



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel in GCSE Art and Design
Component 2 (1AD0)
Paper 02

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. 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 students at: www.pearson.com/uk

Summer 2025

Publications Code 1AD0_02_2506_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2025

Introduction

This report reviews the 2025 series of GCSE Art, Craft & Design (1-9) examinations; Component 2 1AD0/02, 1FA0/02, 1GC0/02, 1PY0/02, 1TD0/02 and 1TE0/02.

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.

Component 2 – Externally set assignment

Component 2, the Externally Set Assignment (ESA) represents the culmination of the GCSE course as it draws together all the knowledge, understanding and skills students have developed in Component 1.

Students must continue to work in the same title as they did for the Personal Portfolio. Art, Craft and Design students are required to create work associated with at least one area of study for this component.

Students must present personal response(s) to an externally set broad-based thematic starting point, set by Pearson in the ESA paper. This component allows students opportunities to:

- develop and explore ideas

- research primary and contextual sources

- experiment with media, materials, techniques and processes

- present personal response(s) to the externally-set theme.

The ESA paper is released on 2nd January and centres may share the paper with their candidates as soon as it is released

In 2025 the externally set theme was **GATHERING**. This has been a very successful series, as moderators reported that many centres commented very positively on set theme. Many have said they intend use this theme in the future as a centre set theme for component one.

On the whole candidates addressed the theme, Gathering, appropriately, and the full range of marks was awarded for all assessment objectives.

Most centres encouraged their students to use processes and techniques relevant to the centres chosen endorsed title and area study. These were almost always the processes and techniques the candidates had learned and developed during their study for component 1.

Moderators observed that it was encouraging to see candidates applying skills from their Personal Portfolio early in the preparatory studies for Component 2. The most successful submissions showcased a cohesive set of work that truly reflected the candidates' best abilities.

Responses to the theme in 2025

The illustrated exam paper provides candidates with possible starting points related to the theme.

People

This section of the paper continues to be the most popular choice as a starting point for candidates. Work created about Families and friendship groups provided candidates with immediate and personal primary source material. This idea often developed to involve food as a focus for the gathering. Celebrations, both personal and religious and smaller intimate gatherings were sources of ideas. The inclusion of food as subject matter enabled candidates to consider wider cultural occasions. School events were contrasted with individual moments of quiet as the antidote to a noisy gathering.

Human made

The tools of everyday life became a focus for still-life arrangements, treated in many cases imaginatively, moving far away from traditional notions around a still life. Objects were arranged systematically and in precise order, or by contrast in a loose and chaotic manner.

The popular idea of food and meals as a focus for gathering was explored in this section through the packaging of foods, containers for presenting food and implements used in preparing a meal or consuming a feast

Environments

Transport was a much-used theme. Candidates explored ideas around local travel on school buses, to longer more exciting journeys to new environments. Maps served as an initial basis for subsequent extensive work involving graphic images, cut paper, and printing processes.

Tower blocks and smaller housing were explored in the development of imagery for the resolved outcome. Again, these gave candidates a good opportunity to draw on personal primary sources.

Natural World

In 2025 there were a significant number of candidates, across all endorsed titles, developing ideas in response to this section of the paper. Plants and botanical themes were very popular. Flowers, gathered as gifts in bouquets, or as symbols of deeper emotive ideas.

The tradition of fruit in sculpture, photography and painting was explored by candidates in creating imagery that considered the cycle of life, harvests and food production. Here

the range of abilities was clearly observed as candidates in the lower performance mark range produced simplistic and unrefined compositions contrasting with the highly skilled, refined and accomplished works created by candidates in the higher performance levels.

Overall, much exciting work was seen in centres, by moderators, across all endorsed titles.

Textile students looked at processes related to production, and created garments or decorative pieces that explore how a garment might be worn

Graphics students successfully incorporated text, some of which was hand-crafted, into posters for school or public gatherings. Politics often influenced their ideas.

3D Design students created objects diverse light fittings, furniture, jewellery, storage containers, and surreal ceramic vases for flowers.

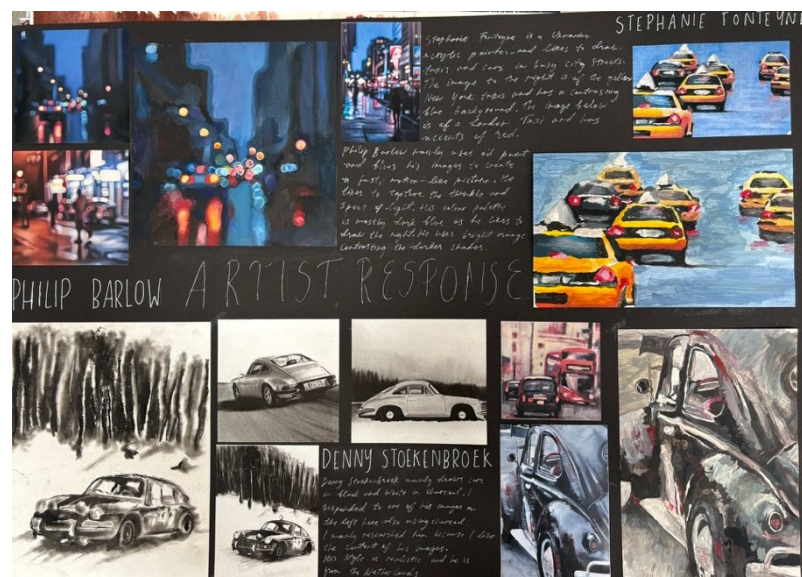
Photography students considered angle of shot, and created high drama through ariel photography or layers of people gathered in different environments, using a range of digital editing programs

The more proficient students, across all titles, successfully connected their ideas and visual imagery with that produced by historical and contemporary Artists, Craft workers and Designers.

Preparatory studies



Preparatory studies in 3D Design
(Confident and assured ability)



Preparatory studies in Fine Art
(confident and assured ability)

Centres can develop their own approach and plan an appropriate structure for the time available to their candidates for the preparatory period. As with component 1, candidates should be encouraged to develop their own personal ideas. Preparatory studies should show the candidate's thinking through the growth of their ideas as they pursue a line of enquiry. This can be presented in a variety of ways as appropriate to the course of study:

Sketchbooks

Worksheets

Design sheets

Maquettes

Test pieces, swatches and samples

Studies exploring different scales

Digital material including PowerPoint presentations, Film, screenshots etc

In most centres the release date of the ESA paper is during the school holidays, so many departments initially share the paper via secure email to enable candidates to have as much time as possible to work on their initial response and develop ideas.

In summer 2025 series moderators noted that in their dialogue with the centre representative a common concern raised was the period available in schools for candidates to work on their preparatory studies. Many explained that the ESA window was particularly reduced this year, saying they had to complete the 10-hour period of sustained focus prior to Easter break, due to the dates of Easter, school timetabling, mocks in other subjects, and NEA release of marks allowing time for internal appeals.

Strong preparatory studies were linked to centres offering structured, engaging activities during the preparatory period. Many centres gave candidates frameworks that balanced guidance with freedom to explore their own approaches using relevant techniques and materials.

In centres where teachers guided candidates closely in the early stages, helping them engage deeply with themes candidates had avoided shallow responses. Some centres began with hands-on visual research and drawing tasks, while others introduced artist studies. These structured preparatory activities improved candidates' thematic exploration and personal responses, building on skills from their Personal Portfolio projects.

Candidates who leveraged strengths from their personal portfolio component produced well-documented supporting studies that met all assessment objectives. The highest quality ESA work reflected the strong foundations formed during the Personal Portfolio development.

However, moderators also observed that highly rigid frameworks sometimes limited the development of independent ideas and personal responses to the theme.

In 2025 moderators noted that opportunities for candidates to make centre arranged visit to galleries, Museums or workshops were reduced but that many candidates made independent visits, encouraged by their teachers. Candidates had also been supported to make virtual gallery visits as part of their research into the work of others. In some centres, candidates participated in school workshops with local artists whose work related to themes from the ESA paper.

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

10-hour period of sustained focus

Moderators found that most centres plan this timed period over two consecutive school days. A different structure was often used to support candidates who needed to allow for the drying of materials for example, ceramics, or printmaking, before creative work could continue. (see specification for a more detailed breakdown)

Considered planning is key to a candidate's success in the period of sustained focus.

Many centres effectively prepared candidates for the 10-hour sustained focus period through the provision of a mock exam as part of component 1. Most candidates knew what could be achieved in the 10-hour period and planned their independent work accordingly, with stronger students setting ambitious yet achievable goals. In contrast, poor planning or insufficient preparation led to incomplete or superficial work.

Assessment in component 2.

Moderators noted that, where a centre had rewarded candidates securely across the four assessment objectives when assessing component 1, they had a good understanding of the common standards and had applied them consistently in component 2.

Difficulties related to assessment identified by moderators were in often AO1 and AO2. Candidates had often produced less work for AO1, leading to lower marks given in AO1. The development of ideas / journey was short and narrow. There was reduced time for experimentation and, to a certain degree, risk taking.

As seen in previous years, the ESA was frequently the lowest-scoring component, due to insufficient development of ideas (AO1), and lack of refinement (AO2) which in turn impacted the quality of the outcome (AO4).

The work seen for AO3 was identified by moderators as a strength in many component 2 submissions. Candidates had achieved a level of skill at the completion of component 1 that enabled them to start component 2 with a degree of proficiency in their chosen media, when recording from a range of sources. This foundation allowed candidates to approach their observational and recording tasks with a degree of confidence, translating visual information into thoughtful studies that aligned with their artistic intentions. As a result, the quality and relevance of recorded ideas and insights (AO3) frequently stood out in this component, showcasing not only technical competence but also a growing personal voice within their creative journey.

Planning was crucial for candidates' success during the 10-hour period of sustained focus. In 2025, moderators noted that where candidates had produced thoughtful, personal work across all endorsed titles, they had drawn on their preparatory studies, primary sources, and made strong connections to contextual studies.

When a candidate had not prepared effectively, their outcome tended to be underdeveloped and literal, without demonstrating relevant connections to their research.

It is worth noting that the marks awarded for AO4 can be found in interim outcomes or other resolved work created as part of the preparatory studies, not only in the piece (s) produced in the period of sustained focus.



**Component 2 Textile Design
from the 2025 series (Emerging
competent ability)**



**Component 2 3D Design from 2025 series
(Confident and assured ability)**

Component 2 Externally set assignment Strengths:

- A well-structured, teacher-led preparatory programme enabled candidates to produce strong and imaginative personal responses.
- Comprehensive first-hand observation and research, including (but certainly not exclusively) that stemmed from the skilful use of a candidate's own photography.
- Sufficient, focused, meaningful and sustained preparatory work that continued the growth of ideas.
- Strong connections to the work of others through 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.
- Preparatory studies that were focussed, informative, expressing thoughts, ideas, experimentation, contextual links and showing review, selection, refinement, and development.
- 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.

Component 2 Externally set assignment Weaknesses:

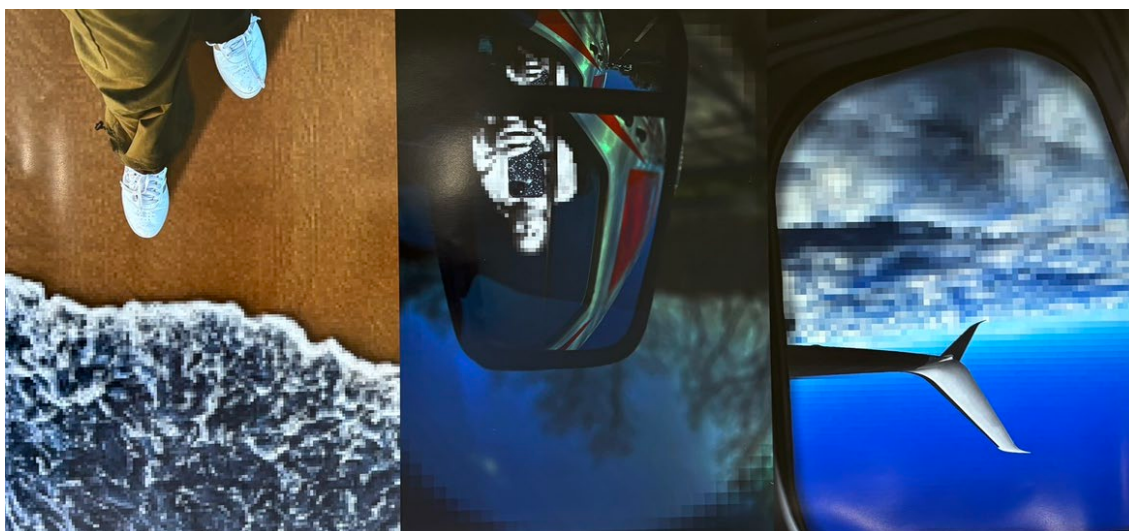
- Ideas are sometimes concluded prematurely, without adequate exploration or development.
- When candidates allocated a significant portion of the preparatory time to initial ideas, such as creating mind maps and mood boards, less time remained for developing and refining a single idea before planning for the 10-hour sustained focus.
- An overly prescriptive preparatory period that did not provide candidates across the ability range with opportunities to develop personal responses.
- Safe and literal interpretation of the theme that constrained candidates.
- Poor command of materials, techniques and processes that ultimately reduced the quality of final outcomes.
- Disproportionate written evidence (annotation) for analysis and evaluation.
- Superficial outcomes caused by inadequate review and lack of thorough refinement.
- Incomplete outcomes due to a lack of planning
- Centres indicated that they lack sufficient time to fully complete Component 2.



Component 2 Fine Art from the 2025 series
(Emerging Competent ability)



Component 2 Fine Art from the 2025 series
(Confident and assured ability)



Component 2 Photography from the 2025 series (Competent and Consistent 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.

When a centre presented a well-organised and clearly labelled display with an evident rank order for component 1, this same approach was observed in component 2. In the majority of centres additional labelling was also provided to identify work completed during the 10-hour period of sustained focus.

Moderators reported that centres 'clearly take considerable satisfaction in guaranteeing that candidates' work is displayed to the best advantage for moderation.' Moderators praised the time and effort that centres invested in this vital aspect of the assessment process

Summary

Many centres have demonstrated growing confidence in their understanding of the GCSE Art and Design specification for Component 2 (Externally Set Assignment), as well as the requirements it places on both teachers and students. The ESA paper is used as a stimulus, with candidates drawing inspiration from its images and the ideas presented in the text. The supplementary bullet-pointed list of words has proven especially helpful

for candidates who find working with a single word challenging. Overall, centres have built upon effective practices established in Component 1, enabling them to support candidates successfully during both the preparatory period and the 10-hour sustained focus session.



Component 2 from the 2025
series Art, craft and design
(Basic ability)