

Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

June 2014

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

This report reflects the experience, observations and outcomes seen during the 2014 moderation of Unit 2. This is focused on an externally set assessment 'exam' paper, with questions that cover the six Pathways in the specification. Learners then have a number of weeks to prepare for the 'exam', during which they have twenty hours of supervised time, followed by a highly controlled (no help from the teacher) period of ten hours. During those ten hours learners are required to develop final outcomes that meet client expectations and bring together the research they have done, the ideas they have developed and the media and processes they have explored leading up to this time, and they must work unaided during those ten hours.

Assessment Feedback

There are identifiable issues in the assessment of this Unit. Centres overall still tend to be lenient in their marking. In some centres marks are being awarded for aspects of research and contextual understanding, even when those sources are supplied by the teacher. Very little evidence has been seen of primary source evidence, the use of books and libraries, or a critical and selective use of internet-based material.

Where the criteria for Learning Outcomes A and B have been thoroughly understood and applied, moderators have seen accuracy in assessment decisions. To help further improve accuracy, assessors should read the marking grids carefully, and also refer to the additional information supplied in the Unit regarding 'levelness' and fine-tuning of assessment decisions.

Leniency was found where centres did not recognise the necessity of the transition between visual research into ideas, and the extended, sustained development of ideas in the development stage. Often an idea stayed at the first stage. Diversity, exploitation and individuality responses tended to be found when learners had been able to choose methods of working, and had plenty of material, processes, and techniques at their disposal. This reveals much about the taught courses leading up to the controlled assessment.

An increasing number of centres have developed a well taught/directed course for the initial work and then encouraged individual learners to work in a variety of media and to creatively evolve their own individual progression towards final pieces. In other centres learners had not always followed the subject teachers' specialism but had been encouraged to evolve their own pathways to completion. These also resulted in innovative and energetic outcomes in a growing number of instances, which support the premise of the course being well taught and tailored to the individual requirements of learners. Again, and in an increasing number of centres this year, the enthusiasm with which learners had embraced the course was evident.

In less successful centres, the impression was that many of the learners had not given sufficient consideration to Assessment Criteria 1 and 3, specifically regarding the process of working to a brief, producing work to meet the requirements of a brief, and reviewing and evaluating their work in the context of the brief. There was often a lack of evidence presented by the learners to explain their journey through the brief towards their conclusion. Final outcomes sometimes just seemed to jump into existence, with insufficient connection to the preparatory work. These characteristics meant that in many centres very few learners were achieving Merit or Distinction

levels.

There was an over-emphasis on material and media experimentation for Criterion 2 rather than on the development of a piece of work that would fulfil the brief, and learners' creative intentions for the brief. Where centres are using the full mark range this was not always applied evenly. Moderators have visited centres who assess accurately at the lower end of the scale, but then progressively become more lenient.

However, as centre experience develops and more attention is given to the assessment grids and guidance, better and more accurate assessment emerges. Work was seen in response to the Labyrinth question, and to the Retro theme, that reached into the upper marking bands, and the centres had accurately and correctly recognised this. This better and more accurate approach, whilst clearly on the increase, is most welcome and contrasts strongly with the less effective practice found. The overall picture is a mixed one, as is reflected in moderators' comments. Some promising signs are evident that there are centres delivering, managing and assessing this qualification with the integrity and accuracy we would want to see.

In the best centres, learners produced some excellent work with teachers making sure that the Design brief was understood, and that preparatory work was thorough and well carried out. Some centres produced a multi-stage work plan for each learner to follow.

In a number of centres visited, the learners produced well-researched and well-executed final outcomes, with full evaluations made and progress annotated. At those Centres who taught the specification to Year 10 /11 learners it was obvious that the extra year or two had made all the difference in the understanding of the unit requirements, and the maturity found in the work produced.

Mid-range and lower scoring learners tended to refer to some contextual references, but very often failed to understand or make conscious links to their relevance in the design process. This was especially noticed with Year 9/10 learners – and especially so with some cohorts consisting entirely of low ability learners or learners who had little interest in the subject.

The choice of Pathways, which learners chose to carry out their research, was varied and often selected by the individual centre. One moderator commented that a centre had been so prescriptive that little was left for the learners to discover themselves.

A common error made by learners was not fully understanding the starting point, which is a short, client-oriented brief in the form of the exam question. As with many creative commissions, this is a critical point in the process, and the brief must be read and understood. Many learners were not well enough prepared for this essential stage of their work and as a result did not perform as well as expected. They did not understand or grasp the importance of all the essential stages of the process. For example, it is not enough to do an evaluation of the final outcome alone, as a simple 'I did this, then I did that' statement. Evaluation should also be more wide-ranging, and be written much more specifically in relation to satisfying the brief and the client expectations, which are clearly listed in each question. Many learners appear to have never seen these. Regrettably this was a common error and many learners' responses were characterised by a mechanistic and over-controlled approach rather than tackling the task in an independent manner.

Administration

Moderators tell us they have seen more centres this year where the assessment process is being applied correctly and increasingly accurately. This is a positive and welcome indication.

It is of some concern that centres have been visited where assessors claim never to have seen the administration or guidance materials, and have worked without guidance, and awarded 'Pass', Merit' and 'Distinction' grades rather than marks. Often, a 'Level 2 pass' equivalent mark has been awarded to the least able learner, with the rest 'stacked' above them. This resulted in a failure to present the correct Assessment Matrices for moderation, the use of a very limited range of marks for the learners' work and an ineffective rank order. The latter failing however could be easily remedied by reference to the extensive support material on the website, and that found in the Centre Guidance documents which have been widely distributed.

A few learners had detailed their difficulty and dissatisfaction regarding the time allowed for their 'final project outcome'. It must be recognised that many courses had stressed and evolved the need to ensure that work was developed and brought to as good a conclusion as was individually possible, which is part of the demand of this process. It is a time related exercise. The sudden transition to the controlled ten-hour paper looked as if it was something of a shock to some. It may be that centres need to be made aware of this aspect and build it into their course teaching, in order to retain parity with other courses, recognising that this is a necessity of the course and an essential element of the rigour that has been asked for in the Next Generation specification.

Summary

What then can we learn from these various, sometime contradictory, observations?

1. Centres really need to be certain that they can deliver enough Pathways to make the course wide-ranging, to give it a genuine vocational context and to prepare learners for the externally assessed Units.
2. Teachers must read and understand the specification, assessment guidance and supporting material. In this are many of the answers to the many questions that emerge, and with which moderators have been confronted.
3. Centre admin needs to ensure that timely submission of marks is undertaken, and that everyone in the process agrees and understands the requirements, timings, documentation and moderation requirements.
4. Learners should be given free access to the exam paper, and as far as is reasonable, be able to choose the question they wish to attempt, and this then to be based on their skills and experience gained to date. Prescriptive, directed, over-managed and mechanistic approaches result in an orthodoxy and blandness in learners' work that suggest they are incapable of any independent thinking or action.
5. Learners should be old enough, mature enough and confident enough to address the demands of the Externally Set Assessment questions, and capable both of preparing for the production of the final outcome and even more so in working under the 'highly controlled' parameters and expectations of the ten hour 'exam' period. Year 9 learners overall still seem to struggle to make independent and

informed decisions about research, development, context and meaning full outcome.

6. Having said this, more learners than before are now generating innovative ideas and achieving effective and striking individual creative intentions that meet client expectations. This should become the shared ambition of all stakeholders.

Grade Boundaries

Unit	Max Mark	D	M	P	L1	U
20478E – Unit 2: Creative Project in Art and Design	30	25	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://pastpapers.edexcel.com/content/edexcel/grade-boundaries.html>

Provisional qualification outcomes for BTEC First Level 1/Level 2 Award in Art and Design

The provisional qualification outcomes for the BTEC Level 2 award can be found below.

2013 – 2014	D*	D	M	P	L1	U
Claims: 1114	2.69	7.27	24.78	56.91	99.28	100.00

These outcomes reflect the cumulative percentage of learners who have received each grade for the qualification this year.

These figures are provisional because we are expecting more learners to claim their overall qualification outcome over the coming weeks. We will publish updated qualification outcomes in due course.

Outcomes explained

An aggregate qualification grade is where all unit outcomes are joined together to give a final grade for the qualification. Full details on how the qualification grade has been calculated can be found here:

http://www.edexcel.com/migrationdocuments/BTEC%20Firsts%20from%202012/9781446907740_BTEC_L12_DIP_AD_SPEC_WEB.pdf.

2013 – 2014	D*	D	M	P	L1	U
Claims: 82,247	1.56	5.31	22.62	65.25	96.21	100.00

Number of claims released by August 2014

Eg: proportion of learners claimed & grades released achieving a merit or above 2014

We will be publishing full year qualification outcomes for BTEC in the autumn.

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