

Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

June 2014

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

Unit 7: Recording for Creative
Intentions in Art and Design (21357E)

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Publications Code BF038174

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Introduction

The principal message for teachers and learners resulting from this first year of entries for unit 7 is that the majority of learners were under-prepared and that centres had not taken the time to fully understand the requirements of the unit nor of the underlying principles behind the unit. Marking in nearly all cases was found to be lenient and often well outside national standards.

Learners had tried to address the learning aims and there was evidence of considerable enthusiasm, effort and due process but the great majority were unable to fully satisfy the criteria of the mark scheme. This was further exacerbated by the choice of pathway. In many instances candidates chose a pathway in which they had little or no experience or chose multiple pathways.

The unit culminates in a 5 hour, unaided exam; since the underlying principles of unit 7 are at the root of all creative work, the 25 hours preparatory time has often been wisely spent spanning other units of the courses delivered. The preparatory work may be used in other units but cannot be used either in the 5 hours controlled exam nor can it be considered in any way towards the marks for the unit.

The unit does not require finished work and "outcomes", as such, should be "design ideas". The form of these will vary between Pathways.

This unit is divided into two parts, A & B, the first of which has two elements.

- A1 - Selection and reasons for selection
- A2 - Recording of items selected
- B - Design ideas and creative intentions

The teaching is likely to include how to record, how to select (make choices), how to derive creative ideas from the recorded material and how to articulate and present those creative ideas. Aspects of art & design such as analysis of the requirements of the task (brief), time constraints, composition, annotation, reasoning, evaluation, review, drawing, photography, printing - even directly from the object, rubbing, frottage, paint, typefaces etc., etc., are likely to be drawn upon; the list would be very long and encompassing of all art and design processes and disciplines. Client expectations will also be an important factor.

Assessment Feedback

The articles for assessment, consisting of three documents, to be found in the specification on pages 128-132 had apparently not been fully considered when applying marks. Often, aspects of the marking scheme seemed to be completely ignored, mostly that of selection and reason/s for selection i.e. criterion A1.

What the moderators found most often was a limited choice of object, materials and approach. It was felt that many learners had not been specifically taught how to approach this unit and that they were expected to have learnt the requirements through their work in other units. That approach will only work if the requirements of this unit are taught and emphasised clearly enough within the other units.

There has been considerable variety in approach to this unit. Where centres have carefully read the specification their approach has been rewarded with some positive

outcomes on the part of learners. The issue is that many centres have not taught the learners to fully address the assessment criteria; in particular the requirement of giving a reason or reasons, which has often been missed or misunderstood. In several centres submissions were marked too leniently when there was no evidence of reasoning. Some centres were unable to provide sufficient evidence here and thus work had to be ungraded. In other centres candidates gave reasons for their choice of medium or approach rather than why they chose a particular item to record. The specification on page 126 states:

- considering the potential of different visual sources in meeting the requirements of a brief
- recording notes on selections made, including strengths and weaknesses, in an appropriate format

The grade descriptors, mark scheme and specification all come into play when assessing the 5 hour test. Moderators found that centres were missing the wider aspects of the marking scheme descriptors and thus awarding leniently. Centre assessors are advised that to achieve above level 1 "reasons" N.B. plural, must be given and "design ideas" not "idea" are expected. Since elements were insufficiently evidenced or missing, learners received grades which were lower than their ability levels may have indicated.

Since this exam is necessarily vocational, the brief is at the core of each unit. The aspects of "identifying the main objectives of a brief and planning recording activities to be undertaken within a limited time" were also aspects which were often ignored. The level descriptor for level 2 states "The studies that they produce will demonstrate effective recording of these sources to show how they intend to progress towards meeting the requirements of the brief that they have chosen". If the learner fails to state which brief has been chosen this aspect is difficult to assess. Planning of the use of the time and indication through annotation of the thought processes, were not even considered by the great majority of candidates.

The notion that thinking about the possibilities which arise from the brief will allow an informed choice of object to be selected and recorded, is one which is fundamental to this unit. This is in order to provide relevant information from the objects chosen which will aid the design process. The great majority of candidates were unable to make their choices with this in mind.

The aspect of recording is the strongest seen by moderators for this unit. Learners recorded according to ability and sometimes in a variety of media. Some photographic recording was of a high level but all too often several snaps were expected to suffice rather than interrogating the objects to elicit relevant information. Still life compositions were seen by many to satisfy the notion of an "outcome" but this unit requires no outcome or finished piece. In all mediums used for "recording" there must be the design process, behind, alongside or in front of that recording and that process must be documented, the presentation of several photographs cannot satisfy that aspect. Ability and maturity conditioned the levels of skill in recording but all too often skills had not been developed sufficiently in order to extract and derive relevant information from the sources. Drawings were often neither analytical nor showed effective use of line or tone, photographic images failed to show an understanding of

the principles of photography e.g. point of focus, depth of field, close up or even composition.

The use of mediums was not a strong aspect but where variety was present the work was often of a higher order. Drawing was the most popular medium used with photography by far the second most common medium used, followed by printmaking. There was very little evidence of the use of three dimensional or plastic mediums. Scrap material and textiles seen in several centres aided the creative process, where it was used to record or to transcend from recording to design.

Administration

The specification is clear in what the learners must produce and yet there were submissions where the understanding of centres had evidently been considerably awry. Art teachers will understand that “primary sources” means working from actual objects not printed images nor from digital images. The exam has to be conducted under controlled conditions; one aspect of that is that no access to digital devices connected to the internet or other online or similar sources of information should be allowed. There should be no imagery from external sources in the work presented for assessment. Images duplicated from books were also seen, as were crib sheets or aide memoirs, all of which do not fulfil the requirements of this unit.

Centres should ensure they have read the relevant section of the Specification as well as the Administrative Support Guide before embarking on assessment of this unit.

Summary

The process of generation of design ideas towards creative intentions was challenging. The creative steps or process leading to a variety of ideas and subsequent selection and further development was only very rarely seen. All too often a single idea was presented and variety may have been in how it was presented e.g. colour ways or the use of felt tip instead of pencil.

The documentation of the creative process, when present, was mostly descriptive, in the great majority of examples seen, rather than informative of creative intentions. Some candidates presented evaluations and within those, reasons for selection were sometimes stated, together with analysis or reflection and thus marks could be supported. The documenting of the journey made, from considering the brief to design ideas, was in the vast majority of examples, worryingly absent.

When approached in an informed and purposeful manner, the elements and stages required to achieve the higher marks were present. A variety of viewpoints, analysis of how the designs had met the client expectations, sequential steps in the collection of relevant images, where the “primary source” material had been both analysed and suitably interrogated visually, had informed creative steps in the design process. The notion of generation of design ideas towards creative intentions, where understood, led to more convincing work.

Grade Boundaries

Unit	Max Mark	D	M	P	L1	U
21357E – Unit 7: Recording for Creative Intentions in Art and Design	30	26	20	14	8	0

External assessment

The suite of 'next generation' NOF 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>

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