an integral part in investigations, such as carefully considered, detailed storyboards for photographic shoots, demonstrating an understanding of the formal elements within different titles and exploring compositional possibilities in fine art, graphics, and photography.
- Encourage candidates to consider the overall presentation of their submissions so that their intentions and investigations are easily accessible to the viewer. Greater selection and organisation of materials and detailed annotation would help clarify the progression of ideas and improve outcomes.



*An innovative idea for a Graphics PI, of using existing graphical material to explore ideas and inform both the photoshoot and narrative.*

## ART AND DESIGN

### General Certificate of Education

Summer 2023

### Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

## UNIT 3: EXTERNALLY SET ASSIGNMENT

### STRENGTHS

- Candidates sourced and explored a diverse range of contextual references often through direct experiences of visiting exhibitions, galleries, and through interviews. These direct contacts were often the most effective and had the greatest impact on 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 showed evidence of very high-quality visual studies and of adopting a breadth of drawing approaches, which provided vigour and excitement to submissions. Observational and investigative studies greatly enriched the initial research and had a positive impact on final outcomes.
- Candidates showed well documented development of ideas, including investigative sketches and annotation. The creative process was clear and effectively communicated.
- Many candidates thrived on the opportunity to select a new enquiry for the ESA and often demonstrated highly personal interpretations of their chosen starting point.



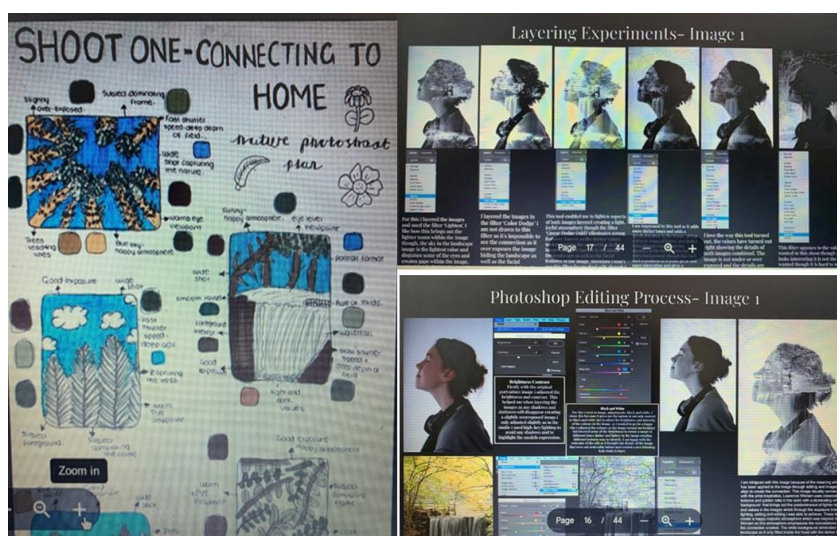
*Exploring media and composition in an ACD response to the ESA question of "Translucency".*

## SHORTCOMINGS

- Contextual references were not studied in sufficient depth and often had little relevance to the chosen question and final outcome. Analytical commentary was insufficiently thorough and had little impact on the creative making.
- 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.
- 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 photographs, resulting in static and lifeless images.
- Some candidates did not plan effectively or use their time efficiently and, as a result, did not fully realise their final outcome.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT

- Reinforce the significance of providing quality critical commentary when analysing contextual sources, by focussing candidates' responses on artists intentions, their influences, and the contexts in which they worked.
- Ensure that investigations into techniques and materials are purposeful, thoroughly documented and regularly reviewed so that the creative journey is clear and coherent and leads to fully resolved outcomes.
- Promote the use of quality primary sources and observational drawing using a variety of styles, media, and techniques, to enhance visual research and feed personal and imaginative ideas.
- Encourage candidates to show greater discrimination and critical reflection during the development of initial ideas that lead to practical outcomes.
- Remind candidates of time restrictions by encouraging them to plan and timetable their preparatory study leading up to the Sustained Focus Period and plan how they can make effective use of the 15-hour period.



*ProCreate used to explore ideas through drawing and as a planning tool for a Photography PI, showing a clear relationship between the initial drawings and the development of the outcomes.*



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