



# A Level Art and Design

## PERSONAL STUDY SUPPORT

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Information about the A level personal study

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# GCE Art and Design 2015

## Personal study support

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### Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The personal study</b>	<b>2</b>
What is the aim of the personal study?	2
How long should the personal study be?	2
What should the personal study focus on?	2
What form can the personal study take?	3
To what extent can students integrate sketches into their personal studies?	3
How much guidance can I give my students?	4
<b>Possible starting points</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Possible approaches</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Marking the personal study</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Exemplars</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Practical tips</b>	<b>5</b>
Referencing other artists' work	5
Creating a bibliography	5
<b>Students with special requirements</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Training</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Getting in touch</b>	<b>6</b>

## Introduction

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Employers in the arts and tutors at universities and art colleges have all emphasised that research skills, such as critical thinking, contextual analysis and literacy, give students a significant advantage for further progression in the subject.

The personal study has therefore been retained as a key part of all 2015 A level Art and Design specifications, as a way of ensuring students develop these skills.

Centres that have delivered the previous Pearson Edexcel specification will find that the format of the personal study hasn't changed – it is very similar to what students do now in the current Unit 3. However, significantly, a discrete number of marks have now been ascribed to the personal study. There are 18 marks available for the personal study, so that it now represents 12 per cent of marks for the overall A level qualification.

The purpose of this guidance document is to help you understand the requirements of the personal study and to give you advice on different ways in which you can approach the personal study with your students.

## The personal study

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### **What is the aim of the personal study?**

The aim of the personal study is for the student to create a sustained piece of critical and contextual analysis, showing an awareness of intention and context, which links to their own practical work.

### **How long should the personal study be?**

The personal study should take the form of an extended piece of continuous prose of at least 1000 words. We recommend an upper limit of 3000 words.

#### **Advice: word count**

Students will not be specifically penalised on the basis of the length of their written component or any difference from the indicative minimum word count of 1000 words. However, failure to meet the minimum word count may restrict students' ability to develop the required depth and breadth to access the full mark range.

### **What should the personal study focus on?**

The focus of the personal study can be any concept, movement, person, people, artefact(s) or other source of reference. It must show connections to the student's own investigations and practical work.

The link between the personal study and the student's own practical investigation is important. A successful personal study should constitute part of the evidence that a student has researched, engaged with and understood relevant contextual ideas in depth, which, in turn, inform and inspire original responses rather than simple pastiches of source material.

The study should aim to go further than simply establishing that connections with sources have been made, or describing the appearance of artworks. The personal study should be critical and analytical, examining the intentions and context behind the creative ideas of the practitioners and artefacts that have been studied.

It should also express the student's personal interpretations and establish conclusions.

Personal studies that do not link in any way to the student's own work miss the opportunity that it gives to add depth and rigour to both the ideas that inform their practical outcomes and the 'creative journey' which is at the heart of the qualification.

Through the personal study, students should demonstrate understanding of relevant social, cultural and/or historical contexts. Students should also express personal interpretations, and use technical and specialist vocabulary.

The personal study is worth 18 marks out of the 90 marks available for Component 1 Personal Investigation at A level. The personal study is therefore worth 12 per cent of the whole A level qualification, once marks for Component 2 Externally Set Assignment are also taken into consideration.

#### **Advice**

The following are also important considerations:

- the structure and presentation of the personal study
- the clarity of expression and language
- a bibliography acknowledging all source material.

#### **What form can the personal study take?**

The personal study must be identifiable as a separate outcome, distinct from the body of practical work that the student has produced. It must be a piece of continuous prose of at least 1000 words.

There is no single preferred method of presenting the personal study. The guiding principle should be that a coherent piece of continuous prose of at least 1000 words should be presented, in either written or oral form. It could take the form of a written and illustrated essay, printed out and presented on A4 and included at the back of a coursework sketchbook or presented in a separate folder. Alternatively, the written essay might form part of a larger visual presentation incorporated into a 2D or 3D outcome. Video presentations, recordings of interviews and other creative options are all possible, as long as a coherent body of prose of at least 1000 words can be identified as a separate outcome.

If the personal study is presented as an audio or video file, and the work forms part of the sample requested for moderation, the moderator must be given access to the actual audio or video file at moderation. In addition, the moderator should be provided with a transcription of the file.

It is not acceptable to describe unlinked annotations within a sketchbook as a personal study, even though they may well make up more than 1000 words.

The personal study can be developed in many ways. For example: distilled or expanded from the spoken word, such as a critique, a discussion or an interview; through investigation of some aspect of art and design, for example from a museum, gallery or site visit; or from a series of annotations produced earlier in a sketchbook and now developed into an extended piece of writing.

#### **To what extent can students integrate sketches into their personal studies?**

A personal study can take the form of an illustrated essay, but it should be emphasised that the personal study must be a piece of continuous prose.

Students can integrate sketches, photographs and illustrations relating to either their own or others' artwork or artefacts within the personal study. These may well help to illustrate a point being made in the text or be a picture of the artefact or

artwork that is being referred to. Sketches and illustrations should be considered as a visual addition to the essay rather than a substitute for written analysis.

### **How much guidance can I give my students?**

You can guide the development of the continuous prose through presentations to the class, discussions and individual tutorials, but personal studies must be the students' own work.

You can also help students to focus their ideas for the personal study by asking them to produce a proposal or an outline of their intentions.

## **Possible starting points**

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The personal study must be submitted at the same time as practical coursework. However, there is no single preferred way to begin the study.

It may be appropriate that the study undergoes a process of evolution during the course, being initiated as a proposal or outline before undergoing drafts as the student's own contextual understanding develops in relation to their practical work.

However, it may be appropriate to write it as a conclusion once practical work has been completed. As has been previously stated, it may begin after an interview, discussion or visit – the key is that the analysis bears relation to the student's own practical investigations.

## **Possible approaches**

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The student's approach to their personal study can be as individual and creative as their own work. As long as the principle criteria are adhered to – 1000 words of continuous prose exploring contextual ideas in depth, with links to the student's own work – the approach can vary considerably.

Some students and centres formulate a creative question to address, relevant to their ideas. Others use an interview or an experience working with a particular practitioner as a basis for critical analysis. Others focus on an exhibition, an idea or a 'cultural phenomenon' of some kind.

There is no set limit to the number of practitioners, ideas or artefacts that a student has to study although, to make a meaningful analysis within 1000–3000 words, superficial surveys of many practitioners or over-generalised themes should be avoided as they would likely lack the depth of analysis and understanding that are the important criteria for successful studies.

It is also important to find the right balance in a personal study between critical analysis and links to the student's own work – lengthy descriptive passages that, in effect, become a diary of what the student did for coursework are unlikely to demonstrate the depth of critical analysis and understanding needed to access the higher mark bands. The higher mark bands are reserved for personal studies that show exceptional analytical and critical understanding, and express complex ideas with authority.

## Marking the personal study

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There is a separate assessment grid for the personal study and there are 18 marks available.

The assessment criterion is built on all four Assessment Objectives. In addition, there is a descriptor relating to use of written communication and specialist terminology.

## Exemplars

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We will be producing personal study exemplars to help you understand the standard required. These will be available on our website from May 2015.

Personal study exemplars will be marked using the new assessment grid and will be accompanied by examiner commentaries which explain why particular marks have been awarded.

## Practical tips

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### Referencing other artists' work

A key aspect of the personal study is that the student is able to make reference to the work of other artists, creative practitioners and thinkers.

There are a number of possible ways to make this evident: through direct quotations taken from interviews or comments made by the artist; by quoting critiques or other authors; by referring to visual/photographic illustrations of artworks and artefacts; or through visual, verbal or written impressions gathered directly in front of artworks.

Students should be given guidance on how to make references clear, for instance through the use of quotation marks if short passages are being integrated into the text, or by creating an identifiably separate piece of text if longer paragraphs are taken from sources.

### Creating a bibliography

It is a standard practice for extended pieces of critical discussion to include a bibliography so that the reader can access the sources referred to. The quotations, sources and references that inform the personal study should be referenced in a standardised bibliography at the end of the study. There are a number of academic variations of how this should be done but, as long as the information is consistent and clear, this should not be too demanding a task.

A straightforward bibliography structure for books or other printed publications is usually:

Author (surname first, then initial letter of first name), *Title of publication*, publisher, date

For example:

Gayford, M., *A Bigger Message: Conversations with David Hockney*, Thames and Hudson, 2011

The sources should be listed in alphabetical order of authors' surnames.

Websites should be referenced using the full web address/URL, so that the referenced image or passage of text can be found. A straightforward bibliography structure for websites is usually:

*Title*, publisher or organisation, [date viewed], available from <URL>

For example:

*St Francis and the Birds*, Sir Stanley Spencer, [6 February 2015], available from [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/spencer-st-francis-and-the-birds-t00961](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/spencer-st-francis-and-the-birds-t00961)

## Students with special requirements

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You will find information about access arrangements in the JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments document:

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

If you have a specific question, you can email [ukspecialrequirements@pearson.com](mailto:ukspecialrequirements@pearson.com).

The personal study must be the student's own work in the sense that the ideas and connections made are the student's alone.

If the student dictates their personal study to a scribe then evidence of the dictation, such as an audio file, must be available at moderation.

If a video file is presented, the moderator must be given access to the actual video at moderation; however, a transcription should also be provided to help with the moderation process.

## Training

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Training from Pearson will be running training events to help you prepare to teach the new specification and to help you understand the standard. In 2015, we will be running:

- free Getting Ready to Teach events
- standardisation events.

You can find details of all training events at

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/training-from-pearson-uk.html>.

## Getting in touch

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If you have any questions about the changes to the Pearson Edexcel A level Art and Design qualification or delivering this redeveloped course, please get in touch with our Subject Advisor, Susan Young, or one of the teaching services team:

- email: [TeachingArtandDesign@pearson.com](mailto:TeachingArtandDesign@pearson.com)
- telephone: 0844 576 0032 (+44 (0) 207 010 2181 from outside the UK)

Emailing Susan at [TeachingArtandDesign@pearson.com](mailto:TeachingArtandDesign@pearson.com) will also sign you up for her email updates in which she gives details about:

- training events, free support materials and new published resources
- news and government announcements affecting our qualifications
- key dates and entry deadlines.