



# Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

June 2015

NQF BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in Art  
and Design

Unit 2: Creative Project in Art and  
Design (20478E)

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## **Introduction**

Unit 2 of the BTEC NQF Level 2 requires learners to respond to a short 'brief', given to them in the form of the examination question. The emphasis in all six pathways is for the learner to consider the requirements and expectations for a client, as well as to develop a personal creative response to one or other of the themes and pathway questions. Learners should select their own pathway, theme and topic.

## **Assessment Feedback**

As might be anticipated, some of the themes appear to be more popular than others. But it should be recognised that this is partly due to a tendency toward choosing particular pathways in centres. A large proportion of learners seem to be choosing, or are directed toward, the visual arts pathway. Learners in some centres have been instructed which Pathway, and indeed which question, they must choose, with the result that a worrying uniformity of approach and outcome has been seen in several centres. The moderators visiting centres have reported that in some centres the preparatory time seems to have been spent undertaking near-identical exercises. There is also an associated orthodoxy of outcomes with almost all producing for example, textile wall-hangings of near-identical size, or the majority of a cohort producing an A2 painting on paper, or producing very similar pieces of jewellery made using the same basic techniques.

It has been noted by many moderators that in many instances centres still perceive and deliver this specification in a similar way to the GCSE programme, with which staff are more comfortable and familiar. Sometimes this means that teaching staff change the intentions of the units, including this externally set unit. This can have the effect of diluting the vocational/applied/client-centred approach that this specification has as one of its fundamental tenets.

The themes of Metamorphosis and Culture have proved popular this year, with a growing number of design crafts responses seen. Whilst it is encouraging to see this pathway being taken up by more learners, the technical quality of many outcomes was sometimes disappointing, with crude processes and techniques used for joining, fixing, surface finish and presentation. Some much more refined work was seen, for example, making extensive use of laser cutting, resin casting, etched tags and labels with designed logos giving a commercial look to the work. However this was offset somewhat when it emerged that many of the learners had used, or been advised to use, identical techniques in experiments, production and presentation of their work.

A greater proportion of learners do more meaningful, sustained, connected and coherent preparation in better centres. The best of them do so individually, independent of any mechanistic and over-guided approach. For them, we see reflection on an ongoing basis, with 'why did I do this' rather more frequently seen than the 'this is what I did' style of evaluation. We also see learners who are able to keep in mind, from start to finish, the requirements of the brief, the client expectations, and indeed, the very wording of the exam question.

Sketchbook work varied greatly, with some of the best being a sensible balance between visual and written content. However, we have seen a growing number of examples this year where the written content has greatly overwhelmed the visual

material. While annotation is an essential part of documenting the creative process, development could often be far better expressed through more extensive and coherent visual material.

Regarding sketchbook work, moderators have reported that there are a number of characteristics that are seen in sketchbooks that either add nothing to the work in assessment terms or are actually detrimental to the sketchbook as a proper record of ideas development, experimentation and decision-making, and they often cite the following:

- Too much meaningless decoration, such as the word 'IDEAS', spread across a page or two, and coloured in.
- Self-fulfilling annotation, such as 'I coloured this using paint' or 'I used biro to write this', focusing too much on 'what I did' rather than 'why I did it'.
- Pointless copying of existing artwork in pursuit of media exploration. It is seldom anything to do with the media the artists used in the first place and appears to be a carried-over technique from lower levels in the school.
- A general sense that sketchbooks have been 'padded' with material that adds little to our understanding of the thinking that has gone on.
- The misuse of the idea of 'mood boards'. This is often used as a misnomer for a basic collage of images and secondary material, and seldom carries or expresses a mood, or gives any additional insight into the candidate's intentions.

In some centres there was evidence of over-prescriptive teaching, with mechanistic duplication of source material, worksheets, and identical artists and designers used as reference in sketchbooks. At times it can be difficult to see exactly what any individual learner has actually made their own decisions about. In other centres learners have been given a free choice, they have seen their own copy of the exam paper and have worked independently towards outcomes that they can truly say are their own work. This more independent approach allows learners to more readily access marks in line with their own ability.

Evaluation often posed a challenge to learners who often produced a hindsight diary full of 'then I did this, then I did that' which is more a list of activities rather than being fully evaluative. More successful responses are genuinely self-questioning, identify issues and decisions throughout the process, rather than trying to tie up the ends in a neat 'then I did this' package.

Weaker responses demonstrated unsophisticated handling of materials and poor selection of media, both 2D and 3D. Some centres did not make full use of opportunities for producing digital work where facilities exist. Well managed use of photography can support all pathways. Some annotation in sketchbooks was unreadable, such as yellow felt-tip pen on white paper with very weak spelling and sentence construction. 'Making' was occasionally simplistic with poor quality assembly, joining, sewing or production processes.

Weak understanding that a client is 'in the picture' somewhere, or that there is a brief to be answered was another factor that stopped learners from achieving.

Weaker final outcomes were obvious, literal and simplistic responses that bore little relationship to the research or preparatory pages in the sketchbook. No thought as to how outcomes might be seen or used, not enough evidence of working to scale, or in situ representation, even when specified in the exam question, no thought of client presentations or the initial context of the question.

### **Accuracy of Assessment**

Centres tend to be lenient, with evidence showing this to be the case across the board, in the lower, middle and higher mark bands. The marking grid and fine-tuning guidance is welcomed by many assessors, and used, often with some indications of where the learner sits in the mark band.

It is the case that some centres are assessing with accuracy, often somewhat regretfully having to recognise that their learners are at or around the Level 1/Level 2 Pass threshold standard.

At the top end, there are some very high marks being awarded which are accurately determined and justified. A number of pieces of work marked from 26-30 have been seen, some of which have been agreed fully. One high performing piece seen was following the Culture theme, interpreted through the Fashion pathway, where the learner had explored 'punk' as a culture, designed and made some garments, created a photo-shoot with a model, painted the background, then edited and organised a page layout, as specified in the brief for an A4 magazine. The result, inserted cleverly into a copy of Vogue, was highly convincing, creative and more than anything fulfilled the brief most effectively.

However, in some centres, moderators have noted a tendency of assessors to award marks above and outside of the grade range that is most obviously correct. Not all centres are using the PM/FM (partially met/fully met) 'tuning' properly, or the guidance about what sort of evidence and work we might see at each level, and are therefore awarding over the relevant band, even where the evidence and guidance should prevent that.

Moderators who have visited many centres tell us that generally, centres did not appear to have grasped the standards and what attainment in each assessment mark band should look like. There appeared to be too much leniency applied in efforts to make sure that students achieved at least a pass, therefore inflation was seen in all of the ensuing mark bands but in general where marks were placed in merit, pass and even at times level 1 they were often out by one band.

Centres at times tended to over-reward candidates for skill levels and competences that they had not met. This is due to the lack of meaningful time planning shown by the candidates, a minimum level of reflection, and limited experimentation with techniques

Over-lenient assessment tended to reward any activity that vaguely meets the theme, and perceived as being a successful piece of vocational, design-based or applied art and design, even where there is little sense of the learner working within the parameters and constraints of the brief. The assessment was more often lenient than accurate with centres often putting their candidates into mark band 3 rather than at

the top of mark band 2. However, some centres used the marking grid very honestly and accurately and this meant that many of their learners were placed in the correct band. They had read the guidance on assessment carefully and seen that they could not move their learners into the next mark band unless they had met all the criteria for mark band 3. It needs to be emphasised that centres should mark according to the mark bands indicated in the grids and not in line with grade boundaries.

It is always important to consider when assessing the work, to follow the assessment grids carefully and to accurately determine the marks for each learner.

### **Administration**

One issue that has emerged again this year is that of learners choosing a pathway but adopting the theme or question from a different Pathway in the exam paper. Learners cannot pick the bits they like, each Pathway has a given theme, and learners should make it completely clear which Pathway, theme and question they have chosen. Teachers have a responsibility for ensuring that the entire rubric of the paper is understood. It is vital that teachers read the Unit, the paper, and delivery guidance so they fully understand how the work is to be assessed.

Centres do understand the model and processes associated with Unit 2 delivery much better as each year goes by.

We are now seeing almost no Year 9 learners entered for this examination, with a growing trend toward Year 10 and 11 learners forming the majority of the cohort. It is important to remember that this is a Level 2 qualification with the Level 1 Pass acting as a fallback position. Learners should be recruited onto this course who are capable of operating at this level.

Centres need to read all of the guidance material, together with the material published in support of Unit 2 on the Edexcel website. Assessors must ensure that their learners really do understand what is being examined through Unit 2, and could support this by looking at the past papers available, even perhaps using them as the basis for some coursework projects.

The mechanics and processes of uploading marks, paperwork and tracking for Unit 2 should be read and checked. For example, there is no requirement to Internally Verify the marking, Unit 2 should be marked not graded, and learners should not be told their centre marks. There will always be a separate visit to verify the internally set components, entirely different to the Moderation visit that looks at marking of the Externally Set Assessments. Some centres have insisted that once they have had an SV visit, no Moderation visit is required.

## **Summary**

Moderator comments indicate that schools that marked more accurately and tended to have the best grades were those that focussed on ensuring that all of the students understood the Client Expectations and who usually presented their final outcomes in some sort of a 'mock up' 'in situ' environment. This allowed students to really demonstrate their understanding of the client brief and show their understanding of any constraints relating to it. There has been some better understanding of addressing the Client Expectations, but not all centres emphasised this sufficiently with their candidates.

The better sketchbooks balanced visual and written annotation, and made sure that annotation added to understanding. In good centres, sketchbooks were attractive to read and handle, engaged the viewer and showed the learner journey towards planned outcomes that met the requirements of the brief.

Some key strengths and weaknesses seen in 2015 are listed below:

### **Strengths**

- Non-prescriptive approaches where learners made their own creative choices supported independent development and lead to imaginative outcomes that were rewarded well.
- Learners who engaged clearly with the client expectations produced truly vocational outcomes that worked well within the intentions of the task and unit.
- Learners conducting ongoing evaluation throughout the creative process were able to fully justify their decisions.

### **Weaknesses**

- Overly prescriptive, teacher-led approaches produced mechanistic responses that reduced the ability of learners to respond creatively and independently to the brief.
- Some responses spent too much time on extensive written annotation that could be more usefully employed in producing more extensive and coherent visual material.
- Some centres did not apply the marking grids accurately; all the available information in the marking grids should be used to ensure assessment is accurate.

## Grade Boundaries

Unit	Max Mark	D	M	P	L1	U
20478E – Unit 2: Creative Project in Art and Design	30	26	20	15	10	0

### External assessment

The suite of 'next generation' NQF BTECs include an element of external assessment. This external assessment may be through a timetabled paper-based examination, an onscreen, on demand test or a set-task conducted under controlled conditions.

### What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we 'set' the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade (Distinction, Merit, Pass and Level 1 fallback).

### Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries - this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark should be for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries ensures that a learner who receives a 'Distinction' grade next year, will have similar ability to a learner who has received an 'Distinction' grade this year. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to make sure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

### Variations in externally assessed question papers

Each exam we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries year on year because then it wouldn't take into account that a paper may be slightly easier or more difficult than the year before.

Grade boundaries for all papers can be found here:

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>





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