



Pearson
Edexcel

Principals' Report
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Art and Design
(1AD0/01 – 1TE0/02)

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Introduction

This report reviews the **2023 series of GCSE Art & Design (1-9) examinations; 1AD0 01/02, 1FA0 01/02, 1GC0 01/02, 1PY0 01/02, 1TD0 01/02, 1TE0 01/02.**

The Pearson/Edexcel GCSE specification aims to provide, for all centres, a framework (appropriate and accessible to a range of levels of candidates' experience and ability) which encourages an adventurous and enquiring approach to Art and Design.

The GCSE specification forms part of an educational continuum. GCSE builds on art practice at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.

GCSE candidates should be able to

- develop practical artistic skills and abilities.
- demonstrate an understanding of past and contemporary art and design practice.
- produce a personal response that embraces a range of ideas.
- reflect on their work and on the work of others.

Reports submitted by moderators in 2023, informed by the essential initial discussion they held with teachers in centres at the start of their visit, together with the subsequent study of candidates' work, have supplied evidence of the success of the 2023 series. In 2023 the GCSE specification gave centres a framework to offer candidates flexible and exciting GCSE courses.

Moderators recognised that numerous centres built on sound and good quality practice to construct suitable courses of study for their candidates.

Teachers who

- examined the specification.

- attended face to face training programme events or attended online training offered by Pearson/Edexcel.
- scrutinised the exemplars and support material available on the Pearson/Edexcel website.
- sought clarification from the Pearson/Edexcel Subject Advisor (Jaclyn Wiid email: TeachingArtandDesign@pearson.com). Previously, Susan Young.

found they were well placed to organise suitable courses of study that many centres sustained by long-established good practice.

Centres that had not considered the specification thoroughly, or had taken advantage of the support outlined above, may not have fully understood some aspects. It is certainly worth urging centres to visit the Pearson/Edexcel website and utilise the support material available along with scrutiny of the **Administrative Support Guide** (Previously, Centre Guidance Document).

Successful courses of study encouraged candidates to complete visual research using primary and secondary sources and record observations, experiences, and ideas in varied, appropriate and skilful ways. Good quality candidate submissions showed an ability to observe, select and interpret with discrimination, imagination and understanding. Moderators noted that candidates certainly flourished in centres where teachers stressed the value of working successfully from first-hand experience. Increasingly, first hand references are supported by digital photographic evidence.

The importance and value of pursuing and documenting a creative visual journey, informed by critical and cultural contexts, is clearly acknowledged by successful centres to be crucial. Notable submissions showed convincing evidence that candidates achieved striking growth in the development of their ideas and realised quality outcomes by fully exploring and reviewing a range of possible solutions and then suitably modifying their work as it progressed.

The importance of the personal final outcome/s, for GCSE artists, was definitely valued in successful centres. To their credit many centres showed they recognised that a detailed understandable visual account of the creative journey was a crucial part of candidates' submissions. Some centres clearly appreciated that exceedingly large volumes of evidence were, without doubt, not a requirement and, as a result, enabled their candidates to allocate an adequate amount of time to produce convincing final submissions.

It is worth emphasising that although it may be unnecessary to present every single piece of work for assessment and moderation, it is in every candidate's best interest to ***select enough convincing evidence to reflect their best performance*** and therefore plausibly substantiate teacher-examiner assessment decisions.

In this summer 2023 series, many candidates showed they understood how to use a range of two dimensional and three-dimensional materials, processes and techniques, new technologies and moving image, to add to their knowledge and use of visual language.

The degree to which candidates knew about and understood a range of work from current practice, past practice and different cultures showed an appreciation of continuity and change in art and design was undeniably evident in the 2023 series. Most centres encouraged candidates to investigate and analyse contextual encounters using visual language and therefore resisting the inclination to submit extensive amounts of annotation. It is, perhaps, worth noting that the purpose of annotation is to show an understanding of the work of other practitioners and the degree to which contextual exploration informs the growth of candidate's personal ideas and outcomes.

It is important to recognise, in this report, those GCSE candidates awarded the highest marks. High achieving candidates repeatedly provided teachers and

moderators, in 2023, with opportunities to see impressive outcomes that revealed in some cases, exceptional ability, understanding, imagination and creativity.

Candidate work from 2023 GCSE Fine Art (Exceptional ability)



Administration and Moderation

The Administrative Support Guide (ASG) document has been reviewed and modified to meet the needs of the current specification, incorporating areas for improvement from the preceding examination series. The ASG is available to centres on the Pearson/Edexcel website and both the Subject team and moderators have been supporting centres in accessing it prior to moderation visit.

Unquestionably, where centres carefully read the ASG, assessment and moderation processes were accomplished efficiently.

Moderators continue to provide, a feedback report (E9) available via Pearson/Edexcel Online. Centres must study the feedback report and respond appropriately to its contents for support in achieving persuasive future assessment decisions.

An **Assessment Grid** (AG) and an **Authentication Form** must be completed correctly for each candidate and made available for moderators when they visit the centre. **Centres should note that the Authentication Form enables the candidate not only to declare the work submitted for assessment has been carried out without assistance other than that which is acceptable but also, gives permission for Pearson/Edexcel to use their Art and Design work for vital standardisation, training, and exemplar purposes.**

In 2023 all Candidate marks are submitted to Pearson/Edexcel using the online system (Edexcel Online/EDI) as in previous series. It is worth reminding centres of the need for accuracy when transferring teacher examiner assessment marks from the Assessment Grid to the direct online input.

Most centres offered candidates' work for moderation in the form of an exhibition/display. Candidates' hard work and enthusiasm certainly justified the celebration, presented by an exhibition, for others to enjoy. Centres subject to constraints of space and unable to display candidates' work as an exhibition submitted the work in folders. Candidates who had been encouraged to arrange and select their folder carefully to reveal evidence of their creative journey, provided evidence supporting the teacher examiner assessment decisions.

All moderators welcomed centres' readiness to provide a separate **order of merit/rank order** for each component for the moderation visit. It was helpful where centres had made a clear distinction between the work offered for the Personal

Portfolio sample and the Externally Set Assignment (ESA) sample. The time and care that many teachers took to describe and explain in some detail, the approach taken in their centre towards the course structure and delivery, assessment and internal standardisation was appreciated. Centres should recognise the genuine value of the **initial dialogue** as it offered a vital opportunity for the visiting moderator to seek full understanding of the character and context of the visual evidence offered by candidates for the assessment objectives.

It is vital that centres mark their candidates' work using the assessment guidance grid available and assessment support material (standard marked exemplars) on the website together with the taxonomy. Centres that followed this practice showed an accurate understanding of performance levels. Where the assessment guidance and support material were used carefully to arrive at assessment decisions the assessor achieved sound and accurate internal marking and reliable standardisation across all titles and teaching groups. In the interests of marking precisely, centres should **steer clear of any temptation to make grade boundary assumptions** as a guide to assessing the evidence found in a candidate's body of work.

In addition to the moderation samples centres are reminded that the work of all candidates must be readily available for the moderation visit. The work of the highest and of the lowest candidate, for the Personal Portfolio component and for the ESA component, must be presented with the selected sample.

It is worth highlighting the significance of thorough internal standardisation. Where this has not been effective within the centre it may result in significant changes to the overall centre marks affecting all candidates and titles. ***Centres must internally standardise across all titles, otherwise all candidates' final marks may be adjusted.*** A secure rank order for each component is a valuable tool for moderators because it may provide convincing evidence that precise internal standardisation has been effective.

It is vital for centres to note that assessment guidance applies to both the Personal Portfolio and the ESA.

Candidates performing at the lower levels of attainment commonly showed simple ideas considered from straightforward starting points. Development was informed by simple research and evaluation of a modest range of sources. Minimal exploration of resources and processes and tentative experimentation and refinement underpinned the literal development of ideas. Weak technical control hampered the potential of personal work and research showed elementary connections to intentions. Deliberate responses led to adequate straightforward realisation of intentions. The modest beginnings in the work of lower performing candidates led to superficial understanding.

The work of more able candidates showed that their ideas provided some reasonable starting points for development and refinement. Work was progressed skilfully and was based on adequate research. Evaluation and analysis showed a degree of straightforward understanding and an appreciation of creative concerns and qualities. Appropriate and predictable selection and experimentation showed chances to adapt and refine through resources and processes. Noticeable focus underpinned relevant selection and the recording of information from sources and growing technical control supported and communicated intentions. Work was technically sound, and intentions were appropriately realised.

At the higher levels of candidate performance ideas were comprehensive and perceptive, evidenced through a sustained investigation. Independent and complex understanding was underpinned by the thoughtful exploration along with comprehensive experimentation. A wide-ranging appreciation of the potential of materials, techniques and processes was obvious. Persuasive and personally selected concerns, perceptive engagement with ideas and convincing technical proficiency were commonly found in higher performing candidates. The potential of materials, techniques and processes was credibly recognised, and secure

technical command ensured intentions were completely realised. Personal outcomes revealed some visually exciting qualities.

It is vital that centres secure a realistic grasp of the visual characteristics of all the performance levels (Limited, Basic, Emerging Competent, Competent and Consistent, Confident and Assured and Exceptional in the national context for GCSE Art and Design. ***Pearson/Edexcel not only makes available exemplar material on its website but also offers training for centres designed to promote a sound appreciation of standards within the national context.***

Candidate work from 2023 GCSE Art Craft and Design (Confident and Assured)



Strengths:

- Complete candidate submissions showing evidence for all assessment objectives.

- Rigorous observance of assessment and moderation processes set out in the Administrative Support Guide (ASG).
- Precise and complete Assessment Grid, Edexcel Online/EDI mark input and Authentication Forms.
- A persuasive order of rank across all titles for each component.
- Each candidates Personal Portfolio and ESA clearly labelled.
- An informative discussion with a head of department or centre representative (**initial dialogue/discussion**) that details the centre's approach toward course design and delivery, the character of the visual evidence, assessment, and internal standardisation procedures.
- Accurate use of assessment guidance and support and a good grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Emerging Competent, Competent and Consistent Confident and Assured and Exceptional attainment in the national context for GCSE Art and Design to sustain assessment decisions.
- Credible internal standardisation for Personal Portfolio and ESA within and across all titles and teaching groups.

Weaknesses

- Incomplete candidate submissions, not showing evidence of all assessment objectives.
- Failure to adhere to ASG assessment and moderation processes.
- Inaccurate and incomplete Assessment Grid, Edexcel Online/EDI mark input and Authentication Forms.
- An unconvincing rank order across teaching groups and all titles.
- The lack of an informative dialogue with a head of department covering the centre's approach toward course structure, delivery, assessment, and internal standardisation procedures.
- Imprecise use of the assessment guidance and a poor grasp of the visual characteristics of Limited, Basic, Emerging Competent, Competent and

Consistent Confident and Assured and Exceptional in the national context for GCSE Art and Design to arrive at secure assessment decisions.

- Ineffective internal standardisation.

Candidate work from 2023 GCSE Textile Design (competent and consistent)



Component 1 - Personal Portfolio

For Component 1 (Personal Portfolio) of the Pearson/Edexcel GCSE Art and Design (1AD0/01, 1FA0/01, 1GC0/01, 1PY0/01, 1TD0/01 and 1TE0/01) candidates complete a body of work for assessment.

Component 1 covers work produced from activities, tasks, topics, briefs, theme(s) or projects. A personal portfolio is defined as a body of practical research, experimentation, and development, showing a clear line of enquiry - applicable to a chosen title, leading to one or more outcome(s) or to a variety of resolutions.

Component 1: Personal Portfolio in Art and Design (together with Component 2: Externally Set Assignment in Art and Design) would normally provide evidence of two years' full-time study at Key Stage 4.

Centres can devise the content of Component 1 and plan, select, and develop their own theme or themes/projects/briefs/tasks appropriate to their candidates and resources. The work for Component 1 project/s may be separate in focus or interconnected. Candidates should be encouraged to develop their own personal ideas. Supporting studies should show the candidate thinking through the growth of their ideas. Each component must contain supporting studies and personal response(s). Centres must ensure the authenticity of work submitted for assessment using the authentication form provided.

In summer 2023 series, most centres chose to pursue projects/activities that best fitted their own art education situation along with the inclusion of induction periods at the beginning of the GCSE courses in year 10, primarily concerned with developing and securing skills through exploring materials and techniques.

Centres commonly made sure that the flexibility of their preferred Personal Portfolio theme, or themes, allowed each candidate to make personal and well-informed

responses. Moderator reports note that centres employed a range of Personal Portfolio themes in 2023 including, Structures, Surfaces, Layers, Identity and Distortion. It was also noted that past ESA themes were used; Together and/or Apart and Fragmented, Reflection Extraordinary and/or Ordinary were often recorded in moderator reports.

Course organisation in successful centres clearly embraced the interests of a wide range of abilities. Moderators noted they often encountered courses that promoted high expectations in relation to practical skills, effectively developed self-confidence, made sure that outcomes reflected the true level of a candidate's ability and enabled the successful documentation and communication of creative intentions.

In this series, Component 1, overall, proved to be a very strong element of most candidate's submissions. Many centres had created sympathetic, carefully designed and challenging schemes of work with compelling and resourceful approaches, that clearly engaged their candidates. Individual work of quality arose where centres had, in addition to a well-thought-out framework, also successfully provided opportunities for candidates to decide on their own directions to investigate individual responses using relevant materials and techniques and processes. Able candidates given free control regularly produce work of high quality. Successful candidates across the ability range produced their best work when working within a structured, although non-prescriptive framework, where there were ample opportunities to investigate and extend independent and personal responses.

Centres frequently made use of past themes from both the legacy and current specification Externally Set Assignment (ESA) in their course design. Moderators noted that, where centres took individual ownership of a past ESA theme and developed and built on it as a starting point suitable for their setting, they often encountered successful and engaging candidate outcomes. It was also noted in this series that many centres used a past ESA theme and paper as a starting point for a mock exam assignment. Moderators commented that some centres were struggling

to obtain a worthwhile timeframe for a mock exam assignment; to include a preparatory period and a realistic timed test. As recommended in the GCSE schemes of work on the Pearson website the best time for a mock exam to take place is immediately prior to the launch of the Externally Set Assignment. Without this experience candidates in these centres would be disadvantaged.

There was convincing evidence of centres building on the good practice of thoroughly incorporating contextual encounters and references within Personal Portfolio projects. Candidates' sound judgements and responses enabled them to go on to reveal their understanding of contextual issues for the development of their individual outcomes.

Moderators have drawn attention to how visits to galleries, museums and other places of visual interest (local places of historical significance were often used as a way of starting a project), these encounters added value to candidate's experiences.

Many centres showed a growing confidence in supporting candidates in their quest to research, react, respond, and reflect. Visual analysis and evaluation were found in candidates' work. Unfortunately, there are still some centres, which place too much emphasis on writing at the expense of visual analysis and evaluation accompanied by sufficient purposeful and meaningful annotation. Moderators sometimes encountered, principally amongst weaker candidates, a tendency to offer large amounts of text simply copied or downloaded from a website as evidence of contextual research, analysis and response. Moderators also pointed out, perhaps again most notably for weaker candidates, there was an inclination to over-reward explicitly biographical evidence which revealed little in the way of contextual understanding or, significantly, the value of contextual encounters for the growth and achievement of personal candidate outcomes. **Art and Design (all titles) is fundamentally a visual subject and a visual response using visual language should be encouraged. Annotation should bring about explanation and clarification of the development process.**

Most centres ensured that candidates gave the refinement and reviewing sufficient attention to support the production of the best outcomes. Many candidates, having generated exciting ideas from contextual references and other information gathered, persuasively developed the potential of individual themes through selection, experimentation, and investigation. Moderators noted, in 2023, that many centres supported candidates to make the most of substantiated and meaningful development and therefore avoid any tendency to make rushed, uninformed judgements. However, in some cases to the clear disadvantage of the quality of final outcomes, a careful process of review, refine and select was treated superficially and ideas could, therefore, be secured too early. Where candidates moved straight from conception to the realisation of final outcome/s the result could often be inferior in quality. Reviewing, refining and selecting offer essential opportunities for candidates to not only refine skills but also decide on suitable media and ascertain the best focus for realisation. The skilful use of digital media provided another supportive way of developing ideas. Moderators reported that some candidates not only manipulated images, but also thoroughly developed ideas using digital techniques in advance of producing persuasive final outcomes. A range of materials and ways of working was frequently offered to candidates. However, moderators noted they encountered examples where confidence and expertise in using materials and techniques may have been compromised by the lack of quality and understanding of the developmental process leading up to realisation.

Many candidates showed they understood the importance of visual research by recording first-hand observations employing a range of media, materials and processes. Candidates clearly gained from structured courses endorsing the thoughtful collection and selection of information and recording of observations from a range of primary and secondary sources. Many centres supported candidates in the perceptive use of digital photography to bring together visual evidence of first-hand experiences and make use of this evidence to successfully sustain ideas. It should be emphasised that where centres encouraged a wide range of first-hand research and opposed the extensive use of secondary sources,

candidates achieved real individual progress not only in respect of increasing technical proficiency but also in the ability to completely develop the potential of personal themes. Moderators reported persuasive examples of good practice where the innovative use of digital photography actively supported first-hand visual research. Where candidates had carried out first-hand research in several different ways, the quality of the visual source material was enhanced. It should be noted that visual research of quality, using photography as an investigative tool, usually came about in centres where the significance of composition, angle of view, lighting, settings, and technical know-how had been tackled successfully with candidates and, as a result, moved them away from the basic snapshots. Many centres clearly encouraged their candidates to recognise that the range, depth, and quality of primary and secondary research had a direct and positive impact on the quality of final outcomes.

Most centres have a secured clear understanding of assessment criteria. Overall, when all the assessment objectives were seen to be equally supporting, all candidates performed at their best across the whole mark range. Where assessment objectives appeared to have been tackled as a series of separate tasks (often headed with the relevant assessment objective), moderators reported that candidates may not have reached their full potential.

It is worth stressing that the assessment objectives are interconnected, and they may be approached in any order in Personal Portfolio and the ESA activities. It is perhaps obvious that project themes/briefs might begin with specific research activities from first-hand sources. However, projects could commence just as effectively, for some candidates, from working experimentally with materials or develop from personal responses to contextual starting points.

Supporting studies essentially serve to provide evidence of the candidate's line of enquiry (the creative journey) and have the potential, as do final outcomes, to reveal

the quality of research, contextual encounters, visual analysis, review, refinement, selection, exploration, development and realisation.

Supporting studies could evidence a candidate's progress and development of ideas using some or all the following:

- work journals
- sketchbooks
- notebooks
- PowerPoints
- webpages
- worksheets
- design sheets
- different scale rough studies
- scale models
- samples
- swatches
- test pieces
- maquettes
- thumb nail sketches
- screenshots and other digital material

Moderators reported that in some centres there is an inclination to over-reward final outcomes. In some cases, outcomes did not sustain centre assessment decisions because of the lack of convincing evidence that demonstrated the sound use and understanding of the potential of materials and techniques to realise intentions. It is vital, to prevent over marking, that assessment decisions are securely established using the assessment guidance and support material available on the Pearson/Edexcel website.

Candidate supporting studies from 2023 GCSE Fine Art (emerging competent)



Candidate Final outcome from 2023 Fine Art (emerging competent)



Strengths:

- Well-structured and flexible courses that provided candidates, across the ability range, with sound visual language skills.
- Courses that made available to candidates' chances to show their grasp of a range of techniques, processes and methods for research, the use of a variety of media, analysis of artists' work and development of ideas.
- Courses that highlighted the function and importance of visual research and the use of primary sources such as first-hand observational studies and visits to galleries, museums, and places of interest.
- Work in which relevant contextual study was meaningfully linked to the focus of projects and development of individual ideas.
- Supporting studies that were individual, and informative, expressing thoughts, ideas, experimentation, contextual links and showing review, selection, refinement, and development.
- Courses which stressed and promoted the production of ambitious and imaginative final outcomes using materials and techniques proficiently.
- Secure understanding of the inter-relationship of the assessment objectives and sound appreciation of the need for credible and appropriate evidence of a candidate's level of achievement.
- A mock exam preceding the ESA assignment.
- Selecting a focused body of work.

Weaknesses:

- Courses that revealed a lack of structure or were excessively prescriptive and that did not provide candidates across the ability range with a secure foundation of visual language and skills.
- Courses that did little to move candidates away from over-reliance on copying from second-hand sources with little or no creative purpose.

- Unselective photographic recording of the entirely 'snapshot' variety.
- Disproportionate written evidence (annotation) for analysis and evaluation.
- Contextual evidence that was comprised principally of unrelated biographical studies of artists copied from texts or downloaded from the internet.
- Shallow responses resulting from insufficient review and refinement.
- Weak understanding of the inter-relationship of the assessment objectives and poor appreciation of the need for credible and appropriate evidence of a candidate's level of achievement.
- Not including a Mock exam.
- Not selecting a focused body of work.
- Offering far too much work.

Candidate work from 2023 GCSE Textile Design (competent and consistent)



Candidate work from 2023 GCSE Photography (emerging competent)



Component 2 Externally Set Assignment

The Externally Set Assignment (ESA) theme in 2023, 'Lock', received a positive reaction from centres. The ESA theme was seen to be accessible to all candidates. Many centres commented on how the theme had proved to be suitably broad and, as a result, motivating as it allowed candidates to use their personal experiences and interests in the growth of their ideas and the production of outcomes.

A separate document is provided on the Pearson/Edexcel website containing an extensive number of contextual references for the 2023 ESA theme (GCSE contextual references for component 2 document). Moderators noted that many centres did not realise this support document existed and therefore provided candidates with their own list of contextual references. Most candidates carried out pertinent individual research centred on historical and contemporary practitioners and/or cultural references useful to their personal interpretations of the ESA theme.

Many candidates clearly engaged with the theme in a creative way to develop individual and often very personal solutions. The work submitted for the ESA certainly showed a determination, on the part of large numbers of candidates, to demonstrate their understanding and appreciation of the potential of the theme for a personal response. Individual responses ranging from the obvious and literal to the extraordinary and unexpected. Candidates' responses were, often, encouraged where centres used the direction and suggestions contained within the examination paper as a way of prompting a deeper level of personal engagement with the theme.

Disappointingly, a small number of candidates worked systematically through several suggestions outlined in the ESA question paper. This approach could lead to an obstacle for a candidate seeking a personal focus and hence too little time being available for thoroughly reviewing, refining, modifying, and developing the production of individual final outcomes. Centres and candidates should be aware that the theme in no way seeks to limit outcomes. Candidates should look upon the

theme, and the suggestions given in the paper, as inspiration to select and explore the best direction in which to go, for them personally, to achieve their best individual responses.

The ESA theme provoked varied responses. Moderators reported that some candidates developed ideas that engaged with people, natural world and manmade. Some responses explored 'issues based' ideas, for example, mental health issues along with social, environmental, and political issues. Elsewhere candidates explored traditional genres; still life and expressive portraits were frequently seen by moderators. Literal responses were also encountered, for example, locks, padlocks on gates/doors a lock on a container and being locked in. Moderators repeatedly noted that informative references to the work of a wide range of interesting and exciting artist, designers and craftspeople featured in the development of candidates' submissions.

Quality responses were unquestionably the result of the way in which centres supported candidates in their organisation of the preparatory period with carefully designed and imaginative preparatory activities. Teachers worked with their candidates during the formative stages, rather than leaving them to their own devices, a high-quality approach helped them to resist a superficial response to the theme. Some centres, for example, started the preparatory period with opportunities to carry out appropriate first-hand visual research alongside a range of observational drawing tasks. Elsewhere the preparatory period began with centres introducing candidates to the work of a range of artists. Undoubtedly, preparatory period activities, developed by teachers with candidates, really supported attempts to go deeper into the theme and develop personal responses underpinned by the experience gained through Personal Portfolio projects. Where candidates built on strengths and experiences gained through the development of their Personal Portfolio component, they adopted a secure and reliable approach to realising convincing supporting evidence that documented their journey through visual research, experimentation, development of ideas and, focused encounters

with artists and cultures. The best ESA work had undeniably grown from the high standard of best practice Personal Portfolio component experiences. **Opportunities, during the GCSE course, for candidates to experience a 'mock examination' (like the one they would be required to adhere to in the ESA) unmistakably supported the management of their work for Component 2 to produce preparation and outcomes of quality.**

The ESA is part of the whole GCSE course. Centres are reminded that, although a candidate's work must be unaided during the ten-hour period of sustained focus; supportive advice and guidance should be available throughout the preparatory period. Weaker candidates, unquestionably, profit from guidance at the initial stages of the ESA to support them in identifying an appropriate personal focus and pathway for their studies. Moderators noted that centres with supportive preparatory frameworks helped those candidates for whom time management is a genuine difficulty.

In 2023, possibly because of the absence of component 2 since 2019, many moderators noted that the line of enquiry in component 2 was much shorter than expected. In many centres there was the need to extend the refinement of ideas. Candidates occasionally did not assign enough time to meaningful research, exploration of ideas and thorough development, refining both ideas and technical processes before producing their final realisation. Results would have been better, for some candidates, if the closing days of the preparatory period had been used more effectively. Selecting and 'fine tuning' the very best development of an idea and at the same time improving technical skills frequently underpinned the production of final outcomes of the best quality.

Centres implemented a range of approaches to give all their candidates the opportunity to follow a purposeful journey of discovery. Stronger candidates made self-directed choices when investigating the work by other artists and they offered their research and analysis in well-informed ways that established meaningful links

with their own practice. Many candidates fully appreciated the process in which they were engaged by collecting, recording, and presenting information with high levels of skill. In many cases a range of media, materials and techniques was used to consider ideas and develop responses.

Visual research obtained through a candidate's own photography was certainly influential where it was selective, well thought-out and purposeful, rather than randomly captured with little evidence of sensitivity or consideration. Once again, it should be emphasised that centres must take great care not to over-reward the evidence offered by photography (notably in art craft and design, fine art, textile design and three-dimensional design) for attainment in visual research. Moderators commented that where candidates presented a substantial volume of digital photographs to the almost total absence of evidence from first-hand resources that exploited the unique characteristics of other media, some centre assessment decisions could not be convincingly sustained.

Contextual sources for the ESA encompassed a mixture of artists, photographers, and designers. Some centres and candidates limited their exploration of contextual sources to those provided in the ESA paper and a small number of candidates cut out the visual prompts in the paper to evidence their contextual links. Centres should be aware that the contextual references provided in the paper are suggestions and candidates should certainly be encouraged to look beyond them to identify beneficial avenues for themselves.

Moderators noted that some centres were not aware that contextual references to support the ESA paper for the new specification are provided in a separate document which can be accessed on the GCSE website.

Strengths:

- A well planned, centre devised, and teacher led programme for preparatory studies that enabled candidates to achieve sound, compelling and well-crafted, imaginative personal responses.
- Suitable and evocative contextual encounters and analysis often supported at first hand through gallery or museum visits and visiting artists.
- Comprehensive first-hand observation and research, including (but certainly not exclusively) that obtained from the proficient use of a candidate's own photography, to support the development of outcomes.
- Sufficient, focused, meaningful and sustained preparatory work that continued the growth of ideas.
- Persuasive application of media, techniques and processes that enabled a high standard of realisation of creative ideas and intentions.
- Accurate centre marking corroborated by convincing evidence.

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient support and guidance given to encourage candidates' time management during their developmental journey, resulting in too little time for essential review, refinement and modification.
- Safe and literal interpretation of the theme that constrained candidates.
- The pursuit of a disproportionate number of 'starter' exercises designed to cover the assessment objectives but which discouraged individual choice, failed to engage candidates, and frequently consumed precious development time.
- Overwhelming reliance on secondary sources or unrelated primary sources.
- Poor command of materials, techniques and processes that ultimately reduced the quality of final outcomes.
- Inadequate planning for the period of sustained focus leading to lack of refinement in the final outcome/s.
- Imprecise centre marking decisions based on insufficient credible evidence.

Candidate work from 2023 GCSE Fine Art (exceptional ability)



Candidate work from 2023 GCSE Textile Design (competent and consistent)



Summary

Many centres showed they have developed confidence in their knowledge and understanding of the GCSE Art and Design specification and the demands it makes on both teachers and candidates. In general centres have built on good practice to build appropriate courses of study.

Quality teaching, thorough and measured planning, the application of a considered approach to the coverage of assessment objectives and fitting resourcing made sure that many candidates performed to the best of their ability in both components of the GCSE examination. Candidates who achieved their potential did so because centres provided helpful support that emphasised recording visually, in a range of ways, from first-hand experiences to sustain assessment decisions. Relevant, contextual encounters provided candidates with encouragement for individual and personal outcomes. Sustained, careful and critical research, visual analysis, thorough development of ideas and the refinement of technical skills, invariably resulted in high quality work.

Centres are reminded that careful scrutiny of the specification, the range of support available on the Pearson/Edexcel website, scrupulous study of the GCSE Art and Design Administrative Support Guide document, taking part in the training offered by Pearson/Edexcel and the help available via Pearson/Edexcel's Subject Advisor for Art and Design, all provide routes to developing precise understanding of the specification and assessment.

There remains the need for maintaining a suitable balance, between the volume of supporting studies and preparatory work and adequate opportunity to develop the realisation of final outcomes. Some candidates may, for example, spend a disproportionate amount of time and effort, on journal-based work. This means that a large quantity of some candidates' work is restricted in terms of both scale and media and their artistic development may therefore be, to some extent,

condensed. It is worth remembering that the growth of a candidate's creative visual journey continues and may well be enhanced during the production of final outcome/s. The period of sustained focus in the ESA requires a candidate to spend ten hours producing final outcome/s, therefore, allowing candidates to spend too much time working in journals may very well inhibit their ability to manage this part of the ESA.

As noted earlier in this report, extremely large volumes of evidence are not a requirement (selection of evidence is actively encouraged in the current specification). **It may, after very careful and thorough consideration, be deemed unnecessary to present every single piece of candidate work for assessment and moderation. Prudent selection from the complete body of work produced by a candidate can make up a coherent line of enquiry in a persuasive way.** It is, on the other hand, in every candidate's best interest to be completely sure that enough quantity of convincing evidence is offered for assessment.

The GCSE Art and Design specification calls for candidates to support their visual responses with annotation, but large amounts of text are, without doubt, not a requirement. It is worth repeating that movement away from dissertation (a lengthy and formal written treatment) and toward meaningful and purposeful annotation (a short explanatory or critical note added to visual evidence) is the expectation. All assessment objectives, right through the entire mark range, may be convincingly evidenced chiefly through a visual response.

Finally, it must be said that both centres and candidates should be applauded for the encouraging ways in which, they have responded to the Art and Design GCSE specification.

Candidate work from 2023 GCSE Art, Craft and Design (emerging competent)



