
AS

Art and Design

7246/C & 7246/X – Photography
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.

Photography

The new specification led to some subtle changes in approach to the delivery of AS. Digital photography and editing software was used in the majority of schools and colleges, although an increasing number of submissions also included traditional techniques, sometimes at a very basic level. Some students chose to include the moving image. Digital sketchbooks, using presentation software such as PowerPoint, were used to good effect by many students. The most successful examples included hardcopies of final images which helped to further demonstrate understanding of production techniques. The majority of students chose to present their work as hardcopy in sketchbooks.

The majority of teachers were aware of the need for students to demonstrate greater understanding of selection, technique and planning. Some students included documentation of what they hoped to achieve in a particular shoot, planned for that particular shoot and evaluated

the results. This influenced the direction of their investigations and provided additional evidence for assessment. Some teachers produced a planning sheet for students to work with.

The most successful digital and traditional work included annotations which provided evidence of students' thinking and documented why a particular shot was chosen from a contact sheet, how work was informed by contextual references and the technical considerations of each shoot. Usually the intent of the investigation was clear from the outset. Many students chose to work with manual settings on their cameras and noted the settings on their contact sheets. This is good practice and should be encouraged.

Where students included studio work, diagrams of the planned photo-shoots and proposed lighting were often included. Effective planning was also seen in traditional darkroom-based work. Digital photography was widely used, but a resurgence in darkroom work often contributed to students' understanding of photography.

Successful students demonstrated their understanding of relevant photographic techniques and camera skills when developing informed, personal responses.

In less successful work, students presented collections of images with little understanding of techniques and a lack of discrimination or real engagement with the topic. Irrelevant image manipulation was frequently found in these submissions. In a number of examples, extremely interesting images were presented but with insufficient evidence of investigation and development. There was a tendency to mistake unjustified image manipulation for evidence of the development of ideas, which led to over-marking in a number of cases.

Portfolio (7246/C)

The Portfolio was used by many schools and colleges as an introduction to photography and to the requirements of the specification. Some students included a number of mini projects designed to introduce techniques and camera skills. These were often developed into an extended project. Most teachers recognised the importance of contextual references and the majority of portfolios included evidence of studies of the work of relevant photographers and artists from other disciplines. Students included detailed experiments with camera techniques and digital effects. Schools and colleges usually provided a theme, or a choice of themes for this component, and many students took the opportunity to present, edit and organise their work carefully.

In some examples, extensive contextual research was included which did little to inform the investigation and the development of ideas. The most successful students included research which was understood and had a definite influence on their work. The majority of students made clear which work was theirs and which was the work of others. This is a requirement of the specification and must be adhered to avoid allegations of plagiarism. Where manipulation techniques were used, successful students included detailed explanations of the process as well as consideration of the outcome. The camera settings used were well documented and their effectiveness considered. In less successful work there was evidence of a lack of defined purpose, poor organisation and limited investigations in which students demonstrated little understanding of contextual references or photography skills.

Many students chose to include written evaluations of their work, their reaction to research findings, and their progress in the investigation. This provided genuine insights into their work, understanding and decision making. Sometimes, evaluation was little more than a descriptive commentary which added little to the investigation.

Externally set assignment (7246/X)

Students of all abilities were able to respond to the broad range of starting points offered. Teachers welcomed the introduction of contextual references within the AS question papers. The specification requires students to complete final outcomes in a 10 hour period of supervised time and to clearly identify what was done in that time. This was met by the majority of teachers by using a red dot at the start of the controlled time, or by the student completing a log. In some examples work produced in the supervised time was not identified.

Personal opinions

Thoughtful and fluent work was produced in response to topics in which students explored the nature of contemporary society and expressed interesting and thought-provoking opinions. Some students explored specific issues, stereotypes and teenage problems. Text was included in a number of responses. In some examples researching the topic dominated the investigation at the expense of the practical work

Image and text

This was a popular starting point. Many students explored an issue of concern to them and made their point with overlaid text, often in response to contextual references. In some examples the work became copies of the selected research. This was evident in the less successful submissions, where contextual references were not fully understood. Successful work was thoughtful and confident. Students demonstrated understanding of contextual references and explored various ways of adding text to images, some approaching abstraction. Graphic, as well as fine art approaches to this starting point were seen.

The passing of time

Responses included numerous examples of various advanced camera skills, and many students used it as an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding. Carefully controlled exposures were evident in many submissions and appropriate consideration was given to ISO and image quality. Some students seemed to struggle with techniques, but produced responses that were very interesting in concept. Some effective outcomes were produced using double exposures. Topics explored included day and night, decay, light trails and stop motion.

Mood and atmosphere

Portraiture was a popular theme in response to this starting point. Street scenes at night influenced by film noir were also popular. Studio lighting techniques were used in a number of submissions in which students explored controlled lighting effects. The more successful examples provided detailed plans of lighting set ups and responded to relevant contextual material. Successful students carefully considered the contextual references suggested in the question and also referred to other examples relevant to the effects they wished to achieve. Less successful work tended to be rather disparate with little attempt to develop ideas beyond initial thoughts.

Image manipulation

This was a very popular starting point and it gave many students the opportunity to demonstrate their skill with fluent, purposeful image manipulation. Some students, tended to rely on copying the work of others with little attempt to respond personally. Regrettably, this starting point saw something of a resurgence of the over use of filters in less successful work, with little rationale for their use. Traditional skills were also used frequently, with examples of double exposure and darkroom manipulations evident. These tended to appear in the more successful and confident investigations.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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