



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In Art and Design

4FA1, 4GC1, 4PY1, 4TD1, 4TE1  
Component 1 and Component 2

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This report reviews the 2023 series of the International GCSE Art and Design (9-1) examinations; Fine Art 4FA1/01 & 02, Graphic Communication 4GC1/01 & 02, Photography 4PY1/01 & 02, Textile Design 4TE1/01 & 02, Three-Dimensional Design 4TD1/01 & 02.

This is the first year since 2019 that the qualification has returned to full assessment.

**Component 1** Personal Portfolio (50%) consists of students' practical coursework, where students respond to theme(s), project(s) or task(s) set by the centre and is externally marked

**Component 2** Externally Set Assignment (50%) externally set and marked.

The International GCSE specification aims to provide all centres with the framework to develop and devise courses for Art and Design (9-1) across all five endorsed titles:

- Fine Art
- Graphic Communication
- Photography
- Textile Design
- Three- Dimensional Design

Centres can enter students for more than one endorsed title in any one-examination series.

### **Administration and submission requirements**

The [Centre Guidance Document](#) covers:

- Key events and deadlines
- Entry information
- Summary of scheme of assessment
- Private candidates
- Preparation for the submission of artwork
- Instructions for the submission of work
- Digital submission Guidance
- Special consideration
- Malpractice
- Grade awarding
- Authentication form

### **Students must submit:**

- Three sheets of supporting studies (maximum size A2 for each sheet) one sheet of final outcome/s (maximum size A2)
- Digital Portfolios should be no more than 20 slides if done in a PowerPoint presentation
- Digital portfolios should be in chronological order, so the sequence of the development can be followed by the examiner.
- All submissions should also include signed authentication forms.

Microsoft Sway and .rar files should not be used when submitting work for assessment. Centres should refer to the digital submission guidance section in the Centre Guidance for further information about acceptable file types.

Centres are reminded of the following:

- The PowerPoint slide limit should not be exceeded.
- All images submitted for assessment must be of suitable quality, e.g. not blurred.
- To ensure that all necessary paperwork is included with each submission.
- Internal assessment is not required for this qualification, therefore, assessment grids for our GCSE Art and Design qualification should not be submitted.

You will be able to access individual candidate's marks for each assessment objective and the total mark awarded for Component 1 and 2 by using our Results Plus service, using the link below

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/Services/ResultsPlus.html>

Results Plus is a free online results analysis tool for teachers that gives you a detailed breakdown of your learners' performance in Pearson qualifications. This will enable you to analyse the strengths and weakness of each candidate in each AO. You will find it helpful to refer to the taxonomy and candidate assessment grid when using this service. If you have any difficulties using Results Plus, please ask your exams officer.

## **Component 1 Personal Portfolio**

Centres are free to devise their own themes during the course or use a title from a past legacy examination theme. Some centres opted to use the sample assessment theme. **Centres should select the best project that each candidate has produced during the course. This should be a submission that exemplifies a full 'work journey' and provides evidence for all assessment objectives.** The quality of the work is key. Centres should support candidates in their selection of a focussed body of work for their submission.

The specification states clearly that during the course 'Centres are free to devise any theme(s), project(s) or task(s) which may each have a separate focus or be interconnected.'

**The centre is then required to choose just ONE project for assessment. Students must submit:**

- Three sheets of supporting studies with one sheet of final outcome.
- A 'digital portfolio' containing no more than 20 slides (PowerPoint) or 20 pages (PDF).
- A signed authentication form.

Digital portfolio should be in chronological order, so that the sequence of the development can be followed by the examiner.

**It should be noted that in 2023 a number of centres chose to submit more than one project by students for assessment. Centres should refrain from this practice when submitting work in the 2024 series.**

Below are the strengths and weaknesses of candidates' submissions highlighted by examiners in the 2023 series for:

## **Component 1 Personal Portfolio**

### **Strengths**

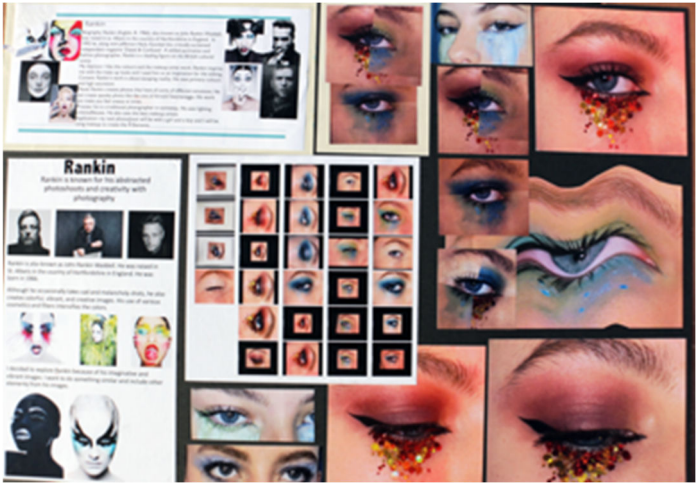
- The depth of local inclusion and influence into individual projects remains a key strength of this qualification. Candidates were able to draw inspiration from their local environments, including both the natural world and man-made constructions, which were heavily and usefully embedded as source material in many projects.
- Candidates who embark upon a focused and sustained journey develop skills which enhance their preparatory and supporting studies. The best examples show ample studies of recording, drawing and mark-making which build towards the final realisation.
- Annotations were focussed and informative, critical and reflective - not simply used as labelling or description.
- High achieving candidates produced highly skilled and intuitive work. The references were appropriate, well-chosen and moved their work forward. There was a level of sophistication and visual awareness which enabled critical analysis with inspired outcomes
- A wide range of media was used, exploiting the qualities of each and often using combinations of processes and materials to give rich surface textures and subtle colour. Candidates used the formal elements with confidence, flair and to good effect
- Some of the most powerful work was based around personal stories and experiences – lockdown, home schooling and the effects of the global pandemic on social and family life. Finding the visual language to express some of the emotions – anxiety, stress, loneliness, boredom and isolation - called on a range of skills unexpected in this age range
- When personal photography was used, the quality of the subsequent development was much higher. Using images from the internet did not provide the same level of engagement
- Candidates appeared to take advantage of local artists and exhibitions when they had the opportunity. It is exciting to see the local traditions and culture reflected in the work and this should be seen as a positive, rather than an emphasis on work in the Western European traditions
- The majority of the candidates understand the requirements of the four assessment objectives and structure their work around these. Most appear to have at their disposal an adequate range of materials and media
- Centres who offer work for assessment within the traditional format for IGCSE (3 research sheets and a finished outcome sheet) seem able to focus on the assessment objectives with clarity and purpose. Evidence is stronger when the selection process has been adhered to with consideration and a genuine focus on the formal elements
- Digital submissions seem ideally suited to the Graphic Communication endorsement where original work had been accomplished using creative software and sophisticated manipulation of images wherever possible.
- The use of PowerPoint and pdf files helps to understand the breadth of the course followed and, when successful, the technology serves to illustrate the candidates' work rather than dominate the submission .

- Drawing from first hand observation and selecting primary sources seems to germinate stronger ideas at the start of the course, rather than trawling through the internet for artists with a similar interest or theme.

## **Weaknesses**

- Over-reliance on copying artists' work (pastiche) and not using this experience to produce personal responses.
- Overpowering PowerPoint presentations with a plethora of contextual sources and gathered influences often dominated the submissions. It is difficult to establish the level of the candidate's ability when their work is reduced significantly in scale or masked by uncredited work by their chosen artists. This is especially true when candidates prefer to illustrate their inspirational source (copy), rather than deliver an outcome of their own creation .
- Photography candidates focus too much on creating mood boards based on the work of other photographers rather than using these images to inspire creations of their own.
- A reliance on secondary sources from the internet usually results in drawing which is flat and lacking in tonal range. Candidates' own photography is not widely used as a recording tool, but where it is, the act of choosing and framing an image improves the subsequent observational work.
- When candidates work through the AOs, meeting the objectives in a sequential manner, the work can become a series of exercises and the sense of journey and development of ideas is fragmented.
- Where candidates had worked on a small scale to create images ( A6) for their A2 sheet and then suddenly jumped to working full sized A2, they frequently misjudged the difference that increasing scale makes to a piece of work. For many, the detail that seemed appropriate on a small-scale lost impact when enlarged.
- Meaningless annotation and written biographies shortened the space available for the candidates' own work.
- Lengthy PowerPoints or PDF files from centres, which had not undergone a suitable selection process for their submission.
- Extra slides used for 'cut and paste' tasks, creating mood boards and arbitrary images did not develop ideas or generate a personal response.
- A lot of pastiche and direct copying of artists failed to translate into a personal response in the final outcome.
- Candidates who had excellent drawing and mark making skills sometimes chose to limit the evidence by writing substantive text and gathering examples of work by artists and designers.
- In some centres there is extensive use of digital enhancement which produced polished images but can mask a lack of developmental thinking.
- A small number of centres submitted an excessive number of projects and this can disadvantage candidates.

**Component One. Personal Portfolio. Photography Confident and Assured Ability candidate submission**



Below are the strengths and weaknesses of candidates' submissions highlighted by examiners in the 2023 series for:

## **Component 2 Externally Set Assignment**

### **Strengths**

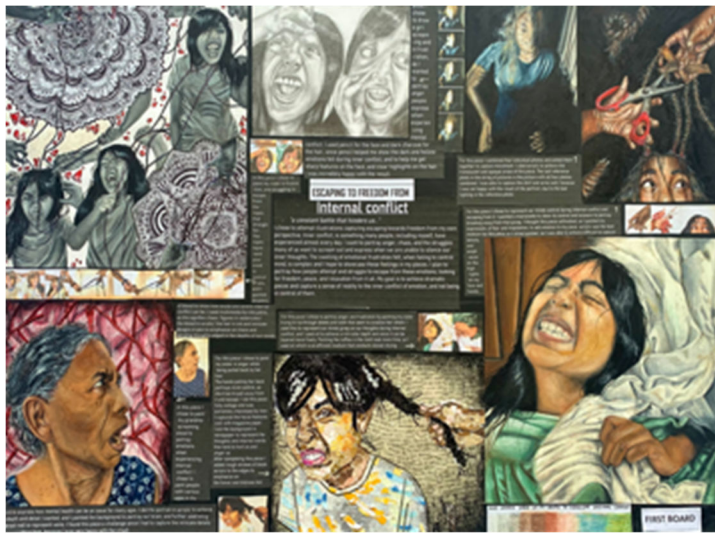
- 'Escape' inspired an eclectic range of responses at varying levels of engagement and ability. Many candidates focused on 'emotional escape', with several references to mental health issues, 'escaping from anxiety and stress' and 'arranged marriage'. More 'literal' ideas were also developed with a focus on 'escaping from a particular place or space' e.g. prison, cage or room.
- Candidates who performed well started with a diverse source of references, often with 'mood boards' consisting of artist references, secondary source images related to their initial ideas, or starting points inspired by the ESA paper. These images generated ideas that progressed; recording a process of experimentation and exploration, using a wide range of materials and processes.
- Confident and assured candidates demonstrated comprehensive, exciting and in-depth responses to the theme 'Escape', that led to interpretations based on 'Escaping' an emotion, way of life or place. Many had looked at the theme from a cultural context or stereotypes. Tradition and heritage featured strongly in the more accomplished candidates work.
- Sophisticated recording, especially in the Fine Art title, through personal observations and ideas.
- Unexpected developments and risk-taking seen in higher ability candidates, all cleverly linked and supported by artist referencing.
- Lots of work based on family, friends, heritage, culture, animals to more complex matters, such as escaping from war zones.
- A very diverse approach to the theme – some thoughtful and unexpected, some straightforward and methodical.
- A number of Centres used their entire quota of submission slides to create digital portfolios which allowed further references to be used to validate the journey taken by the candidate.
- There was an increase in the use of image manipulation technology to enhance photos and explore these options for drawing. This was not confined to graphics or photography and more evident in fine art solutions.
- There is within this new submission format an inevitable increase in written descriptions of ideas and processes used to achieve outcomes. Again, inventive and personal solutions dominated the higher achievement levels with photography being used effectively to support personal drawing and recording objectives.
- Candidates in the higher performance levels produced very mature and credible responses to the ESA theme.

### **Weaknesses**

- The broad-based theme has always been a welcome 're-start' for candidates in previous years with the Externally Set Assignment allowing a further opportunity to tackle a fresh starting point. It was evident in the submissions this year that a lack of previous experience, when working to a shorter timescale, had inhibited personal responses in some ESA submissions.

- Analytical review and critical analysis are sometimes curtailed early by a lack of energy and engagement with personal ideas.
- Emotional responses to broad based themes are very much abandoned when candidate research becomes more scientific and prescriptive and less purposeful and aesthetic.
- A lack of focus and somewhat random choice of artists references did nothing to inform in the lower achieving candidates work and resulted in little development and exercises which were repetitive and showed little progression.
- There was evidence of repetition in the development of ideas, with the same image (usually copied from a photograph or secondary source image) drawn in 2-3 different mediums with minimal progression through experimentation.
- Little or no annotation.
- Some centres including an entire page of internet links to sources as a substitute for critical written analysis.
- Many candidate's included their own photography but the quality was often poor, and images unrelated to their ideas.
- Some centres had used the same photographs for both Components, and in some cases the same artists' images.
- It was evident that when candidates had good ideas for the theme, they were not advised on artists' choices, or supported in their use of media.
- Personal style was often frustrated by the lack of technical skill, so candidates often copied internet images in coloured pencil or pencil.
- Lower mark range candidate's final realisations were often unresolved and simplistic.
- Repetitive photographs, presented with little development or understanding of context in relation to the exam theme.
- Some Graphic Communication candidate's responses to the ESA theme had little knowledge or use of graphics, the work was more suited as a Fine Art entry.

**Component 2 Externally Set Assignment Fine Art Exceptional Ability candidate submission.**



Below are general comments made by examiners in relation to the four assessment objectives.

## **Component 1 and 2 Assessment objectives**

### **AO1 Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources**

- The best examples of recording with the camera were accompanied by drawings and quick paintings or notes done in the field
- There was a lack of rigorous contextual research seen in some submissions
- Higher achieving candidates showed clear connections to sources
- Artist's connections were effective and clearly supported their ideas and development of skills
- Lower mark range candidates would have benefited from more in-depth investigations
- Ideas not developed in enough detail were sometimes predictable and often safe choices were made
- Some centres presented work without a clear theme in Component one, presenting a collection of unrelated images
- Excellent recording seen in many candidates work – skilful and accomplished, showing a sound understanding of the formal elements and the application of different materials with success
- Candidates who sometimes make no reference to other artists then struggle to demonstrate critical understanding
- Excellent use of own local environment and culture as a starting point
- Greater variety of visual references needed to provide information to work from
- Repetitive drawings
- Good use of first-hand photography
- Obscure artists are not always useful.

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

- Very often centres guide candidates towards an artist or group of designers and the choice and their selection has been made for them. Where candidates discover their own inspirational images, objects, artefacts and artist; the response is more considered and in depth
- Clear lack of refinement in some submissions
- Creative use of mixed media
- Experimentation which showed promise was not developed fully in weaker candidates
- Refining becoming a natural process in the creative journey
- Exciting experimentation
- It was notable this year, that many more candidates had been to galleries/spaces to view artwork, first hand. This aided to creative curiosity and helped to spur real artistic development
- Playing safe with known techniques
- Processes and techniques used in traditional ways with predictable results
- Little evidence of risk taking

- Refinement came about by practise with materials, media and developing technical skills rather than analysis of work
- Limited range of materials and techniques
- Successful use of thumbnail sketches to plan for an outcome
- Cohesive sheets submitted so refinement can be clearly tracked
- Experimentation with media did not always have a sense of purpose or direction
- Effective use of sophisticated software and digital programmes showing well taught submissions
- Well documented creative journeys
- Some inappropriate media used to fill research sheets
- Decorating and embellishing sheets at the expense of substance.

### **A03 Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses**

- Where centres maybe didn't have access to a range of materials, the ones they had used had been practised and polished, subsequently producing high quality pieces throughout the project
- Good development and recording using a variety of media
- More judicious selection and analysis required by some candidates
- Good evidence of having worked from direct observation and experience
- Excellent technical skills
- Incomplete or unrecorded journey
- Recording and drawing simplistic and repetitive
- Little analysis
- Recording showed advanced skills and exceptional performance
- A foundation of drawing skills allows candidates to meet this assessment objective
- Excessive scrap booking of images from magazines and the internet or Pinterest
- Recording not always relevant
- More able candidates resolve ideas successfully due to their ability to visualise ideas and intentions
- Clear creative journey
- Photographic compositions record situations as possible formats for painting.
- A number of lower mark range candidates spend far too much time gathering images to strengthen ideas rather than exploring those images in a variety of different media.
- Digital images were more evident in this year's submissions, but it was encouraging to note that digital art was not being 'substituted' for observational drawing from primary sources, and centres seemed to be placing greater importance on recording from first-hand than in previous years.

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

- In a few cases, where the development work had been average, the actual outcome had been very well executed
- 'Escape' provided an open and challenging theme which was embraced by all candidates
- A common issue in this assessment objective involves the uniting of all or most of the preparatory work into a large tableau and in so doing frustrating independent creativity
- Final outcomes did not always show the promise of initial research work
- Many exceptional outcomes realising intentions and clearly demonstrating sophisticated connections and visual language
- Consistently precise drawing and painting but unresolved compositions
- Disappointing when final outcome is a copy of smaller earlier work from the research sheets showing no development or extension of work
- Considered outcomes showing clear selection from research work
- Continuing to explore in the final piece in both components demonstrating an artistic journey for higher placed candidates
- Weaker candidates relied too heavily on collage and juxtaposition of images
- Repeating images in final outcome
- Final outcomes enlarged from smaller images in research sheet so not as refined, resulting in lower marks in this assessment objective
- Outstanding, fully resolved, independent, imaginative and in some cases exciting outcomes.
- It was good to note that fewer candidates had produced 'mini versions' of their final outcome; this resulted in more successful final realisations, with well-balanced compositions and more refined visual language skills suited to an A2 format
- Weaker candidates often repeated ideas and images without any development or progression, producing final realisations that bore little or no connection to the sources explored.

## Summary

Good teaching, well-structured courses and appropriate resourcing ensures that candidates perform to their full potential in both components of the International GCSE.

A programme of professional development and training, covering various aspects of the specification can be found on the website for 2023-2024. Centres may also wish to contact their Regional Development Managers for further information and support regarding training requests.

If you have a question about the International GCSE Art and Design specification '**Ask the Expert**' ATE is a resource you may decide to use. Information about this resource can be found on the Pearson Edexcel website under information for teachers.

Jaclyn Wild is the subject advisor for Art and Design and you can contact her via the Pearson website in relation to questions you may wish to ask or training opportunities.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/subjects/art-and-design.html>

This has been the first year the qualification has returned to full assessment since 2019 and centres should be commended for their hard work in preparing candidates for this.

