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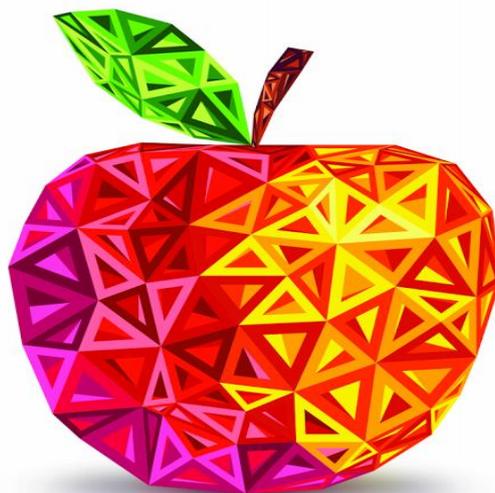


Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

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

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



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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

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

Grade	Unclassified	Level 1 Pass	Level 2		
			Pass	Merit	Distinction
Boundary Mark	0	9	14	19	25

Introduction

This report is intended to give centres some insights into this year's Unit 2 performance, the scope and quality of work seen, innovation and surprises in the outcomes, and also to help centres develop improved practice in the assessment process.

As in previous years, it is advised that centres read, consider and then use their moderator's reports to help develop action plans and improvement strategies. They should also read this Chief Examiner's report and consider the published Grade Boundary figures, available to them on the Pearson website.

Later in this report, quotes or comments taken from moderator's reports are included, in italics, to extend centres' appreciation of the range of material being seen during the moderation process. We hope these will be also useful in reflecting the wide range of experiences and observations that the many dozens of moderators make as they complete their allocation of visits to centres across the UK.

Overall Performance of the Unit

Centres visited have shown a growing understanding of this qualification and almost all centres seen have sustained a level of accuracy and consistency in their assessment decisions for Unit 2. Where there is variance it is almost invariably that of leniency, with a number of submissions placed one mark band higher than they should be. Centres are always advised to read both the criteria in the assessment grids and the additional guidelines for assessment that are attached to those grids. Evidence for the fine tuning of assessment decisions is still somewhat lacking in some centres.

Learners are usually drawn from year 10 and 11 year groups, and there have been entries from both FE and Sixth Form colleges. It is rewarding to note that this qualification retains such a wide appeal to different providers.

Centres generally manage the preparatory and 'assessment' periods well, with enough time being given to the release of the paper, discussion with learners about choices of pathway, and many centres plan visits or research tasks that support the early stages of ideas development. This was especially beneficial this year for the 'Industrial Heritage' theme, where some excellent fieldwork and primary recording in drawing and photography was seen. Local sources were well used for this theme, as they were for the 'Trees and Shells, Rocks and Fossils' themes. It is gratifying to see learners out on location, selecting buildings and structures, surfaces and textures, natural forms and man-made artefacts, and using these to the full to inspire ideas and develop personal creative intentions.

The learners engaged well with the theme Industrial Heritage with some good photo-shoots in relevant local sites. Many submissions contained similar responses to relevant artists, in what seemed to be centre-led exercises but there was also evidence of the learners' own selection and refinement of ideas. Work seen for both of the pathways showed that learners had manipulated and developed their ideas with a variety of hands on, collage, print and technological techniques, with some pleasing outcomes produced.

When it comes to responding to the question paper, moderators still see instances where a single question from a selected pathway seems to have been determined by staff as the 'chosen' question for all learners. Predictably perhaps, those centres then seem to exert or determine quite a high level of control and direction over their cohorts' work, which can lead to almost identical sketchbooks, and in some cases sketchbook pages appear to match in order and content, one learner to the next, limiting or even removing any real individuality in the work. This then has the effect of diminishing individual

characteristics or creative development. The question is whether the controlled assessment conditions are being delivered according to the mandatory requirements as described in the paper. It often appears that learners are doing near identical work during the timed supervised assessment period as well as during the preparatory time. Those ten hours are meant to take place with no direct intervention, and certainly no direction, teaching or guidance, except for a defined range of technical support, such as managing kiln firings.

Over-management of this sort might be because teachers believe that learners are unable to develop ideas on their own, and moderators have been told: "if I don't direct them on what to do, they won't produce anything". However, this approach risks the learner missing out on reaching any higher mark bands. Selection, diversity of ideas, independent decision-making and individual creative development are the ways by which learners can aspire to the marks in the higher mark bands.

Learners realised their potential most effectively where they were encouraged to take a personal and individual approach from the outset and this was most successful where they had previously acquired and developed the necessary experience, knowledge and skills to approach the brief with confidence. Centres endeavoured to find ways to support those learners who lacked the skills and imagination to confidently pursue personal responses. Good use was made of local and regional resources through group visits to museums and galleries and areas of local interest that were relevant to the themes.

As with previous years, some learners did not seem to access or read the whole paper, or even select the question they have responded to. We always include as part of each question a set of pointers, at the end of each section of each of the pathways with the heading: 'Client Expectations'. Many learners had not referred to this to help structure their presentations, annotations or outcomes. Representations of work in situ, or as it might be presented to clients, are often hastily assembled, and fall short of being convincing.

In the lower mark bands in some centres there was an over reliance on secondary source imagery and "readymade" contextual references that were seen to be generic across work sampled.

A wide range of materials, processes and techniques were seen overall. It was typical that learners who performed well used these with a sense of purpose and an understanding of the relevance and relationship to the project brief and the direction of their work. Most centres had encouraged their learners to work with a variety of materials, processes and techniques in the preparatory work for Unit 2. However, it was evident that on some occasions these were simply generic "one-off" exercises that lacked any real connection to the requirements of the brief. A couple of centres, one with a large cohort, had confined learners to a single theme within one pathway and the submissions were characterised by formulaic responses and exercises which were at times unconnected to the brief.

Learners should be reminded to read and follow the brief and client expectations carefully in order to refer to all requirements in the question they have answered. There was some variability from learners regarding the aspect of meeting clients' needs. Some centres ensure that a formula is followed to ensure that this element has been met, even if this sometimes means a more formulaic delivery of the course. This has enabled the learners to address the needs of the client, Some centres seem to see this whole aspect of addressing the client's needs as slight at best or unnecessary at worst, which really limits learners' access to the higher marking bands.

On a general note, there are still centres who have not understood that in some cases, it is a requirement that a mock-up of the work 'in situ' should sensibly include the scale and positioning of the learners final outcome. This was missing in most of the submissions seen in one centre.

The listed bullets shown at the end of each section of each of the pathways under the heading: 'Client expectations', can be used by learners as a guide for their continued evaluation. At the end of the project, to do a short written presentation and an illustration showing how the final piece could be shown in situ or presented to the client would be a useful concluding activity for this vocational assignment. If learners referred to these issues more carefully they would be awarded higher marks, as they would fulfil the requirements of the brief as shown on the assessment grid. Some need to be taught to read and follow all required parts of the question paper.

There are of course some exceptionally well-taught courses, with a focus on opportunities for individual work, exploration of the themes, and based on a free choice from the whole paper. In these instances, higher marks are more accessible in mark bands 4 and 5. A number of submissions have been seen this year that have been awarded very high marks, and those marks have been supported by moderators.

In some cases, it has been hard for moderators to know which pathway and question some learners have chosen, as there is nothing in the sketchbook or portfolio to suggest it:

"Perhaps half of the centres visited provided the whole paper to the learners, although a number of centres did then discuss the options with learners to help 'encourage' them to all choose from the same theme. Where this was the case it was a strategy that enabled teaching staff to more easily manage and direct weaker cohorts of learners, or use limited resources while completing the controlled assessment. The other half gave only selected pathways to the learners, and some centres made every candidate work to the same question from the same Pathway".

Learners in many centres neglected to state which pathway or question was being answered. This was not always easy to determine from the work produced, especially when research and design work did not readily 'fit' any of the required outcomes.

There is a bias for learners to select the Visual Arts question and this is often because many centres deliver a more general Art and Design programme without specialist pathways. However, there are more centres delivering fashion/textiles, design craft and photography pathways, and some really attractive and lively work has been seen this year in ceramics, digital imaging, laser-cut work, print and montage.

All of the themes were received well in centres, with very many responding well to the potential in Industrial Heritage. Where centres had encouraged site visits, run field trips and lent out cameras for weekend visits, results were impressive. Learners found inspiration in their local areas and regions, and some exceptional digitally enhanced work was seen that mixed traditional darkroom work with had drawn acetate overlays, acetate negatives and digital manipulation. Applied thoughtfully to the Industrial Heritage theme, in regions across the country where industry has a past rather more than a future, powerful emotive pieces emerged.

Some centres took the opportunity to arrange educational visits, or to give learners the chance to meet with tutors on a Saturday morning, to visits places of historical interest. Primary recordings formed the basis of the initial exploration of ideas and a wide range of materials, techniques and processes were used for experimentation purposes. Only one centre said that learners had found difficulty collecting primary source material. The Product Design Pathway also produced interested and well researched work. These included lampshades made from wood and decorated with shell designs, burnt into the wood. Another centre produced skilful small-scale models of furniture inspired by the theme. One centre even made full size furniture.

As in previous years, photography was used to gather some primary source material. Much of this was of the point and shoot type, and opportunities were lost which could have added to the development of ideas. Composition, cropping and viewpoint don't seem to enter into the process at all for many learners, and the almost universal application of the mobile phone camera seems to remove any thoughts of better quality or more selective composition and image-making. Guidance and direct teaching about composition, framing, viewpoint, angle, exposure and most importantly, selection from a range of images, would be of great benefit to many young art students.

'Shells, Rocks and Fossils' was a popular theme this year, with some delightful work seen in textiles, such as standing screens, hangings and assemblage pieces. 'The Trees' theme also had a number of enthusiastic takers, with good results seen in Visual Communication. 'Industrial Heritage' was effectively used in both Photography and Visual Arts. Some very good fashion and textiles work has been seen using images from primary sources, with richly presented sketchbooks underpinning creative developments. Hangings, garments, screens, and customised clothing have been seen, many with striking visual effect, and many showing high levels of technical control and well taught constructions skills.

It was pleasing to see that the good practice is in place, allowing learners to select their own question and deal with the demands and expectations of those client briefs. The constraints in the questions have actually encouraged depth and richness in the sketchbooks, as well as thoughtful and usually well-explained statements as to which end product will be produced, and how this meets the requirements of the brief. That philosophy seems to be a departmental expectation, and it has certainly worked very effectively in many centres.

There was often a disconnection between preparatory work and the final outcome. Across most of the centres the development of plans, sketches, layouts and the generation of ideas seemed to have been diluted and the jump to a final solution too rapid and unconsidered. In only one centre I visited was there seen to be a considered and fluent approach to the planning, development and realisation of the final outcome.

The learners own ideas development, selecting and refining ideas showing critical understanding was less well evidenced with the design process often relegated to a few cursory thumb-nail sketches. This often led to disappointing and predictable outcomes. The learners' annotations on their own and others' work tended to be descriptive rather than explaining or analysing their ideas, processes or intentions.

There are centres where learners seem to be advised to treat this paper not as a vocational task, with a client who has specific expectations, but more as a starting point for a personal piece of art, like a GCSE style question. Centres have instructed whole cohorts not only as to the Pathway they are going to 'choose', but also the exact same question - and unsurprisingly the evidence shows that centres over-manage the preparatory time, and sometimes the supervised assessment, resulting in very similar outcomes. This is a good time to remind everyone that this 'paper' also reveals the way the whole course is taught, how learners respond to a brief, and how they manage time, ideas and resources as independent workers. Thus the way the coursework units are delivered can have a meaningful effect on performance in Unit 2.

The qualification is mainly delivered in Art & Design departments, but we also have a growing number of Design Technology departments who deliver this qualification very successfully.

Assessment has become generally more accurate across both school and college providers. This suggests that centres are continuing to refine their assessment processes, and are more familiar with

the application of the criteria as well as being more in tune with the national standard. Where centres are inaccurate, this tends to be leniency. Centres tend to find the right mark band, but often go to the top when the learner actually sits more comfortably lower down. Improved internal standardisation of marks may help centres better fine tune final marks. There are still occasions where centres seem to mark with minimal reference to the assessment grids, guidance and instructions, ranking their own cohort regardless of the criteria in the mark bands.

Assessment decisions for learners tended to be either very accurate or in a few instances way out of tolerance this year; centres generally assessed work in the correct marking band but at times there was still an over tendency to mark at the higher part of the mark band, when often the lower part of the mark band would be a more accurate decision. This was often due to insufficient development of ideas, limited evidence of critical selection, jumping far too early to a 'final design', and not enough sophistication demonstrated in those studies or in the creation and resolution of the final outcomes.

The full mark range has again been observed this year, including the very top end of the mark bands. We have seen learners successfully achieve the highest marks. Excellent work has been reported in photography, visual arts, fashion and textiles and design craft.

Most centres assessed accurately, though some showed leniency, carried right across Criteria 1 to 3. All centres used the assessment grid, but some failed to use the fine-tuning guidance, found on the reverse of that sheet. One centre made excellent use of the additional guidance, adding helpful notes to clarify how the assessment decisions had been made. Another centre was found to be somewhat inaccurate across the whole sample, mainly due to the similarity of work presented and the lack of the use of the fine-tuning tools.

The assessment grid includes indicators for 'Not Met', 'Partially Met' and 'Fully Met'. Some centres were circling these, but with no relation to the awarded mark. For example in the 13-18 Mark Band, they would circle 'FM' fully met, yet only award 14 marks. This makes no sense.

Misinterpretation of questions, sadly unexplored potential, starting points not fully pursued and unexplained leaps to final outcomes with little explanation were seen by moderators this year, although in assessment terms, these issues had not been recognised by the centre. There are exemplar materials and guidance on the website to help support marking activities and it is strongly recommended that these are used.

Assessment has also been seen 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 weaker work was accurately assessed in the 4-8 range. Overall, centre accuracy continues to improve, with a majority of centres proving to be within tolerance in the samples moderated.

There were some centres that were far too severe in applying the assessment criteria. At one, some of the learner's sketchbooks were stunning, full of ideas and material explorations with detailed analysis which met the top marking band criteria fully, rather than the centre's decision to place them in mark band 4. For another centre, some of the final outcomes created were of a very professional final finish with enough developmental work to be awarded a Mark Band 4 or 5 grade rather than the Mark band 3 grades that were generally awarded.

Summary

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

- Review and discuss their moderator 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 staffing and technical resources more effectively to support delivery of this qualification.
- Look on the Pearson website for any of the exemplar material available to support better assessment and delivery practice.
- Avoid mechanistic and formulaic models of delivery which diminish 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 instead support learners so that they can choose, justify and use some additional contextual references themselves.
- Use selected questions from previous years' Unit 2 papers as 'mini-assignments' to help prepare learners for the paper.
- Underpin learning with drawing, the teaching of research skills, understanding of primary and secondary source material, the use of better photography and ensure learners see how these elements inform creative development, design and decision-making.
- Use the twenty hours of preparatory time to encourage progress and confidence and ensure that there is a clearer focus on individual work as time for the supervised assessment period.
- Ensure that the wider context of the specialist vocational pathways is a fully considered factor throughout the programme, if a specialist pathway is being delivered.