



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE in Art and Design
Component 1 (1AD0)
Paper 01

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Introduction

This report reviews the 2025 series of GCSE Art, Craft & Design (1-9) examinations; Component 1 1AD0/01, 1FA0/01, 1PY0/01, 1GC0/01, 1TD0/01 and 1TE0/01.

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.

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, 1TD01 and 1TE01) candidates complete a body of work for assessment.

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. In most centres this would mean Year 10 and 11.

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 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.

In summer 2025 most centres chose to pursue projects/tasks/briefs or 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, processes and techniques relevant to the centres chosen title and area of study.

Centres commonly made sure that the flexibility of their preferred Personal Portfolio brief/project/theme, allowed each candidate to make personal and well-informed responses. Moderator reports note that centres employed a range of Personal Portfolio themes in 2025 including, Structures, Layers, Identity and Distortion. It was also noted that past ESA themes were used; Lock, Power, Reflection and Fragmented 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 journeys and intentions.

In 2025, 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 produced 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 continue to frequently make use of past Externally Set Assignment (ESA) themes 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 2025 that many centres used a past ESA theme and paper as a starting point for a mock exam assignment. The 2024 theme '*Power*' was used in many centres. 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 period for the timed test. 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 could be disadvantaged.

AO1 Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources

In 2025 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 ideas and personal 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. Critical 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 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 and analysis. Moderators also pointed out, again, most notably for weaker candidates and in a small number of centres there was an inclination to over-reward explicitly biographical evidence which revealed little in the way of contextual understanding or, the value of contextual encounters for the growth and achievement of personal outcomes.

It should be noted that 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.

AO2 Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials techniques and processes

Most centres ensured that candidates gave the refinement, exploration, selection and experimentation sufficient attention to support the production of the best outcomes. Many candidates, having generated exciting ideas from contextual references and other information, persuasively developed the potential of individual briefs /themes/projects through selection, experimentation, exploration and investigation. Moderators noted, in 2025, 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 disadvantage of the quality of final outcomes, a process of refine, experiment and select was treated superficially and ideas could, therefore, be secured too early. Where candidates moved straight from conception to the realisation the result could often be inferior in quality. Refining, experimenting and selecting offer essential opportunities for candidates to not only refine skills but also decide on suitable media/materials/techniques to ascertain the best focus for realisation. The skilful use of digital media (Photoshop and Procreate) provided another supportive way of developing ideas, most notably within Photography and Graphic Communication. Some Textile Design and Three-Dimensional Design candidates employed similar digital techniques. Moderators reported that some candidates not only manipulated images, but also thoroughly developed ideas using digital techniques in advance of producing persuasive proficient final outcomes.

AO3 Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses

Many candidates showed they understood the importance of visual research by recording first-hand observations and 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 use of digital photography to bring together visual evidence of first-hand experiences and make use of this evidence to successfully create meaningful 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 progressed, not only in respect of increasing technical proficiency but also in the ability to develop the potential of personal briefs/themes/projects. Moderators reported skilled 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. 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.

AO4 Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language

Moderators reported, in 2025, in some centres, an inclination to over-reward final realisations. It was noted that in some centres candidates were obviously more focused on preparatory studies in work journals/sketchbooks at the expense of producing sustained and well executed final outcomes. When this occurred moderators noted, outcomes did not sustain centre assessment decisions because of the lack of credible evidence that demonstrated the sound use and understanding of the potential of materials and techniques, alongside the lack of evidence showing ability to use visual language and the applying of the formal elements with some degree of proficiency.

To ensure accurate marking, it is essential that assessment decisions are firmly based on the guidance provided in the Exemplar Gallery.

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Moderators reported that some candidates are using AI as a tool to enhance some processes and techniques, also to support with the generation of initial concepts and ideas. It should be noted that this is still very much in the initial stages of development. Candidates should always explain how AI was used within a project and ensure they

clearly articulate what tools and methods have been employed. The use of AI in GCSE Art and Design projects can be acceptable and can have a positive impact on candidates work, however it **must adhere to the specific guidelines published on the Pearson website**. If centres have any doubt about the way candidates are using AI, they should seek guidance from the Art and Design subject advisor.

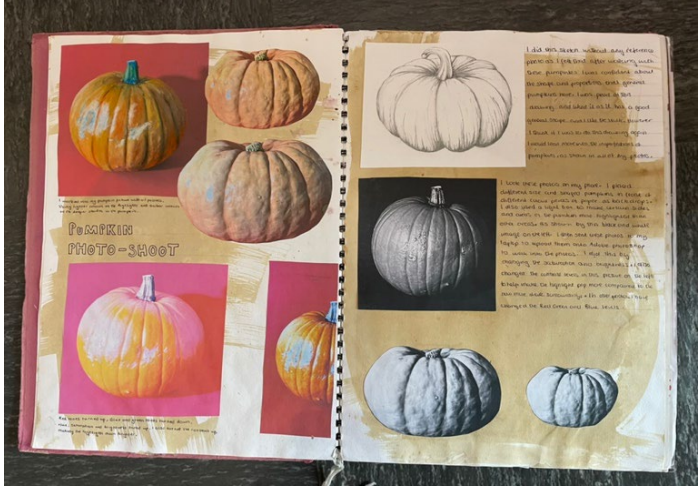
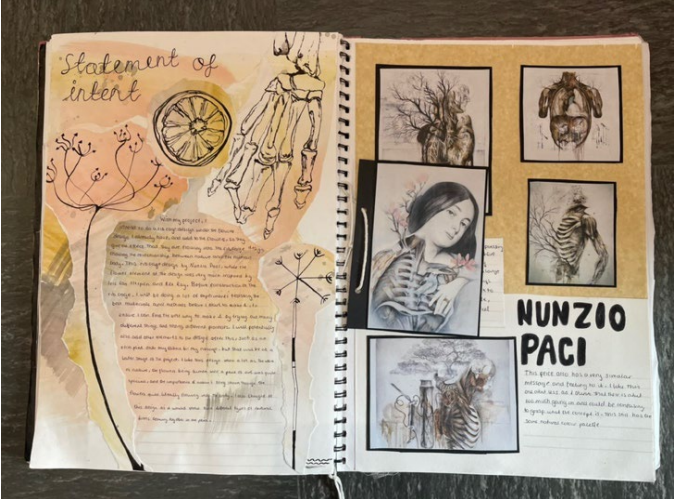
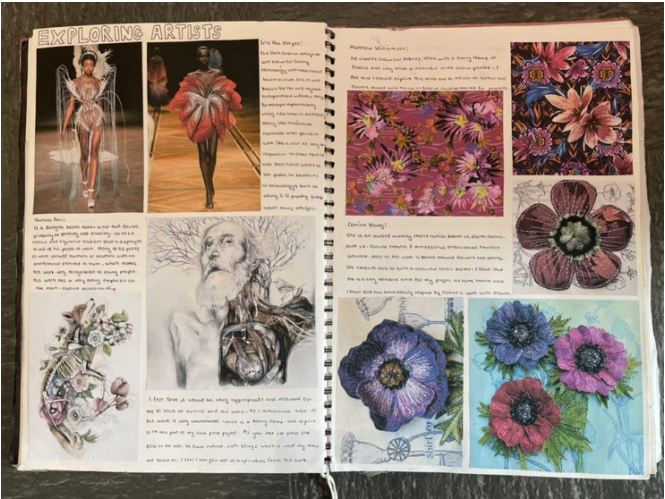
Supporting Studies

Supporting studies essentially serve to provide evidence of the candidate's line of enquiry (the creative journey) and have the potential, to reveal the quality of research, contextual encounters, visual analysis, review, refinement, selection, exploration, development and realisation.

In 2025 moderators observed supporting studies being documented in the following ways:

- work journals
- sketchbooks
- notebooks
- PowerPoints
- webpages
- worksheets
- design sheets
- scale models
- swatches
- test pieces
- maquettes
- screenshots and other digital material

Component 1 supporting studies from the 2025 series Art, Craft and Design (Confident and assured ability)



Component 1 outcome from 2025 series Art, Craft and Design (Confident and Assured ability)



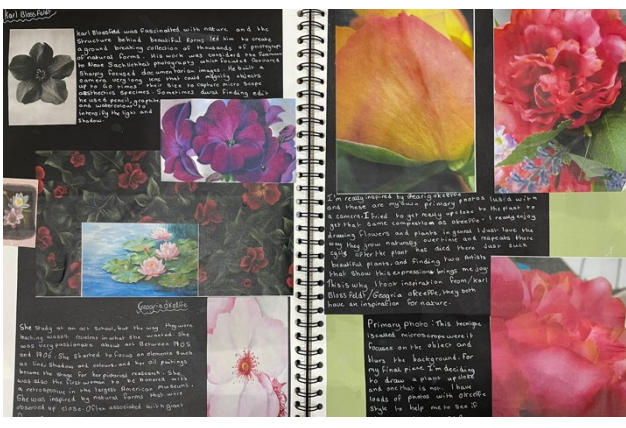
Component 1 Personal Portfolio Strengths:

- Well-structured and flexible courses that embedded sound visual language skills for candidates of all abilities.
- 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 realistic mock exam opportunity in year 11
- Selecting a focused body of work that provided sufficient evidence for the 4 assessment objectives.

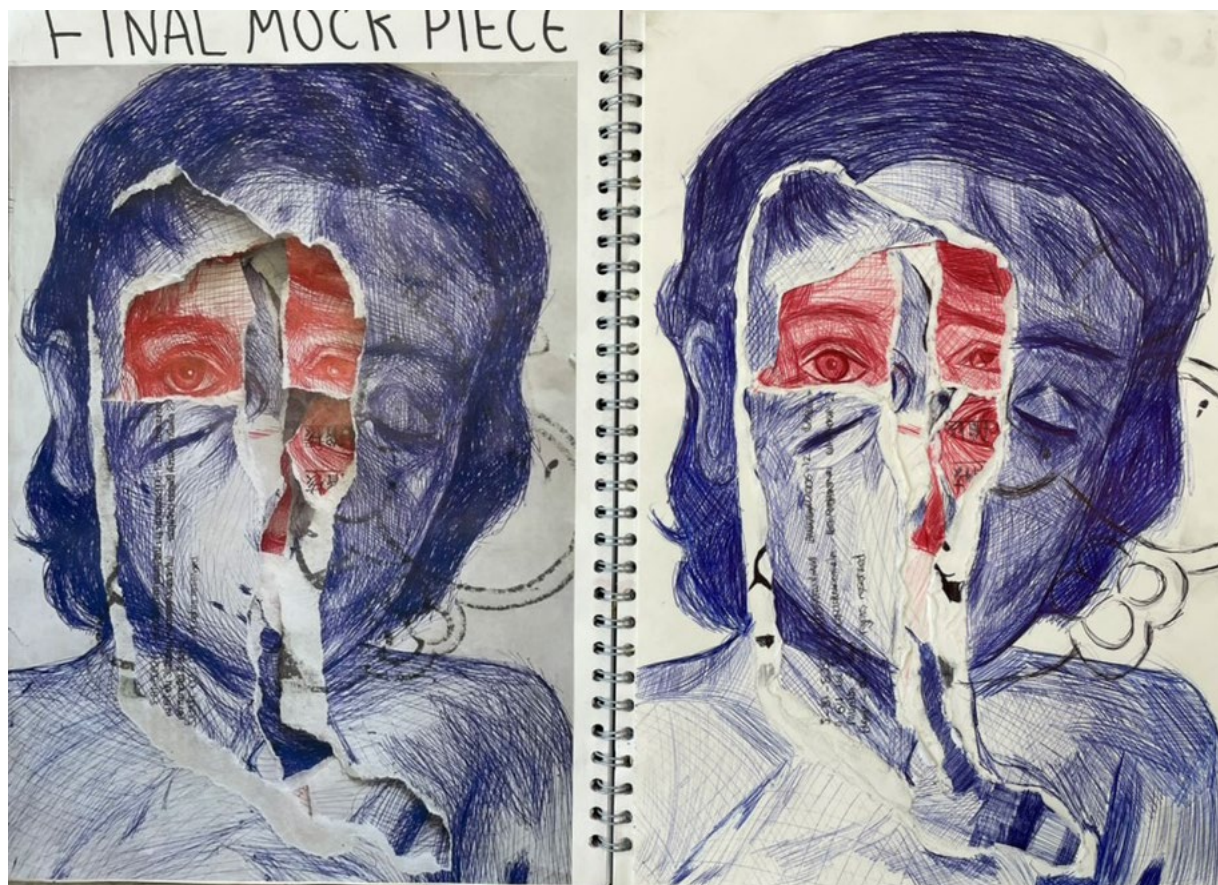
Component 1 Personal Portfolio Weaknesses:

- 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 selecting a focused body of work.

Component 1 Fine Art preparatory studies from the 2025 series (Emerging Competent ability)



Component 1 Fine Art outcome from the 2025 series (Competent and Consistent ability)



Component 1 Fine Art outcome from the 2025 series (Emerging Competent ability)

Administration and Moderation

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.

Administration and Moderation. Strengths:

- Complete candidate submissions showing evidence for all assessment objectives.
- Rigorous observance of assessment and moderation processes set out in the Administration Support Guide (ASG).
- Precise and complete Assessment Grid, Edexcel Online Printout/EDI and Authentication Forms.
- A persuasive order of merit/rank order for Component 1 across all titles for each component.
- Each candidates Personal Portfolio 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.
- Reliable internal standardisation for Personal Portfolio within and across all titles and teaching groups.
- Using the Exemplar Gallery to inform assessment decisions.

Administration and Moderation. Weaknesses

- Incomplete candidate submissions, not showing evidence of all assessment objectives.
- Failure to adhere to the instructions in the ASG relating to assessment and the moderation processes.
- Inaccurate and incomplete Assessment Grids, Edexcel Online Printout/EDI and Authentication Forms.
- An unconvincing rank order for Component 1 across teaching groups and all titles or not providing one.

- 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.
- Unconvincing internal standardisation.
- Not referencing exemplars in the Exemplar Gallery to make assessment decisions.

Summary

Many centres continue to show they have developed confidence in their knowledge and understanding of the GCSE Art and Design specification (Component 1 Personal Portfolio) and the demands it makes on both teachers and candidates. In general centres have built on good practice to create 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. 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.