
AS

Art and Design

7243/C & 7243/X - Graphic communication
Report on the Examination

7240
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General

Many teachers commented positively on the clear language of the new specification and the inclusion of contextual references in the question papers. Teachers were able to adapt existing schemes of work to meet the requirements of the new specification. The extensive support materials provided on e-AQA were valued by many teachers.

The 10 hour period of supervised time at the end of the Externally Set Assignment was seen as an opportunity for students to produce finished work which was considered to be an appropriate conclusion to AS. The work seen in schools and colleges was very much a celebration of students' achievement in Art and Design.

At the start of the AS year, the majority of schools and colleges provided an introductory course. These varied in both structure and content. A series of focused tasks or short projects introduced students to materials, processes and techniques or were designed to develop particular skills. Most students then produced one extended personal project which addressed all four Assessment Objectives.

Intensive drawing projects provided opportunities for students to explore a range of media and techniques and to develop their observational skills. Examples included small, closely observed studies of natural and manufactured objects and large expressive drawings of the human figure. Explorations into mark-making techniques were widely seen. Some students were provided with small tasks or assignments designed to introduce them to formal elements and the language of art and design. A number of students explored typography, composition and other graphic elements by responding to the work of others in a series of design tasks. In some schools and colleges, students were introduced to computer software packages and print-making media.

For the extended project, most teachers provided students with a choice of stimulating starting points. Some students were asked to respond to a single, open-ended theme. Where students produced their own starting points, these did not always provide enough scope for the investigation and the development of ideas. Responses to ideas, issues and events were often thoughtful and considered.

A wide range of traditional and contemporary practice was seen in portfolios. Fieldwork provided many students with first-hand source material which they often recorded with digital cameras and/or smartphones. Successful students responded to source material with insight and sensitivity. When found images were used successfully, there was evidence of selection and they were responded to imaginatively. Some very accomplished drawings were seen, in both finished and preparatory work. Evidence of good drawing practice was also seen in well-considered sketches and diagrams that were appropriate to intentions and fit for purpose. Thumbnail sketches and storyboards, for example, enabled many students to explore ideas, to refine compositions and layouts, and to plan their work.

In successful work, students were inspired, influenced or helped by references to appropriate contextual material which informed investigations and the development of ideas. Some students investigated contextual material at the beginning of each project. Others referred to the work of others as their work progressed. Appropriateness to the student's intentions was important when identifying and choosing contextual sources. The majority of students demonstrated care and discrimination when selecting relevant contextual material and other sources. Some students simply downloaded collections of unrelated images from websites such as Pinterest and these did little to inform their investigations.

In the most successful work, students provided clear evidence of their intentions and of their ability to investigate and develop ideas. The best examples were thoughtful, personal, coherent and organised. Some exciting sketchbooks were seen and high standards of presentation were reported by moderators. Successful digital sketchbooks included images that were organised into a PowerPoint presentation or into folders that were labelled clearly. The thoughtful and considered selection of images for assessment was an important factor in the most successful work.

It is a requirement of the specification that images which are not produced by the students are identified and acknowledged, either in the body of the work or on the Candidate Record Form.

It is also a requirement of the specification to identify what was produced in the supervised time.

Administration, marking and moderation

In most schools and colleges, mark sheets were completed correctly and were received by the deadline of 31 May. Problems occurred when Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) and Centre Declaration Sheets (CDSs) were not completed before the moderation visit. Some CRFs were not signed by the teacher(s), some did not marry up with the work displayed and there were some transcriptional errors between the CRFs and Centre Mark Forms (CMFs). However, teachers' comments on the CRFs were often very helpful.

Teachers are reminded to send the pink **and** yellow copies of Centre Mark Forms (CMFs) or two copies of EDI print-outs to the moderator. One copy of each will be returned indicating the required sample(s) for the moderation visit.

Preparation for moderation visits was generally very good. Samples were displayed as an exhibition or presented in folders, either equally acceptable. Labelling was usually clear, but there were a few exceptions which was very disappointing. It was most helpful when different sets of work were clearly labelled and separated. Many teachers organised the samples in rank order. Where different components of a particular candidate were displayed together it was not always a straightforward task to identify which work belonged to which component. The majority of moderators were provided with a quiet, private space to work in. Teachers are reminded that moderation is a confidential process and the moderator must not be required to mark work in public spaces.

A number of moderators commented on the positive approach of teachers to the moderation process and to the warm reception they received. However, there were occasions when they felt under real pressure to reveal marks, which they cannot do because they do not know the outcome of their marking.

Understanding of the requirements of the four assessment objectives often resulted in accurate marking. Problems generally occurred when teachers awarded their top student high marks when a lower mark was more appropriate. Standardisation meetings are viewed by many teachers as an opportunity to see different ways of working and a variety of approaches from schools around the country. The training provided by AQA at standardisation is regarded by many teachers to be exemplary. Erratic marking was often linked to non-attendance at these meetings.

Assessment Objectives

AO1

Successful students demonstrated the ability to investigate and develop ideas in a sustained, focused and coherent manner. Their intentions were clear. Meaningful references to appropriate contextual material helped students to consider different approaches and to develop their own personal language. Analytical and critical understanding was evident in the choices and decisions made by students and in the connections made between images.

AO2

The development of skills when handling media, materials, techniques and processes enabled students to investigate and develop their ideas successfully and to review and refine them as the work progressed. Successful students demonstrated their ability to explore and select resources appropriate to their intentions. Less successful students did not always provide evidence of refining their ideas and their work often lacked basic skills and an understanding of materials and processes.

AO3

Students recorded ideas, observations and insights in a variety of ways including drawings and colour studies, photographs, computer generated material, textile samples, models and maquettes. Successful practical work provided evidence of how students reflected critically on their work and progress and the way that a particular idea or image led to another. Most students provided additional evidence in written materials. The least successful students produced collections of unrelated images with annotations which added little to the understanding of practical work.

AO4

Successful students developed appropriate skills and understanding which enabled them to manage their investigations effectively and to realise their intentions. Clear and confident connections were made between elements of the work. The majority of students realised their intentions at different stages of their investigations as well as in the final outcomes.

Portfolio (7243/C)

After an initial introduction to graphic communication, the majority of students produced one extended project which addressed all four of the Assessment Objectives. Introductory courses usually comprised short tasks or projects in which students explored formal design elements and graphic materials, processes and techniques. In some schools and colleges, students responded to carefully selected examples of contextual material which helped them to develop understanding of particular aspects of graphic communication. Portfolios included explorations of typography, layout, grids, computer software packages, photography, and illustration techniques. Teachers provided stimulating design briefs or a choice of broad, open-ended starting points for the extended project. Where appropriate, many students were encouraged to engage at first-hand with their chosen source material. When secondary images were used, successful students demonstrated their ability to be selective and discriminating. Field-work enabled some students to develop their understanding of design context. Ideas were developed from a wide range of sources

and the work produced often went much further than was suggested in initial studies. Many exciting and well-considered portfolios were seen.

Examples of most areas of graphic communication were seen. Popular areas of study included branding, design for print and publications, advertising and packaging design. Illustration using both traditional and electronic media was seen and a number of students demonstrated high levels of skill in drawing, painting and printmaking. Examples of motion graphics were seen in a few centres where students produced animated logo designs for Apps and television channels.

Many students demonstrated high levels of skill when handling computer software packages but it was not unusual to find a lack of evidence of how choices and decisions were made and final designs arrived at. Printing key stages when developing and refining ideas provided clear evidence of and helpful insight into the student's thinking. Thumbnail sketches, simple drawings and diagrams were used to investigate initial ideas and to consider alternative layouts.

Investigating the work of others helped the majority of students to consider different approaches and genuinely informed their investigations and the development of ideas. A wealth of interesting and rewarding sources was referred to in portfolios. Contextual material provided students with valuable insights into relationships between image, text and layout, and helped them to develop their awareness and understanding of graphic conventions and visual language.

Successful students demonstrated their understanding of the appropriateness of particular typefaces for different contexts and purposes, and gave consideration to the sizes of typefaces used. They also understood the impact which margins and space have on the balance of layouts. On occasion, less successful students produced multiple applications of logo designs at the expense of investigation and development.

Work was presented in sketchbooks, in transparent sleeves and on mounted sheets. High standards of presentation were seen in work that was well organised and visually attractive to see. A number of students made use of decorative borders but, on occasion, when these were unnecessarily elaborate and intrusive, and detracted from the work. When electronic sketchbooks were successful, files were well organised, accessible and labelled clearly. Most were accompanied by hard copies which documented key stages in the development of the work.

Externally Set Assignment (7243/X)

The majority of students used this component to demonstrate and continue to develop what they had learnt in the Portfolio. There were many examples of well-researched and resourceful responses. The paper comprised a mixture of open-ended and brief-style questions. Teachers are reminded that all of the questions are starting points which can be interpreted differently by students.

The Abbey at Riverdale

Imaginative and successful students explored different ways in which the name of the restaurant might be configured which led to interesting ideas. A number of students identified the idea of the tranquillity suggested by the title and investigated ways in which typeface, image, colour and layout could express a tranquil atmosphere. Some students undertook fieldwork in suitable locations and either incorporated photography in their work or used their own photographs to produce illustrations for a logo design. Examples included drawing, painting and printmaking.

Student Guide

Responses included designs for print and electronic media for real or fictional schools, colleges and universities. A wide range of interpretations was seen including publicity material for open days and end of year exhibitions. A variety of fold-outs and reversible poster-brochures was also seen. A number of examples included illustrated maps of campuses. Investigations into contextual material had a positive impact on the development of ideas and opened up a wide range of possibilities for personal work. Successful students demonstrated their ability to handle complex relationships between typography, image and space.

HiBri Cabs

Some responses included well thought through designs for vehicle wraps, advertising and stationery. A number of students produced designs for Apps and webpages. In the majority of examples, students explored both aspects of the question, environment friendly taxis and wheelchair access. Successful students demonstrated their understanding of typography and colour in a variety of convincing logo designs and publicity material.

Jams and preserves

The question provided opportunities for students to consider a variety of styles and approaches. Some students based their work on sensitively observed illustrations of fruit and others demonstrated their photography skills. References to appropriate contextual material provided insights into the diversity of approaches that might be taken. Some designs for labels, packaging and advertising material were decorative and had a vintage feel. Others were strikingly minimal and hard-edged.

Sports event

The work of designers and design groups included in the question was referred to by the majority of students. A broad range of mainstream and more specialised, minority sports activities provided interesting source material. Several responses utilised local sports events. Multiple exposure photography and layering were used by some students to portray the energy and power of particular sports. Imaginative outcomes were seen in designs for posters, stamps and publicity material. Several students produced campaign graphics to raise awareness of sport for the disabled. Other examples promoted sport for children living in inner-cities.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.