



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCE
In Art and Design (9AD0) Paper 01

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Component 1: Personal Investigation

Practical Element

Learner work for Component 1 showed a continuing revival following the negative impact of the COVID pandemic. Much outstanding work was evident, indicating renewed confidence in pursuing independent creative journeys with ambitious outcomes across all titles and media. There was a noticeable shift toward outward-looking exploration, with learners visiting exhibitions, engaging with culture, and becoming less introspective.

Results indicated that the most successful strategy for A Level Art teaching was to allow learners to work independently as early as possible in the course. In many centres, learners spent the first term of Year 12 engaging in skills-based, teacher-led exercises to establish foundational techniques. In centres with learners from varied GCSE backgrounds, it took longer to develop the understanding and working methods needed for independent work, especially in titles like Photography, where many had no prior experience.

The most effective approach involved teachers confidently facilitating individual creative journeys from the outset. Learners in these courses worked independently throughout the remainder of Year 12 and all of Year 13. In contrast, courses with lower achievement levels often persisted with teacher-led projects well beyond the first term, relied on unrelated workshops, and defaulted to producing pastiches of other artists' work with superficial analysis. This hindered the development of personal direction, particularly in Photography.

Successful Textiles courses found a balance between technical experimentation and focused idea development. In Graphic Communication and other titles, learners increasingly used intuitive digital tools such as Procreate, moving away from the once-dominant Photoshop.

Sketchbooks played a key role in the success of learners. Those that featured active recording, experimentation, development, and review, along with brief, focused annotation in the learner's own words, were consistently more effective. Less successful sketchbooks included decorated pages with unfocused descriptions, irrelevant biographical content, collages of gathered images, and meandering statements of intent or evaluation. These reflected a passive, cautious approach and contrasted sharply with learners who showed energy and curiosity in developing ideas independently.

Outcomes were often ambitious and imaginative. Installations were seen in many centres, but scale and complexity were not necessarily indicators of success. Many smaller-scale works demonstrated the concentration and refinement needed to fully resolve an idea.

Component 1: Personal Study

The Personal Study was confidently delivered by many centres with a clear understanding of its purpose, which is to deepen learners' insight into their

own ideas and creative practice. Many studies explored interesting, well-researched topics and demonstrated authoritative understanding of the issues and ideas being discussed. These studies clearly informed the learner's practical work and maintained a consistent point of view or argument throughout.

Less successful studies often had overly broad or unwieldy titles, lacked connection to the learner's own work, or failed to reference artworks or visual aspects of the topic. Some followed formulaic structures with minimal personal engagement, while others included lengthy descriptions of the learner's own projects that added little critical or contextual value.

AI was increasingly used by learners. Some acknowledged its role in structuring initial research, while others relied heavily on AI-generated text, resulting in bland, generic studies that lacked personal voice and were easily distinguishable from sketchbook annotations. Studies written in the learner's own voice were consistently more individual, meaningful, and reflective of genuine understanding.

Learners who spent significant time in museums or galleries, or who engaged directly with artists, often produced the most informed and personal studies. An innovative development was seen in two centres, where QR codes pasted into sketchbooks linked to recordings of learners discussing their ideas for the Personal Study, enhancing engagement and accessibility.

Conclusion

Learner confidence continues to improve following the pandemic. The most effective strategy for course development is to support independent, active, and experimental work from the beginning. Practical work that is personal, risk-taking, and engaged consistently outperforms passive decoration, derivative projects, copied text, or overly long annotations. The Personal Study is most successful when written in the learner's own voice, focusing on the ideas and issues that inform their visual work, rather than simply describing it.