

Moderator's Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2016

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary
GCE in Art and Design

Component 1 Personal Investigation
8AD0/8FA0/8TD0/8TE0/8PY0/8GC0

&

Component 2 Externally Set Assignment
8AD0/8FA0/8TD0/8TE0/8PY0/8GC0

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Introduction

This report is a comprehensive overview of the performance of candidates in the GCE Art and Design Advanced Subsidiary 2016 series and is compiled from observations made nationally and internationally by the whole assessment team.

It is important therefore, that the practitioners who are delivering this qualification receive copies of it, and examination officers in centres relay it immediately to the relevant personnel, as it may help to inform their procedures for the 2017 examination series.

The new specification has been well received due to its flexibility and adaptability to the existing qualifications. Candidates now have the choice of:

- Completing a two year linear A Level incorporating the AS level and using its work to supplement the A Level submission.
- Taking the stand-alone AS level at the end of the first year and drop or change courses
- Completing a full linear A Level
- Completing an AS in either Year 12 or 13
- Completing an AS over Years 12 and 13
- Any combination of the above.

One of the real advantages is that the actual demands of the specification remain the same, along with similar assessment criteria. This has enabled centres who have established good practices to carry on seamlessly into the new qualification. It has also enabled areas of the specification that were less effective to be reviewed and improved, and provided opportunities to further enhance what was already a highly successful qualification. New assessment tools have been introduced, such as the 'Performance Calculator,' that has made marking quicker and less subjective. These will continue to be enhanced, with expanding the hyperlinks to even more exemplar work across all of the offered titles.

Obviously, any new qualification will take time to become familiar with, and during this time, there will undoubtedly be uncertainties. The most significant of these for centres is probably the relationship of marks to grades. However, these are established and available now, as the 2016 series has now run its full course.

Feedback from this report is invaluable in providing information for centres to help them adapt and re-structure their course design and assessment strategies, to suit any nuances of the reformed qualification.

Here are the observations pertinent to each component, as reported by the Principal Moderators responsible for them.

As mentioned in previous legacy reports, the observations are generic and must not be seen as lists of criticism or praise for individual centres. They have been taken directly from the moderator's reports and collated and edited to avoid duplication. Single issues are not commented on, so the points raised have been made by several individual moderators from different national and international locations. They therefore form important trends that need to be addressed if they are pertinent to your centre.

Units 8AD0/01 – 8GC0/01

Component 1

Overview

AS level Personal Investigation, Component 1 is worth 50% of the qualification.

This weighting is different from the weightings for Unit 1 (60%) and Unit 2 (40%) in the current qualification. The weightings have been changed to reflect the January release date of the ESA paper.

For this coursework component, candidates are required to:

- Generate practical work, ideas and research from sources.
- Explore media and processes, develop and refine ideas, and present outcome(s).
- Work from personal starting points.
- Create supporting studies and personal outcome(s).
- There is no requirement for a personal study at AS level.
- Practical outcome(s) and supporting studies are assessed together and the unit is marked out of 72.

Observations

- The reports from the moderation team mostly indicate that candidates are performing to a similar overall high standard as in previous years.
- Coursework themes were, in most cases, appropriate, interesting and challenging. Courses were constructed, showing an understanding of the process-based nature of the Specification. Some centres base their coursework units around our past exam paper themes, often with success. There is indeed a wide variation in how centres engage their candidates for this Component.
- Moderators reported that a great deal of centres offered broad and balanced courses, often to develop good working practices and develop skills.
- Once again, in many of the centres visited, it was felt that the use of Photography as a recording tool was increasingly popular. Latest technology is replacing the conventional use of film and even the digital SLR. There are concerns that the quality of the resulting imagery can disguise the true technical ability and understanding of the candidates.
- One issue that is mentioned throughout the moderator's reports is the lack of observational drawing from primary sources. This has become most noticeable from the samples seen in centres. It has to

be suggested that the introduction of digital media may be responsible for the removal of drawing activities in centres and this can have a negative impact on the ability of candidates to address the formal elements and the Assessment Objectives.

- It was evident that centres valued the use of sketchbooks, or journals, in developing a candidate's ability to generate ideas. Large study sheets and outcomes were also a valued method of allowing candidates to break away from their sketchbook and consider carefully the scale and process.
- Artists "found" on the internet are used indiscriminately and there is an alarming tendency for candidates to work from poor quality secondary images. Over reliance on the internet as an archive tends to deter candidates from taking the opportunity to visit galleries and exhibitions. In a few centres, contextual references were 'given' to candidates who made very few additional contributions to these 'prescriptive' starting points. At times, there was little opportunity for genuine diversity and individuality in responding to critical and contextual sources and in exploring ideas, media and processes.
- Writing continues sometimes to be a descriptive, artists' biography that contains substantial personal comment in the analysis. In order to achieve the higher marks, centres must teach and ensure candidates are being analytical with any research they carry out, using critical vocabulary when they can.
- Moderators also frequently reported that many centres had performed admirably. Often, these continue the practices established in the legacy qualification, producing excellent, personal and original work.

Units 8ADO/02 – 8GCO/02

Component 2

Overview

Component 2 is worth 50% of the qualification

The theme for Component 2 this year was 'Transformation'.

Candidates are required to submit preparatory work and a final outcome(s) for this Component.

The timed period for the completion of the final outcome is now 10 hours.

Observations

- The time constraints for Component 2 often result in a much reduced body of work compared to Component 1, but as always, breadth is not a good indicator of depth, and the focus for the Component should be on the candidates' personal interpretation of the theme.
- Moderators reported that the theme was well received and was very effective in eliciting a wide range of diverse personal responses.
- Where candidates were given the same artists to explore at the start of the Component, work tended to be more formulaic despite the possibilities of the exam theme. It was not until candidates started to develop their ideas for final outcomes that the work became more personal and inventive.
- Centres using this formulaic approach, leads to a narrow range of ideas, materials and processes; likewise the collection of downloaded photographs are wide ranging with no links. Candidates then continue to rely on secondary imagery for their sources, with very little selection or refinement.
- This of course affects all the AOs ultimately, but especially AO1. Outcomes are decided early on and images are merely repeated until the timed test. Consequently, there is very little development or exploration, just hugely ambitious final outcomes without any support, understanding or links to the preparatory work.
- With more personal approaches, candidates reflected on their own life, and photos of themselves as small children, or of family generations. Portraiture was a popular theme this year.
- More ambitious approaches included for example 'transformation' as an idea of 'removing racism from football' or 'life and death in Greek myths'.

- Whilst this political approach is admirable, technically weaker candidates struggle to translate their findings visually. This results in a wealth of written information, but little evidence for the AOs.
- Interpretations such as 'the transformation of everyday objects,' or 'the movement of light and shadow,' were far more visually accessible to a wider range of candidates. These were almost always developed from primary sources and observation.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT OBSERVATIONS

Assessment was difficult for centres this year due to the uncertainty associated with new mark schemes, but this is always the case when a new qualification is introduced.

Some centres used some sort of mathematical formula derived from scaling the 80 marks of the Legacy qualification with the 72 of the new, to pitch their marks.

They did this because they were used to the legacy assessment grid, whose criteria had fallen seriously out of alignment with the corresponding marks and grades. This was a mistake, however, because mark inflation in the legacy had compressed mathematically all of the marks to the top end.

Starting a new qualification was an opportunity to remedy this situation and use the full range of marks available. Therefore, any centre using this formula would have, unfortunately, been considerably inaccurate.

Some centres took the Assessment Grids as they were and placed their candidates more accurately in the mark bands.

Moderators had been effectively standardised and trained that it proved straightforward for them to establish the right level to correspond with the nationally established standards.

In light of all this, moderators did an exceptional job and established a consistency across the qualification that is to be commended.

Centres next year can embrace the effectiveness of the new assessment tools, safe in the knowledge that candidates will receive the rewards that they deserve, in a qualification that demonstrates a truly stable and consistent standard.

This is the best news for the start of a qualification and establishes a very solid platform to begin the new series.

SUMMARY

As can be seen from the individual reports above, the Advanced Subsidiary qualification has been received with enthusiasm and great success. Obviously, it still has great value in establishing a solid foundation for the full Advanced Level or standing alone as a highly valued qualification in its own right.

One point to note is the importance of the actual body of work is often overlooked in the struggle to achieve a successful grade. However, most of the candidates finish at the end of AS with remarkable portfolios regardless of their results. These portfolios present a valuable insight into the candidate's ability to expand and develop ideas, as well as visually and analytically evaluate the world around them. Presentation of these folios at any interview is guaranteed to enhance the chances of the prospective candidates and give insight into their potential. It is important that they recognise the value of these assets and retain them.

The development of this qualification has been a fulfilling and rewarding task, and to see it flourish this year has inspired candidates, tutors and examiners alike. We all wait with eager anticipation to see what next year's cohort of candidates will create in June 2017.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>