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# Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

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

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

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August 2017

Publications Code 20478E\_1706\_ER

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## Grade Boundaries

### 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). The grade awarded for each unit contributes proportionately to the overall qualification grade and each unit should always be viewed in the context of its impact on the whole qualification.

### 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 is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

### Variations in external assessments

Each test 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 for each test, because then it would not take into account that a test might be slightly easier or more difficult than any other.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link:

[qualifications.pearson.com/gradeboundaries](http://qualifications.pearson.com/gradeboundaries)

### Unit 2: Creative Project in Art & Design (31827H)

Grade	Unclassified	Level 1 Pass	Level 2		
			Pass	Merit	Distinction
Boundary Mark	0	10	15	20	30

## Introduction

The view received from team leaders and moderators is that centres have a more confident understanding of this qualification and have improved in the accuracy of their assessment decisions. After four years of delivery, and reference to resources, exemplar work, PowerPoints with assessment detail and supportive material via Susan Young's excellent newsletter, this is what we would want to see. Most of all, it is hoped that centres read, consider and then use their moderator reports to help develop action plans and improvement strategies.

## Overall Performance of the Unit

Centres should download and read the Administrative Support Guide and familiarise themselves with the content before they deliver this unit. This guide will help you prepare and plan for assessment and moderation of the work. Moderators reported errors such as centres uploading the wrong set of marks and failing to upload marks by the set deadline. Some centres registered learners for unit 2 moderation in July, which is beyond the deadline for registrations and as such may impact on moderator availability and results. It is important that centres double-check information and use the guide to ensure they follow the administration requirements, and meet the key dates and deadlines.

In some submissions, learners could have made better use of the listed questions. These are shown at the end of each section of each of the pathways under the heading 'Client Expectations'. Learners should take care to read and follow the unit paper making sure they refer to all parts of the question paper. Some learners responded to client requirements in full and this should always be encouraged. Some centres provided quite a rigorous step by step framework approach which led to a quite prescriptive delivery of the course but enabled the learners to address the needs of the client. Some submissions were found to have paid less close consideration the client's needs which, at times, limited access to the higher marking bands.

At the end of the project, some learners included a short written presentation or a visual to show how their final piece could be shown 'in situ'. Attempts were made by learners to explain how outcomes would be presented to the client; this is good practice and should be encouraged. In a few centres learners had been encouraged to photograph the outcomes and digitally manipulate the images to embed within photographs or drawings of the suitable locations. These were found to be very effective.

Moderators have reported that there is still a general tendency for learners to select the visual arts question on the exam paper. This may be because they come from a general art and design department which hasn't pursued a specialist pathway. As such this is perfectly acceptable. Learners should be encouraged to select an option which they feel most confident with. There has also been a slight increase in centres who offer more

specialist pathways and it is now the case that there are more centres opting for the fashion/textiles, design craft and photography pathways.

The pop and op art and performance questions were popular choices this year. There were some good entries for the classical theme as well. For the performance question, a number of learners organised friends who were dancers or musicians to pose for them, or went to gigs and shows to do some primary observation. In some cases, these initial observations turned into dynamic and committed pieces, often effectively and properly shown 'in situ'. The op and pop art generated some terrific responses. One example seen in the fashion and textiles pathway was presented as a superb sketchbook, and ended up as an exemplary and personal piece of design, a quarter-scale garment that used print, felting, sculptural elements and a real sense of the requirements inherent in the design process.

It was very heartening to hear that learners had really got to grips with the unit 2 paper, liked the questions, and were motivated and focussed in the preparatory stages and in the controlled test, across all of the pathways.

Regardless of the question, and indeed the pathway, some learners see unit 2 not as a vocationally contextualised task for a client, but as a starting point for a personal piece of art. There is less evidence of centres directing learners towards specific question and then over-manage the 20 hour period towards the controlled assessment period. Centres are advised to ensure that support is appropriate to the level in the preparatory period, but still allows learners room to make individual choices leading to personal outcomes.

Moderators and team leaders have commented on the increasing extent to which centres either allow a free choice to their learners regarding the selection of questions, the process or approach to working that they then apply. Centres who operate in a very formulaic manner, pre-selecting the question, supplying identical artist reference material to learners and encouraging learners to complete similar tasks on a week by week basis, do not allow sufficient room for learners to evidence independence and personality in their work. The result is often duplication between sketchbooks and evidence of identical processes being used. It is most unlikely that such an over-managed process can result in high marks as the learner has simply not fulfilled the criteria regarding development of diverse ideas and of independent working. Centres should try to avoid this approach.

At its most effective, guided development at the early stages will serve the learner better, hopefully ensuring that research is properly undertaken. Best practice is for a range of ideas to be developed so some can be discarded and others kept, from which selection can be made for final outcomes with meaningful justification and reasoned personal argument.

There were centres that treated the learners with respect, prepared them for the timed assessment period and made sure they fulfilled the brief. In good examples of this,

outcomes were individual and well resolved. Learners performed well under those conditions and reached their potential. On the other hand, some centres had a 'factory' approach where once the cut and paste information was removed the content looked tight and prescribed.

Too often the responses did not demonstrate the cognitive ability to proceed, analyse and experiment without department crib sheets. Boxes were ticked but qualitative judgements were not in evidence.

Sometimes a linear approach was in evidence with little review or development beyond the obvious. Centres would benefit from emphasising the iterative and cyclic nature of the design process, the questioning, the inclusion and discarding of proposals, the development and refinement of ideas. As would be expected, responses at the lower end of the marks scheme seemed to arrive at one idea early on, whereas learners with higher marks were found to have successfully explored a more diverse and interesting range of ideas.

Many learners in different centres were able to meet the requirements of the brief. The extent to which learners were able to meet the brief in many cases depended on whether or not there had been adequate analysis of the requirements of the brief. It is not helpful if centres write their own brief, particularly when they misdirect learners in relation to that brief.

There were good examples of learners having worked through the preparatory period and then produced outcomes that related to the preparatory work and met the requirements of the brief.

The outcomes from those learners fully met the intentions of their chosen client brief and the best examples balanced personal interests and identified sources with the client expectations with real skill and confidence. In some instances centres have been asked to retain examples of work from this question to support next year's training events, and this is a good opportunity to thank those centres who lent work from previous year's cohorts to help with training events.

Moderators have reported that assessment has become more accurate across both school and college providers. This suggests that centres are growing in confidence, are more familiar with the application of the criteria and are grasping the idea of a national standard. This is very heartening and centres are thanked for their efforts with this.

The assessment grids seem to work well to help markers assess the right mark for their learners and there was a lot of evidence of centres ringing the 'not met', 'partially met' or 'fully met' criteria as well as descriptors on the grid and marking the work accordingly. Some centres did not really understand the fine tuning aspect of the assessment criteria document and slight inaccuracy of marking resulted.

There are still some centres who find it hard to be consistent across the different mark ranges. When leniency is found, it is usually in the higher mark bands, and around the level 2 pass threshold. Moderators have reported that submissions that do not meet the criteria for marks bands 4 and 5 have been marked too highly, without enough regard for the descriptors and criteria. But as a very welcome and positive note, many moderators have reported that accuracy of centre assessment has definitely improved on the whole this year. Some centres have reviewed their assessment processes, including making standardising within departments more rigorous. Another key observation is to recognise that the requirements, expectations and assessment criteria for this qualification have become much more embedded in the philosophies and delivery strategies of teaching teams, and some really excellent work has emerged as a result.

As a vocational award there needs to be a strengthening of the essential skills required. Research as an independently driven process, not one reliant on hand-outs and writing frames. Ideas development properly based on context, client requirements and adherence to a specific brief.

There have been some excellent submissions at the top end of the mark range, in visual arts, fashion and textiles and design craft for example. These have been assessed with great integrity and accuracy.

Assessment has also improved in accuracy at the very low end of the scale, with centres becoming more realistic in their understanding of the level 1/level 2 pass boundary. Some very weak work was accurately assessed in the 4-6 range. Overall, centre accuracy continues to improve.

## Summary

Based on the responses seen this series, the following should be noted:

- Review and discuss the moderator's report when results are published and use that to develop and help implement their action planning.
- Look carefully at recruitment to the qualification.
- Use departmental resources fully to support delivery of this qualification.
- Look on the Pearson website for all the exemplar material available to support better assessment and delivery practice.
- Avoid mechanistic and formulaic models of delivery which stifle individual creativity and are limited to step-by-step exercises in media, materials, processes and techniques.
- Do not rely on handing out the same artists/designer resources for every learner, but encourage learners to choose and use personal choices of contextual references.
- Use selected questions from previous years' unit 2 exam papers as 'mini-assignments' to help prepare learners for the exam itself.
- Underpin learning with drawing, research skills, understanding of primary and secondary source material and ensure learners see how these elements inform design and decision-making.
- Use the 20 hours of preparatory time to encourage and ensure that there is a clear focus on the development of individual work and ideas.



