



# GCSE Examiners' Report

Subject Art and Design  
GCSE  
Summer 2024

## Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.<sup>1</sup>

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

## Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	<a href="https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.</p> <p>For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.</p>	For unitised specifications click here: <a href="#">Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)</a>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a>
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	<a href="https://resources.wjec.co.uk/">https://resources.wjec.co.uk/</a>
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	<a href="#">Become an Examiner   WJEC</a>

## **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
Executive summary	5
General Comments	7
Unit 1 Portfolio	8
Unit 2 Externally Set Assignment	11
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	13

## Executive Summary

The Portfolio unit performance shows both strengths and areas for improvement. The strengths include exceptional work developed from a strong, early foundation period of skills development, confidence in the handling and control of techniques and materials, and well-planned and delivered Portfolio courses which facilitate the development of personal interests within a supportive and well-guided framework.

The use of primary sources as a basis for creative work, contextual work which informs the development of candidates' practical work in meaningful and relevant ways, and, portfolios which have been carefully edited and presented for moderation are also noted as strengths. The judicious and sensitive use of digital media within the developmental work of candidates, a clear path of progression and idea development from initial sources to outcome, and lively and highly personal portfolios which embrace the four Assessment Objectives in equal measure are also commended.

Shortcomings within the Portfolio unit include limited evidence of engagement with each Assessment Objective, a restricted range of creative media and materials, and an over-reliance upon the use of secondary materials. Portfolios which do not demonstrate a clear progression of ideas from initial investigations to outcome are also areas which need improvement.

Stronger submissions from Unit 2, the Externally Set Assignment, followed a clear path of progression to the outcome where the candidate's intentions are clearly explicit. The 'Creative Statement' was completed at regular intervals during the preparation phase, which reinforced the intentions of the candidate. All four Assessment Objectives were embraced in equal measure, through the application of effective time management. Contextual references which had been carefully analysed and considered, informed the development of the candidate's ESA in a meaningful manner.

However, there was also evidence of poorly documented final outcomes that had been arrived at with little reference to preceding work. Questions had been selected prior to considering the availability of first-hand sources. Contextual work, which was biographical and descriptive in nature, contributed little to the development of the candidates' work. Furthermore, some submissions also contained highly derivative work from web-based images.

In conclusion, whilst administrative procedures were generally carried out satisfactorily, there are areas which require attention to ensure the smooth operation of the moderation process. It is crucial that both the Externally Set Assignment and Portfolio submissions are authenticated by the candidate and teacher. Whilst it is not expected that the work is presented as an exhibition, it should be arranged in rank order, and clearly labelled. Centres are kindly requested to ensure that the work of candidates not represented in the sample is also easily accessible.

<b>Areas for improvement</b>	<b>Classroom resources</b>	<b>Brief description of resource</b>
Supporting candidates' approach to NEA.	<a href="#"><u>ART AND DESIGN RESOURCES ON THE HWB WEBSITE</u></a>	View a collection of Art and Design resources on the Hwb website.
Supporting candidates' knowledge across the Assessment Objectives.	<a href="#"><u>GCSE ART KNOWLEDGE ORGANISERS</u></a>	A bank of sample knowledge organisers to support the learning of GCSE Art and Design.
Accuracy in assessment	<a href="#"><u>PORTAL BY WJEC</u></a>	A range of exemplar materials for reference when assessing candidates work.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

### **GCSE**

**Summer 2024**

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

### **Overview of the Unit**

This Principal report has been written following feedback from our much-valued team of WJEC GCSE Art & Design moderators and team leaders. The team has been privileged to have visited the breadth of WJEC centres nationwide during the 2024 moderation window and have been well placed to provide an insight into the strengths, shortcomings and challenges confronting centres nationally in relation to the delivery of WJEC Art & Design courses.

Ensuring that all four Assessment Objectives have been covered in equal measure is critical to ensuring the success of candidates and it is now increasingly rare for moderators to see an Assessment Objective underrepresented within a sample. Many centres across the breadth of differing contexts and attainment are managing to elicit splendid work from their students and are employing innovative approaches to motivate and enthuse learners, particularly in relation to the planning and delivery of the portfolio component. The more concise, focused challenge of the ESA, allied to the reality of time restriction quite often brings forth the most interesting and accomplished aspect of a candidate's submission, however, moderators have noted that this component is at times rather sparse and lacking in heft, perhaps reflecting the increased commitments placed upon learners during the busy Spring term.

It is encouraging to note that the Creative Statement documentation is being applied more rigorously across both components this year and moderators have commented upon the pleasing way candidates have often made explicit their intentions and provided a thorough insight into their aims and creative aspirations. This is a valuable resource and a source of potential extra marks for the candidates.

Accurate centre marking of the portfolio and ESA is of the upmost importance if the moderation process is to be undertaken smoothly and without the upset of scaling needing to be applied. Whilst most centres mark their candidates work within tolerance, it is disappointing to report that some centres seem unfamiliar with national standards and consequently over mark the creative efforts of their learners. Conversely a minority of centres are guilty of under-marking work, particularly at the lower end of attainment. Regrettably some centres are prohibiting staff from attending CPDs and/or online events due to cost cutting and this inevitably has a detrimental impact upon accurate centre marking. This is of particular concern when one considers that we are presently on the cusp of a new specification and that art educators charged with delivering courses need to be in receipt of contemporary information and guidance. Cross moderation within centres offering more than one focus area is an essential element in ensuring that centre marking is undertaken accurately; likewise marking a large cohort of portfolio and ESA submissions in piecemeal fashion, during snatched moments of a busy school day, is not the most appropriate method of maintaining accuracy. Colleagues are advised to try to negotiate appropriate time to undertake this important duty to ensure that the achievements of candidates are not compromised.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

### **GCSE**

#### **Summer 2024**

### **PORTFOLIO**

#### **Overview of the Unit**

Moderators continue to comment upon seeing exceptional work that have developed from a strong, early foundation period of skills development. Visits to locations of aesthetic interest, galleries and/or artists workshops have often enabled candidates to embark upon their own creative journeys with increased confidence. The most successful portfolios invariably demonstrate the candidates' understanding and appreciation of the work of other artists in ways that feed and nurture their own creative outcomes. These examples are often rigorous in terms of analysis and clearly show how the study of contextual sources have aided the candidates in creating artwork that has been significantly enhanced due to the considered study of artist's work.

The most successful submissions demonstrate a pleasing confidence in the handling and control of techniques and materials, and this is often achieved through ensuring that candidates are in receipt of well-structured foundation courses at the onset of the programme of study. A well planned and delivered foundation period often extending to the spring term of the first year of GCSE study, is now well established within many centres. This helps to ensure that candidates are provided with the necessary time to refine their skills and experiences prior to embarking upon more personal and independent lines of enquiry within the body of the portfolio. Previous Principal reports comment upon aspiring to achieve the necessary balance between offering candidates a reasonable breadth of techniques & media whilst avoiding the pitfalls of a 'technique a day' approach. Candidates obviously require adequate time to become conversant with new materials and to refine their technical handling of the media.

Recording using drawing and photography provides the basis for candidates to gather the references needed to progress with their creative work; it must be reinforced at this point that drawing should be relevant to the focus area being studied and may take on many differing forms and be undertaken within a breadth of differing materials from charcoal to embroidering marks with a sewing machine.

Centres who offer their candidates an 'umbrella' theme regarding the portfolio often take their candidates to locations of aesthetic interest to gather primary sources relating to the chosen theme. Candidates then progress to develop their own original avenues of study from these references, confident in the knowledge that the source of their study has been appropriately vetted and endorsed by the centre. The approach of negotiating a suitable theme with individual candidates is also successful in facilitating the gathering of appropriate primary sources and helps to encourage a pleasing level of personal interest and sustained engagement with the work.



It is evident that inspirational and well-structured teaching often manages to overcome the disadvantages of under resourcing; colleagues often employ innovative ways to ensure that their learners are in receipt of a reasonable breadth of creative materials. Indeed, moderators commented that some of the most exciting work was often seen within centres challenged by deprivation. Inspired teaching often managed to keep learners in such contexts motivated and on task by placing an enhanced emphasis upon making and creating; assessment objectives relating to contextual work and research were successfully blended into the learning experiences in ways that did not detract or undermine the creative enjoyment of learners.

Whilst a reasonable breadth of contextual sources is to be encouraged, this should not be at the expense of focused and relatively in-depth quality of analysis. A whole class approach to selecting contextual sources should be avoided as this rarely results in studies which influence candidates work in ways that are truly relevant and useful. It is unfortunately very common for moderators to see contextual references which have very spurious connections with the practical work of candidates.

Marks for Assessment Objective 3 are often lost by candidates who do not place adequate emphasis upon the design journey; drawing and annotated commentary that demonstrate critical reflection and evaluation as the work progresses go hand in hand with the process of design development and media experimentation in AO2. Centres are strongly advised to ensure that candidates place enough emphasis upon reflecting upon the development of their ideas to demonstrate their understanding and meaning to the moderator.

Whilst the judicious use of second-hand sources is acceptable in some contexts, this should not be at the expense of encouraging candidates to generate their ideas from first hand references. The ill-considered use of second-hand sources invariably undermines the achievement of candidates and are generally not the most suitable starting points for the creation of original artwork. If second hand sources are used, they should be employed thoughtfully, with caution and in tandem with plentiful evidence of first-hand sources. Without doubt, primary sources elicit the most original and inspiring work and will enable the candidate to aspire for an enhanced level of marks.

Previous reports have commented upon the practice within some centres of over prescribing the work undertaken by their candidates to the extent that moderators often find it problematical to distinguish between the work of individuals in a sample. This practice is regrettable as it prevents all candidates from producing truly personal outcomes and inhibits the ability of higher achieving candidates to flourish. It also impacts negatively upon the marks which may be awarded within AO4 as the requirement for the work to be 'personal' is clearly stated within the assessment objective.

### **Strengths:**

- Well-planned and delivered Portfolio courses that facilitate the development of personal interests within a supportive and well guided framework.
- The use of primary sources as a basis to creative work.
- Contextual work which informs the development of candidates' practical work in meaningful and relevant ways.
- Portfolios which have been carefully edited and presented for moderation.
- The judicious and sensitive use of digital media within the developmental work of candidates.
- A clear path of progression and idea development from initial sources to outcome/outcomes.
- Lively and highly personal portfolios which embrace the four Assessment Objectives in equal measure.

**Shortcomings:**

- Over-prescriptive programmes of study that curtail and limit the development of candidates.
- Poorly planned and delivered portfolio experiences bereft of structure and guidance leading to low attainment.
- Contextual references of spurious relevance that contribute little to the creative work of the candidate.
- A sparse portfolio demonstrating limited evidence of engagement with Assessment Objectives.
- A restricted range of creative media and materials.
- An over-reliance upon the use of secondary materials.
- Poorly selected and edited portfolios, high in volume but low in quality.
- Portfolios that do not demonstrate a clear progression of ideas from initial investigations to outcome.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

### **GCSE**

**Summer 2024**

#### **EXTERNALLY SET ASSIGNMENT**

##### **Overview of the Unit**

The ESA component is often the most mature and successful aspect of the candidates' submission and moderators have commented upon how well-planned portfolio courses enable learners to engage independently and with confidence to the challenge. The most successful and accomplished submissions demonstrated a very pleasing level of originality allied to an impressive level of skills, focus and rigour.

Shortcomings within ESA often related to the inability of some candidates to manage their time appropriately from receipt of the exam paper in early January to commencing the final 10 hour-controlled period in spring. Moderators comment annually upon seeing research and investigation work allied to contextual references but often little evidence of sustained idea development and media experimentation leading to the outcome. This weakness was particularly evident this year and may reflect issues such as increasing learner absences, covid legacy and/or the additional academic demands placed upon learners during the Spring period leading up to external examinations. Ensuring that learners adhere to a strict timetable of dates for the completion of different elements of the preparatory work is a well-established and successful method of ensuring that valuable marks are not lost by candidates during this frenetic period.

An inability to make a firm decision regarding question choice has also resulted in undermining some candidates' ability to make progress; some submissions have contained evidence of muddled thinking and a lack of direction, consequently much of the initial research material and/or contextual references had little relevance to the remainder of the work resulting in a disjointed effort. This is a perennial problem, and candidates are strongly advised not to procrastinate following the opening of the paper, and to strive to make a firm and carefully considered selection of question as early as practicable in order that valuable time is not lost.

##### **Strengths:**

- Well-researched responses to the ESA paper followed by a clear path of progression to the outcome where the candidate's intentions are clearly explicit.
- The 'Creative Statement' completed at regular intervals during the preparation phase, thus reinforcing the intentions of the candidate.
- All four Assessment Objectives thoroughly embraced in equal measure, facilitated by furnishing candidates with clear deadlines for the completion of work during the preparatory phase.
- Carefully analysed and considered contextual references that inform and enrich the development of the candidate's ESA in a meaningful manner.
- First-hand primary sources used as initial starting points for candidate responses to ESA.

**Shortcomings:**

- Poorly documented final outcomes that have been arrived at with little reference to preceding work.
- The 'Creative Statement' completed retrospectively or not at all.
- Sparse ESA submissions which reflect little rigour on behalf of candidates and consequently insufficient engagement with Assessment Objectives.
- ESA submissions which contain pleasing evidence of research and investigation but little reference to idea development and experimentation of media.
- Candidates opting for questions prior to considering the availability of first-hand sources.
- Contextual work, which is biographical and descriptive in nature, contributing little to the development of the candidates' work.
- ESA outcomes which have been arrived at by copying web-based images.

In general, administrative procedures were carried out satisfactorily, however, colleagues are kindly requested to ensure that the ESA and Portfolio submissions are authenticated by the candidates and teacher. This is a compulsory requirement; unauthenticated submissions cannot be rewarded by the WJEC. The ESA time sheets must also be completed and signed by candidates individually, not on a whole class/cohort basis.

Most centres manage to present work for moderation within an environment that ensures that the process may be undertaken clearly and without disturbance. Whilst it is not expected that the work is presented as an exhibition, it is nevertheless critical that it is arranged in rank order, clearly labelled and in a manner that ensures that the moderator may comfortably view and access the breadth of work. Centres are kindly requested to ensure that the work of candidates not represented in the sample is easily accessible. Moderators may well need to see additional evidence outside the sample in order to ensure accuracy of marking, consequently it is important that any requested work may be easily retrieved by the centre for this purpose.

## **Supporting you**

### **Useful contacts and links**

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4304

Email: [artanddesign@wjec.co.uk](mailto:artanddesign@wjec.co.uk)

Qualification webpage: [GCSE Art and Design \(wjec.co.uk\)](http://wjec.co.uk)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

### **CPD Training / Professional Learning**

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

### **WJEC Qualifications**

As Wales' largest awarding body, WJEC supports its education community by providing trusted bilingual qualifications, specialist support, and reliable assessment to schools and colleges across the country. This allows our learners to reach their full potential.

With more than 70 years' experience, we are also amongst the leading providers in both England and Northern Ireland.



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