

The Impact of Digital Technology on GCE Art & Design

Assessment Guidance

The advance of digital technology has had, and continues to have, a profound impact on Art and Design. It has given candidates greater opportunity to produce both two- and three-dimensional works of extremely high quality, and to communicate their visual ideas in new and exciting ways.

Whilst use of this technology is to be welcomed, there is a risk that the sophisticated end-products of many automated procedures resulting from both hardware and software can give a false impression of candidates' true abilities and understanding of art and design issues. There is also the risk that aesthetic elements that are a product of the technology can be attributed to the candidates who use them.

Recent increases in achievement for those endorsements using digital technology as an integral part of their practice may be a result of assessors being over-influenced by the quality of the final images produced by semi-automated processes. In the light of this, we would ask assessors to re-examine the assessment documents in the specification (i.e. the assessment grid and guidance), and fully understand their application where digital media are involved. These criteria examine candidates' fulfilment of the requirements of the GCE qualification, and therefore must be applied effectively across endorsements when appraising candidates' work. Lenient application of any of the assessment objectives will often result in an inaccurate final mark, as each objective represents 25% of the mark.

This document offers important guidance to enable assessors to avoid the pitfalls of lenient application of the criteria in these endorsements. The guidance is equally pertinent to all endorsements.

To achieve marks in the *confident/fluent* category, candidates must show a clear sense of purpose in their experimentation and research, together with sustained development and thoughtful aesthetic choices evidenced in the process. Many candidates are being over-rewarded on account of the volume of work they produce and an impressive presentation of the final outcome. However, the level of sophistication and exploration of ideas evident in the supporting studies may not always justify the overall mark.

Candidates should be awarded appropriate marks for the level of ability they display using digital techniques where these skills address requirements given in the assessment guidance grid. These must, however, be proportionate to marks allocated to other criteria contributing to the final mark, such as research, analysis, originality of ideas, imaginative leaps, and risk taking.

Assessment must always be carefully checked for consistency against other endorsements to ensure marking is applied accurately across them, and does not unfairly advantage candidates using digital techniques over those using traditional methods of visual communication.

Below are some of the **key descriptors** of a *confident* (AS) or *fluent* (A2) level candidate from the Assessment Guidance grids. Please note they are specific in their requirements for each assessment objective.

Application of modern digital, photographic or software-aided techniques must not bias the assessment towards an emphasis on final outcomes or superficially polished presentations. Manipulation of elements, presentation and outcome, while important and relevant for their part in the context of the full qualification, must not over-compensate for a lack of development, research or experimentation. Again, assessment must reward all of the requirements of the assessment criteria in the correct proportion as prescribed by the assessment criteria.



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Evidence as to why decisions involving digital technology were made, and how they have been used to communicate ideas is crucial to assessing the level of a candidate's 'perceptive grasp' of the processes and media they have chosen to use. The descriptors below can be applied to any medium or method of producing an image or design. They must be applied in the same way to all endorsements, whether they employ digital technology or not, to ensure a fair and accurate result for all candidates. Work that does not fully and convincingly display the characteristics of the following descriptors cannot be placed in these mark bands.

GCE AS: Confident (64 - 80 marks)

- **Wide range** of ideas explored with **exciting and imaginative** developments producing **purposeful** ideas **independently** with perseverance and enthusiasm
- Critical vocabulary used to express **emerging independent judgements** showing accuracy and an **understanding of the more complex issues** involved
- Explores media and processes in a **diverse range** of experiments; **understands** the limitations and potential of materials through **extending and refining** studies
- **Risks sometimes taken** and used appropriately
- Visual language skills evident through **assured** manipulation of the formal elements; **consistent command** of skills/technique
- Research into and recording from sources is **purposeful, relevant and consistent**
- Produces **skilful** outcomes that show a **consistent level of knowledge, skill and understanding**; work has developed a **personal identity** and shows **subtlety and sensitivity**
- Solutions are **well constructed**; **perceptive connections** made with sources

GCE A2: Fluent (64 - 80 marks)

- **Imaginative leaps**, at appropriate times; **sense of discovery** and a **willingness to take risks**
- **In-depth and authoritative** contextual research, enquiry and evaluations, showing **independent judgements** with **well-informed and effective** use of critical vocabulary
- **Creatively and imaginatively** develops work that **recognises** the full potential and limitations of materials, techniques and processes
- **Perceptive analysis** and evaluation of **wide-ranging** experimental techniques; **insightful** review and refinement
- **Command** of visual language skills and **highly effective** manipulation of formal elements, both functionally and aesthetically
- **In-depth** subject knowledge; **independently analyses and interprets** research to generate **personal** ideas and **sophisticated** concepts
- Work is **intuitive, imaginative, exciting and original**
- Shows **sophistication, flair and understanding**; technique, style, content and judgements **consistent and sensitive** from conception to realisation

Please be reminded that these are the descriptors of the top level of achievement in AS and A2. Assessors should read and understand each level of mark band descriptors, and use the full range of marks available to place candidates accurately in the appropriate band.

For further support in assessing the full suite of GCE Art & Design endorsements, please visit the Art & Design section of the Edexcel website. You can also use the Edexcel website to submit specific assessment questions to the senior examining team through Ask the Expert, or book a space in one of our training events.



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