



Examiners' Report Lead Examiner Feedback

January 2022

Pearson BTEC Nationals in Art & Design
Unit 2: Critical and Contextual Studies in Art &
Design (31828H)

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications come from Pearson, the world's leading learning company. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational, and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications website at <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/home.html> for our BTEC qualifications.

Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/contact-us.html>

If you have any subject specific questions about this specification that require the help of a subject specialist, you can speak directly to the subject team at Pearson. Their contact details can be found on this link:
<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-for-you/teachers.html>

You can also use our online Ask the Expert service at <https://www.edexcelonline.com>. You will need an Edexcel Online username and password to access this service.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your learners at: www.pearson.com/uk

March 2022

Publications Code 31828H_2201_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2022

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, at Distinction, Merit and Pass.

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the external 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 is 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 external assessment 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 assessment, because then it would not take accessibility into account.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link:
<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

Awarding BTEC qualifications in 2022

Ofqual has [set out their plans](#) for awarding qualifications in 2022 and intend to return to a normal, pre-pandemic, approach to grading standards over by 2023. They have confirmed that 2022 will be a transition year, to reflect that we are in a pandemic recovery period and students' education has been disrupted.

Our guiding principle and approach to awarding BTEC qualification results in 2022 will be to ensure parity in relation to the approach being taken for GCSE and A level learners. BTEC courses have a different structure and design to academic qualifications - BTECs are modular qualifications (with assessments taking place throughout the course) compared to GCSEs and A levels which are linear (assessed and awarded at the same time at the end of the year), and therefore our approach needs to be different.

In 2022 we will return to the usual method of calculating BTEC qualification results, however adaptations including, U-TAGs and reduced internal assessment, are in place to provide a comprehensive package of support for students.

The basis of our awarding approach to BTECs this year is to ensure it is as fair as possible for all learners. We will use a range of evidence to set grade boundaries for the external units. Part of this evidence will be to closely monitor learner performance in all assessments that contribute to learners' final qualification grade, to ensure parity with A level and GCSEs.

Further information can be found [on our website](#) and via our Social Media channels.

Unit 2: Critical and Contextual Studies in Art and Design (31828H)

Grade	Unclassified	Level 3			
		N	P	M	D
Boundary Mark	0	7	15	28	41

Introduction

This Lead Examiner report has been written to support your understanding of how learners performed during this examination series and to help inform on-going delivery of this unit. When reading this report you should consider the points raised in conjunction with the following materials:

- Unit content - which can be found in the qualification specification
- The set task - which can be accessed on the qualification pages of the BTEC website
- The unit marking grid - which can be accessed on the qualification pages of the BTEC website

The approach for this paper is now well established and requires learners to undertake targeted research prior to sitting a supervised assessment where they are presented with unseen material to respond to. As such the paper is presented in two parts. Part A of the paper is provided approximately 5 working weeks prior to the release of Part B of the paper.

Part A of the paper provides learners with a theme, a scenario and a list of five practitioners from which they must select one to research. It is expected that learners should spend approximately 15 hours independently researching the theme and the practitioners they have selected from the list given. The last three hours of this preparatory period is undertaken in a monitored session or sessions in which learners must collate the research undertaken and produce up to 2 sides of A4 summary notes that can be taken into the supervised assessment period.

Part B of the paper provides an image of a specific piece of work by each practitioner listed in Part A of the paper, along with key details such as the title of the work, the date it was produced, the medium and the size of the work where appropriate. In addition, Part B of the paper also introduces an additional practitioner that learners must respond to. For this new practitioner, learners are provided with an image of a specific piece of work, as well as a short body of text that provides contextual information about the unseen practitioner in relation to the work provided. All information within Part B of the paper will be connected to the theme of the paper.

It is important to note that during the three hours of monitored preparation learners are permitted to have access to the Internet or other research sources in order to produce their summary notes. However, during the supervised assessment period learners will not have access to any research sources and therefore will need to rely on the summary notes they have produced in the preparatory period and the information provided in Part B of the paper.

Learners then have 3.5 hours to produce a formal written response to the set task in Part B of the paper. It should be noted that learners are no longer required to provide a bibliography or list of sources as part of this task.

Centres should take specific note of centre instructions in both Part A and Part B of the paper, as well as the Administrative Support Guide for Unit 2 to ensure that they are adhering to the requirements of this assessment.

The unit mark scheme has remained unchanged since the last series and reflects the requirements of the set task. The mark breakdown is:

- AO1: Be able to apply an effective investigation process to inform understanding of creative practitioners. Marks available = 12
- AO2: Demonstrate the ability to visually analyse the work of creative practitioners. Marks available = 20
- AO3: Demonstrate understanding of how contextual factors relate to creative practitioners' work. Marks available = 12
- AO4: Communicate independent judgements demonstrating understanding of the work of creative practitioners. Mark available = 16

The total marks available for this paper are 60.

Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

For January 2022 the theme was 'Constructed Landscapes'. Overall, the response to the paper was positive with most learners demonstrating a real engagement with the theme. A large proportion of learners appeared to base their interpretation of the theme on the definition given when conducting a basic Google search 'What is a constructed landscape?' This linked to the website for The New York Art Residency and Studios (NARS) Foundation and provided the following definition 'Constructed Landscape explores the complex relationship between urban space, capitalist production and politics, particularly concerning the ways in which things, spaces, and ideas are transformed in the process of capitalist urbanization'. This website defines 'Constructed Landscapes' in relation to a specific exhibition of the same name which was hosted by the NARS Foundation in 2016 and provided a quite unexpected interpretation of the theme. Whilst this definition of the theme was completely appropriate and provided some learners with an interesting conceptual viewpoint, it was clear some struggled to connect this interpretation to the practitioners being looked at, and this, at times led to weak or incoherent analysis. Some learners did apply a more literal interpretation of the theme and talked about how the practitioners had

constructed or produced a landscape in either 2D or 3D form. For these learners, the connection to the theme was much more obvious and easier for learners to articulate. Both interpretations are valid, and learners are free to apply any number of interpretations to the theme as they feel are appropriate and relevant.

Part A of the paper provided learners with a diverse range of practitioners. The practitioners included in this assessment are carefully selected to ensure that learners studying on specialist pathways are not disadvantaged and so each paper will feature work from as wide a range of specialisms as are possible. However, it is important to note that there is no requirement for learners to select the practitioner that is most closely related to their own creative practice. Whilst there may be some advantage to learners in having practical knowledge of the materials, techniques and processes used by the practitioners being researched, it is completely plausible for this information to be developed through the learner's own investigation. With regards to the unseen practitioner who is introduced in Part B of the paper, it is clear that this practitioner may only produce work in relation to one area of specialist practice. Therefore, in preparing for this assessment, it is vital that learners are exposed to a wide range of creative practitioners and have the confidence to apply their skills in visual analysis to practitioners across a broad spectrum of disciplines. All practitioners within Part A of the paper have an appropriate international profile to provide learners with ample opportunity to undertake broad research.

There was evidence of learners responding to all of practitioners listed in Part A of the paper. Of the five possible practitioners in this paper there was evidence of a range of responses relating to each of them. Mariele Neudecker (Sculptor), M C Escher (Graphic artist), Jeff Wall (Photographer) and Alexandra Kehayoglou (Textile artist) were all an equally popular choice of practitioner selected by learners. There was less evidence of learners selecting Richard Long (Sculptor, Land Artist, Photographer).

The unseen practitioner Frank Lloyd Wright proved to be quite challenging for some learners and despite the text clearly identifying the practitioner as an architect, a surprising number of learners analysed his work in the context of it being a photograph rather than it being a building. This resulted in some incongruous analysis of the work.

The set task

AO1: Be able to apply an effective investigation process to inform understanding of creative practitioners

The underlying principle of this unit is the importance of being able to undertake appropriate research and then be able to apply the research to a given task. The 15-hour preparatory period, which includes the 3 hours of monitored preparation, should be used to conduct extensive research into the practitioner selected from the list provided in Part A of the paper. During the monitored preparation period learners must breakdown their research into bulleted summary notes that will support them during the supervised assessment.

Based on the response it was evident that the teaching of the unit content for this unit was a little inconsistent. Whilst some learners were able to make appropriate use of research to provide relevant and thoughtful responses, an unfortunate number of learners simply regurgitated information from their research without any attempt to contextualise the information to the task. Examiners form a judgement on the effectiveness of a learner's investigation based on how they have used the information gleaned from their research to respond to the task, not simply by the inclusion of the information.

Some learners were able to demonstrate they had read widely and developed clear understanding of the work and the context of their chosen practitioner. For responses achieving in the higher mark bands there was evidence that learners had engaged well with the practitioners they had selected to research. This is an extract from a learner's submission that achieved a mark in band 4 for AO1. This is merely an extract example of the standard expected at this level. It must be noted that a holistic approach it taken to marking and there was more in the whole submission that supported the mark awarded for AO1.

"While growing up Mariele was deeply involved with Casper David Friedrich's work, as it was a main staple in her family home in Dusseldorf. Casper's work is associated with 'German nationalist ideology'. Knowing this, Mariele's work was potentially keeping these toxic representations secure in these constructed landscapes contained in fibreglass. This idea gives Mariele Neudeckers work another side to the theme of 'constructed landscapes' as her work isn't just landscapes which have been constructed in boxes, but they are containing something personal to her which links back to her home heritage."

This learner's selection of research is considered and clearly relevant to both the work being discussed and the theme of the paper. They have demonstrated a good level of knowledge about the work produced by Neudecker and have used this to suggest meaning within the work and to justify their opinions about the work.

For learners achieving in the lower mark bands for this assessment outcome there was an over reliance on referencing 'interesting' facts about the practitioner's life or work with limited reference to the set task. This showed a lack of application of investigation to inform understanding in relation to the theme.

This is an extract from a learner's submission that achieved a mark in band 1 for AO1. As before, this is merely an extract example of the standard expected at this level. It must be noted that a holistic approach it taken to marking and there was more in the whole submission that supported mark awarded for AO1.

"Richard Long has pioneered in the 1960s and the 1970s and he is one of his generations most influential artist. Richard Long believes that " the outdoor and the indoor works are complimentary, although i have to say that nature, the landcape, the walking, is at the heart of my work and inform the indoor works. Richard long attending Saint martin schools has been influenced to work with nature and has inspiration from the teaching which he has recieved whilst being at school and as young practioneer Richard was influenbcd by music by the american singer Johnny Cash. From my knowledge and understanding of Richard Long hes work has the philosphy of peace and the admiration and greatfulness to nature."

This learner's selection of research is superficial and there is limited evidence that the information has been applied to inform understanding. The learner has demonstrated some research about Long's early career and inspiration but has not applied this knowledge in a way that demonstrates understanding.

The majority of work submitted for this series showed a consistent and logical structure in line with the expectations of Level 3. Some learners continue to use subheadings to structure their work, which for the most part was logical and helpful. However, centres should avoid directing learners to work from a writing template as this approach can have the potential to limit exploration of an independent idea or line of enquiry. It was also noted that for some centres, learners submitted four separate documents, one for each task in the paper, rather than providing a consolidated body of text. This often led to unnecessary repetition and did not support learners to write a well-structured and coherent response.

Centres must continue to ensure that research skills are taught as part of the delivery of this unit. It is important that learners are able to identify relevant and accurate sources of information when conducting research. Learners must also understand how to use the information gleaned from research to demonstrate knowledge and understanding when responding to the task.

AO2: Demonstrate the ability to visually analyse the work of creative practitioners

This assessment outcome is the highest weighted outcome in this paper and is worth one third of all marks available. Learners are expected to provide a visual analysis of the selected work by their chosen practitioner as well as the work provided for the unseen practitioner. As learners are provided with images of both pieces of work to refer to during the supervised assessment it is expected that there should be equal emphasis on the visual analysis of both pieces of work. However, when assessing the work, it is possible that a particularly strong analysis of one piece can compensate for weaker analysis of the other piece. It is important to note that learners' visual analysis must specifically relate to the pieces of work identified in the paper. Learners may choose to reference other work by either practitioner in order to illustrate a point or justify a decision, but this must not be done in place of analysing the work provided.

In general, the visual analysis was much stronger in relation to the work of Escher, Wall and Kehayoglou and learners appeared to be more confident in their analysis of these 2D images. Often this involved quite a formulaic approach where learners would comment against each of the formal elements i.e., colour, line, and tone etc. When it came to visual analysis of the work of Neudecker and Long, learners appeared to struggle with the 3D nature of the work and much of the analysis appeared to focus on the 2D image of the work rather than the work itself. For example, this learner has placed heavy emphasis on the framing of the photo in Neudeckers' work rather than the actual sculpture.

"The strength of the work comes from using the darkness of the outside of the tank to make the inside of the tank the primary concern of the viewer. The weakness that i personally disliked would be the framing which cuts part of the tank out of the image, for whatever reason this was done, it seems a waste of an otherwise perfectly constructed set. Other people's opinions on the work may state that the image is too reliant on darkness or that image is representative of climate change."

For some learners within this series the visual analysis presented was very descriptive with learners simply describing what was in the image/work without adding any analytical content to their response. Whilst identifying visual components within the work provides a useful starting point, it is important that learners consider these components in detail in order to demonstrate their understanding of the work or to be able to draw conclusions from it. Despite this, there was some evidence of thoughtful visual analysis within the submission. This is an extract from a learner's submission that achieved a mark in band 5 for AO2. This is merely an extract example of the standard expected at this level. It must be noted that a holistic approach it

taken to marking and there was more in the whole submission that supported mark awarded for AO2.

"In turn this provides the inner circle a softness and a rawness, much like life itself. The circle's sharp outline protects the interior just as skin protects tissue, just as barricades protect people. Richard Long is conveying the beauty and fragility in what separates us from the natural landscape, in an ephemeral form. New layers of the earth are shown, and not everything is as it seems on the surface. Underneath the harsh surface of no vegetation, deadly heat and rocky terrain, there is something much more peaceful. From this perspective, the Sahara Circle looks much more dominant and larger than the barren mountain in the background."

This learner has demonstrated a sophisticated approach to analysing visual elements, demonstrating assured understanding. This learner clearly understands the connections between visual elements and subject matter and meaning. They have included a variety of pertinent and insightful references and made appropriate use of specialist terminology throughout.

When it came to analysis of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, there was a very varied quality in the visual analysis of the given work. As mentioned previously a surprising number of learners appeared to visually analyse the work as a photograph, focussing on aspects such as the composition and the surrounding trees, rather than analysing the building itself. However, the strongest learners included pertinent and relevant independent observations and linked these to contextual information from the given text. For example:

"The building is constructed in layers that despite their sharp rectangular shape appear like layers of rock not dissimilar to the surroundings. Wright's use of local sandstone accentuates this by colouring the building in warm and natural tones (beige and brown). Moreover parts of the building such as the central chimney are clearly constructed of rock and whilst clearly constructed by people the many layers and natural texture make these elements appear as if they are meant to be there. The layers extend over the waterfalls and it is this that truly connects the building to the waterfall as it appears to flow out from under them as if it had, over a great period of time, eroded its way through the rock and has now been unleashed. Additionally, the buildings close proximity to the forest means that the trees extend onto the building and vice versa, deepening the connection between the building and nature. Wright has constructed a landscape with Fallingwater in which people and nature are able to be beautifully harmonious. The building's form and natural aesthetic is not simply situated in the environment, it is actually a part of it – they are one."

AO3: Demonstrate understanding of how contextual factors influence creative practitioners work

For this assessment outcome learners must draw on the research undertaken in the preparatory period as well as the text provided in Part B of the paper. During the preparatory investigation it is important that learners research into the wider context in relation to their selected practitioner as well as developing their understanding of the theme and how this impacts on the interpretation of the selected work.

As mentioned previously, many learners appeared to base their understanding of the theme on the definition provided by the NARS foundations leading to a very narrow interpretation. Whilst this did allow some learners to make reference to wider social and political issues, for many they appeared unable to conceptually link the work of the practitioner to the specific definition of the theme. Contextualisation in relation to the selected practitioner was far more varied. Learners achieving in the lower mark bands for this AO limited themselves to simply recited details from the practitioner's biography and made little or no reference to wider contextual factors. It was unclear if these superficial responses were the result of poor research or simply demonstrated a limited ability to apply the research effectively to the task. However, learners achieving higher marks for this AO were able use their research convincingly, demonstrating understanding of the practitioner's creative practice and making insightful links to the theme.

This is an extract from a learner's submission that achieved a mark in band 4 for this assessment outcome. This is merely an extract example of the standard expected at this level. It must be noted that a holistic approach it taken to marking and there was more in the whole submission that supported mark awarded for AO3:

"However in 1934 with the rising threat of Fascism he left Italy and after a couple of years in otherparts of Europe returned to the Netherlands. This marked a huge turning point in his career as an artist and led to the creation of his more imaginative, complex, and mindboggling artworks such as Relativity, Ascending and Descending and Knots. Having lost his main source of external inspiration he began to look inward when creating his artwork. He said, "Ideas came into my mind quite unrelated to graphic art...Suddenly the method by which the image was to be presented became less important than it used to be" this shows his shift to creating artworks to convey the thoughts in his head, thoughts that were often highly complex: "I can't keep from fooling around with our irrefutable certainties. It is, for example, a pleasure knowingly to mix up two-and three-dimensionalities, flat and spatial, and to make fun of gravity."

This learner has provided an effective analysis of key contextual factors that are relevant to Eschers work and these have been expand the learners understanding of the practitioner and explored the impact of events on the production of the work.

Contextual understanding in relation to Frank Lloyd Wright was understandably less developed as learners were reliant on the short body of text provided in Part B of the paper. It is important that learners develop their skills in analysing the information provided to be able to extract the pertinent points; using the information to develop their understanding of the work they are discussing in the task. Unfortunately, lower achieving learners often provided a direct transcription of the given text without demonstrating any understanding of the information provided. However, learners achieving higher marks for this AO showed they were able to absorb the information and weave it into their own commentary often making insightful links to wider contextual factors.

This is an extract from a learner's submission, which achieved a mark in band 4 for AO3. This is merely an extract example of the standard expected at this level. It must be noted that a holistic approach it taken to marking and there was more in the whole submission that supported mark awarded for AO3:

“Wright believes that “organic buildings are the strength and lightness of the spiders’ spinning, buildings qualified by light, bred by native character to environment, married to the ground.” Indicating that because we are certain that nature works, we can follow and learn from its laws and rules rather than be oblivious to them. Therefore, Wright’s work is this principle in action and that is what makes it so remarkable. Wright’s work is an echo of the landscape that they are constructed in, where variety is derived from the natural colours and materials that are local so that they form part of the greater, “native” landscape. A co-operation with nature is vital to our future and humankind must decide for the better of both, where we will be able to advance further. It is this co-operation that makes Wright’s constructions so timeless, as they are part of a unified entity, they will both change together and neither one shows dominance over the other, but they both belong to each other.”

This demonstrates the learner's ability to pick up on a number of the contextual factors identified within the text provided and then link these to wider contextual factors, themes and ideas.

AO4: Communicate independent judgements demonstrating understanding of the work of creative practitioners

For this AO learners must communicate independent judgements and demonstrate their understanding of the work of both creative practitioners. For the majority of learners this AO was addressed towards the end of their written submission through a summary of their findings and ideas regarding both practitioners, comparing their respective work. Learners are required to indicate which of the two practitioners they have considered (Frank Lloyd Wright and the practitioner they selected from Part A of the paper) best represented the theme 'Constricted Landscapes'. This is not something that has a right or wrong answer, but it is important that learners do make a clear decision and justify that decision. There was evidence that most learners were able to reach a conclusion and identify which practitioner they felt best represented the theme, but unfortunately for several learners the justification of their decision was weak or superficial. Often resorting to statement about which piece of work they 'liked' the most. However, for some learners this assessment objective was met through some well-articulated and insightful responses.

This is an extract from a learner's submission that achieved a mark in band 4 for this AO. This is merely an extract example of the standard expected at this level. It must be noted that a holistic approach it taken to marking and there was more in the whole submission that supported mark awarded for AO4:

"I strongly believe that Mariele Neudecker's work most relates to the theme of 'constructed landscapes'. Her work embodies what a constructed landscape should be. Her extremely realistic way of forming and combing natural forms made by hand shows that a man-made landscape can be as engulfing and overwhelming as the real natural scenery."

Summary

Based on responses seen in the January 2022 series, centres and learners are offered the following advice:

- Encourage learners to undertake a sustained investigation from reliable and credible sources.
- When referencing art and design work ensure learners are able to distinguish between 3D work that has been documented through photography and work that exists as a photograph in its own right.
- When undertaking visual analysis of the work of both practitioners encourage learners to go beyond merely describing the visual components of the work and instead, use this information to demonstrate their understanding of the work or to draw conclusions about the work.
- Develop wider understanding of the impact that social, political, religious and environmental issues have of the creation of work to support understanding of context.
- Develop the ability to clearly articulate justification for decisions by drawing on the visual and contextual analysis undertaken to support higher achievement in AO4.



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Pearson Education Limited. Registered company number 872828
with its registered office at 80 Strand, London, WC2R 0RL, United Kingdom

