AQA

A-LEVEL

ART & DESIGN

7203/C & 7203/X – Graphic Communication
Report on the Examination

7203
JUNE 2017

Version: v1.0

Personal Investigation (7203/C)

Graphic Communication is well established in schools and colleges and students produce creative, thorough and well-presented submissions. It was clear that students find graphic communication an exciting and rewarding area of study. Successful displays and folios of graphic work were a celebration of students' achievement in art and design.

Extremely sophisticated examples were seen in which design elements and visual language were understood and manipulated with confidence and maturity. Evidence of good practice was not confined to work produced by the most able students. In many examples of less articulate and confident work, students demonstrated their understanding of design process and awareness of context. This was the result of well-designed courses and good teaching in response to the specification.

The Personal Investigation is an opportunity for students to develop and apply the skills and understanding acquired in the first year of the course or at AS. The thoroughness and depth seen in many investigations demonstrated that students understood the sustained, focused and personal nature of work at this level.

Areas of study that were most popular included branding, advertising and packaging design. Illustration using both traditional and electronic media included high standards of drawing, painting and printmaking. Graphics for film and television included motion graphics and short opening title sequences. High levels of photography skills were seen in examples of design for print and publications. Effective poster designs, book covers and layouts for magazines and company reports were seen. Accomplished packaging designs included refined and sensitive work alongside strong, bold designs. Shelf-presence, product awareness and understanding of context were important in successful work. Most students used traditional methods or software packages to produce three-dimensional mock-ups of their packaging designs. Posters were often printed full-size and book cover designs included wraps. IT was used to produce visuals of posters, signage and environmental graphics in adshels, on hoardings and on buildings.

Teachers provided design briefs and open-ended starting points. Some students wrote their own briefs in response to an idea, theme or issue. Materials were collected from a wide range of sources and students were often able to base their work on their own interests. Fieldwork which provided good source material added meaning to investigations and to students' awareness and understanding of context. Where secondary sources were used successfully, students were discriminating in ways that they selected images and skilfully manipulated them.

Drawings, thumbnail sketches, diagrams and scamps provided evidence of students' abilities to generate, develop and refine or improve their ideas. Some teachers insist that students investigate and develop their ideas on paper before starting work on a computer. In successful work, students printed key stages in the development of their work which provided evidence of refining their chosen idea and gave valuable insight into the choices and decisions made as work progressed.

Successful students demonstrated their understanding of the character of typefaces. Consideration was given to the appropriateness of type style and font size. Margins and the effectiveness of space were also considered. Atmosphere was a key element in some of the work in which images, colour and tonal values were explored convincingly and with sensitivity.

Successful examples of the required written work clearly supported and provided a rationale for the practical work. Relevant work by designers was analysed and ways in which references inspired,

informed or helped students to develop their own personal language were explained. Thoughtful and considered written work provided additional insight into students' thinking and evidence of their understanding of graphic communication.

Most students presented their practical work effectively, often to a high standard and in a manner which made it possible to 'read' it. Folders of transparent sleeves, sketchbooks, mounted sheets of studies and design sheets were used. Some students produced electronic sketchbooks and PowerPoint presentations. It was very unusual to find a student's work spoilt by poor hand-drawn lettering, by careless and untidy captions, unnecessarily intrusive decorative borders or an ill-considered layout.

Externally Set Assignment (7203/X)

Astronomy

This starting point stimulated some vivid and well researched responses. Visits were made to the National Space Centre and the Science Museum. A visit to the Tate Hall Museum informed one investigation into the contribution made to Particle Physics by the University of Liverpool. Students found the work of Simon C. Page and Massimo Vignelli particularly helpful. Examples seen included a variety of logo designs, posters, signage and motion graphics.

Italian Biscuits

Students considered ways in which a flowing typeface for the company name, 'Tilly's' could relate to a static typeface in the surrounding text. Atmosphere, 'feel' and context were important considerations in successful work. In addition to references in the question, there was extensive research into Italian biscuits and examples of historical and contemporary packaging designs. Finished work included exciting and appealing designs for packaging and promotional graphics. Colour was used particularly effectively. One example was based around a photoshoot of a head-scarfed lady on a Vespa, in the style of Audrey Hepburn in the film, Roman Holiday.

Traffic scheme

There were several strands to this question and students chose starting points about which they had something to say. Some students chose a single aspect from congestion, road safety, pollution and transport systems as the focus of their investigation. Others considered how to represent each element of the traffic scheme with a consistent house style and identity. References were made to contextual material in the question and to graphic representations of traffic schemes which included existing and proposed tramway systems in Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool and Croydon.

Fungi and lichens

This starting point prompted a wide range of responses that included illustrations for children's books, natural history guides and scientific journals. One student used macro photography to produce cover designs for a set of books of modern poetry. Some accomplished examples of drawing and painting were seen. Page layouts and double page spreads were often well designed with appropriate and confident consideration given to relationships between image, type and space.

Ethical graphics

Responses included graphics for arts and literary festivals, environmental industries, education and charities. Some students produced brand identities for events or ethical companies and Fairtrade products. Investigations into issues which included health, racism, animal welfare and cyber-bullying led to responses that were very personal. One student produced graphics to raise awareness of the breakdown in conversation caused by smartphone use. References to examples in the question helped students to understand the meaning of ethical graphics and to identify a starting point for their investigation.

Exhibition

Students who recognised the graphic potential and vitality of intricate, colourful, abstract fabric designs for buses, trains and trams, produced interesting and powerful examples of promotional material and environmental graphics. A variety of responses included designs for exhibition posters, catalogues and signage, and packaging for exhibition merchandise. Some students investigated historical fabric designs to produce graphic work which evoked a period atmosphere. Visits to transport museums and Internet research led students to explore contemporary examples.

Pet food

An extensive range of European and American brands were investigated. Some students were intrigued and inspired by the variety of graphic language used. Successful examples seen were based on in-depth research and good quality source material. Students understood the complexities of combining images and typefaces into cohesive designs that were imaginative and original. Many students demonstrated their photography skills and were discriminating when selecting images from photo-shoots. Found images were also used effectively in some submissions. Illustrations were integrated into designs for packaging and advertising material.

Detective story

Successful students made initial investigations into graphics associated with the genre of the detective story in books and in film. This resulted in an interesting variety of interpretations and responses. Examples of illustration using a range of traditional media and techniques were scanned and used in evocative book cover designs and illustrated pages. One student produced a series of illustrations which resulted in an atmospheric title sequence for a film. Another student dressed a parent in Trilby hat and overcoat and photographed them in shadowy halls and doorways. Effective posters publicising books, films and stage plays were produced. Some confident abstract designs were seen, inspired by the work of Saul Bass.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.