

ART & DESIGN

Paper 0400/01
Coursework

You should refer to the *Guidance on the Administration and Online Submission of Art & Design for 2026* which will be updated and published in September 2025.

Key messages

- This was the first time that centres submitted their work via Submit for Assessment. The work was generally well presented and in chronological order.
- Painting and related two-dimensional media was the most common area of study, with photography included as a form of recording.
- Links to artists were included in most responses, although their relevance to the candidates' work and intentions differed.
- Many candidates recorded subject matter from first-hand and were able to develop their own meaningful ideas but there was also a reliance on secondary sources across the levels.
- Candidates must clearly identify via labelling which work is their own and which is the work of others.
- In future, it would be helpful if candidates word-process rather than handwrite any included annotation, to improve legibility.

General comments

Higher levels

The strongest responses offered mature interpretations of the chosen theme. Submissions were personal and contained a good balance of both primary and secondary sources. Appropriate sources were used relevant to the chosen question. The work was focused and well organised, effectively communicating the creative process.

Media selection was purposeful and demonstrated an excellent understanding of the media and materials used. Photography was used effectively and demonstrated candidates' clear understanding of the visual elements and technical ability.

Artist research informed the development of ideas and mature connections were made between the candidates' own images and those of other artists. Supporting annotation demonstrated relevant critical understanding and self-reflection as the work progressed. Candidates explored a range of compositions and image manipulation to best communicate their intentions, and the final outcome was a direct response to the work presented in the portfolio.

Middle levels

At the middle range of submissions, there was more reliance on secondary-sourced images to investigate the chosen theme. At this level, candidates often just copied their photographs as a way of recording from primary sources, rather than including a combination of approaches to their observational studies, such as using other media to record detail, as well as photography.

Some evidence was seen of research into artists and cultures to help the candidate explore and develop their own ideas about media use, content, meaning and composition.

A good range of materials and techniques had been explored, but manipulative skills were less confident and refined at this level. A lack of confidence was seen in the exploration of materials and techniques, which meant that candidates were less able to convey their ideas clearly.

Lower levels

At this level, recording was mostly from secondary sources and at times, it was not clear where the candidate had sourced their recording from.

Often the images and media studies seen in the portfolio did not inform or relate to the final outcome. Often, artist research did not relate to, or inform the development of, the candidates' own work.

The exploration of media and processes varied in work seen at this level. At times the submission demonstrated technical skill when copying from images but lacked exploration of different techniques and processes. At other times there was a willingness to experiment with materials and processes, but the work lacked the ability to build on these explorations and refine skills for the final outcome.

More focused recording from primary sources at the initial stage of the project would have helped most candidates at this level. Relevant artist research could have been used to inform the exploration of media and the manipulation of images to develop ideas into an informed final outcome that reflected the progress in the supporting studies.

ART & DESIGN

<p>Paper 0400/02 Externally Set Assignment</p>
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You should refer to the *Guidance on the Administration and Online Submission of Art & Design for 2026* which will be updated and published in September 2025.

Key messages

- This was the first time that centres submitted their work via Submit for Assessment. The work was generally well presented and in chronological order.
- In future, it would be helpful if the coversheet indicated which question the candidate has selected.
- Painting and related two-dimensional media was the most common area of study, with photography included as a form of recording.
- There were also examples that focused on photography, textiles and graphic communication. Digital manipulation was a common feature within the work and in most cases proved a useful way to develop ideas further.
- It is important that where digital manipulation, software or programmes have been used, candidates indicate this and state specifically what they have used.
- Links to artists were included in most responses, although their relevance to the candidates' work and intentions differed.
- Many candidates recorded subject matter from first-hand and were able to develop their own meaningful ideas but there was also a reliance on secondary sources across the levels.
- Candidates must clearly identify via labelling which work is their own and which is the work of others.
- In future, it would be helpful if candidates word-process rather than handwrite any included annotation, to improve legibility.

General comments

Responses to each of the examination questions were seen across all levels and facilitated a range of approaches from observational to interpretive. Design and abstract concepts were also evident.

The most popular questions were, '**Washing the dishes**', '**Departure**' and '**Flower in a vase**'. Departure encouraged both literal and conceptual responses with detailed and observed scenes of airports, railway stations, luggage, stamps and other related paraphernalia but also some highly sensitive applications to the subjects of loss and death. The other two most popular questions provided easily accessible subject matter and many candidates made use of their own homes, depicting sinks full of crockery and an equal number of floral studies, often creating displays within the home. These made for personal and connected studies.

'**On the stage**' and '**Tyre tracks**' were popular to those candidates with access to the particular theme and included primary sources relating to the subject matter. Others relied upon secondary sources to gather information of stages and sports cars (as one example). These tended to be less successful than those working from direct observation and personal experience.

Regardless of the question chosen, the strongest responses contained imagery from first-hand study. A range of research methods were used such as drawing, painting, the candidates' own photography and relevant references to other artists' works. Intentions were clear, encouraging focus and depth of investigation. Critical analysis effectively enabled reflection and appropriate decision making.

The weakest responses lacked focus and direction, causing incoherent investigation. The creative process in the preparatory work often demonstrated little visual connection, preventing ideas from growing. This disconnect in the supporting work meant that candidates were unable to build on their ideas towards an informed final outcome in the exam.

Higher levels

The strongest responses offered mature interpretations of the chosen question, expressing independence of thought.

Submissions were personal and contained a good balance of both primary and secondary sources. Appropriate sources were used and were relevant to the chosen question. The work was focused and well organised, effectively communicating the creative process.

Use of media at this level was skilful, controlled and consistent. Candidates were able to explore media in relation to the concepts being explored, making a strong relationship between the qualities of chosen media and the desired outcome.

Photography was used effectively and demonstrated candidates' clear understanding of the visual elements and technical ability.

Artist research informed the development of ideas and mature connections were made between the candidates' own images and those of other artists.

Ideas were developed through a synthesis of the visual elements and candidates' ability to build on a range of visual material.

Final outcomes were sophisticated in their use of compositional devices, application of media and image construction. They demonstrated a culmination to the ideas and concepts investigated in the supporting studies.

Middle levels

At the middle range of submissions, there was more of a reliance on secondary-sourced images to investigate the chosen question. Also, at this level, candidates often copied their photographs as a way of recording from primary source rather than including a combination of approaches to their observational studies, such as using other media to record detail, as well as photography.

There was some evidence of research into artists and cultures to help the candidate explore and develop their own ideas about media use, content, meaning and composition. However, reference material was in some cases not relevant, or the relationships being made were not clearly identified.

A good range of materials and techniques had been explored, but technical skills were less accomplished or refined at this level. A lack of confidence was seen in the exploration of materials and techniques, which meant that candidates were less able to convey their ideas clearly.

Many made copies of the work of others to gain experience in handling media in different ways but were unable to combine different approaches to create their own visual language. Further exploration with a clearer intention of what they wanted to achieve may have supported more purposeful experimentation.

Ideas and personal responses were individual but often the candidate did not know how to support this through their reference imagery or observational studies. Some submissions at this level were incoherent as the connections being made were not clear either through the imagery created or the annotation provided. Stronger critical assessment of the work, during each stage of the creative process would have benefitted many of these candidates, in order to recognise and develop their strengths with confidence.

Lower levels

At this level recording was mostly from secondary sources and at times it was not clear where the candidate had sourced their recording from.

Often the images and media studies seen in the supporting work did not inform or relate to the final outcome. In some examples, artist research did not relate to, or inform the development of, the candidates' own work.

The exploration of media and processes varied in work seen at this level. At times the submission demonstrated technical skill when copying from images but lacked exploration of different techniques and processes. At other times there was a willingness to experiment with materials and processes, but the work lacked the ability to build on these explorations and refine skills for the final outcome.

More focused recording from primary sources at the initial stage of the project would have helped most candidates at this level. Relevant artist research could have been used to inform the exploration of media and the manipulation of images to develop ideas into an informed final outcome that reflected the progress in the supporting studies.

Final outcomes tended to either be a copy of an earlier study or completely disconnected to the supporting work. Many outcomes would have benefited from composition planning and exploration of alternative ideas. This would have provided candidates with a focus and sense of purpose in order to showcase the best of their skills in the examination.