



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In Art & Design (4FA1, 4GC1, 4PY1, 4TE1,  
4TD1) Paper 1

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## **Introduction**

This report reviews the 2025 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.

**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**' which can be found on the Pearson/Edexcel website 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

Detailed information on submitting work can be found in a separate International GCSE Art and Design Administrative Support Guide - this also includes Digital Submission Guidance. (see link below)

[gcse-art-and-design-asg-june-2025-v02.pdf](#)

### **General Administration.**

**Examiners made the following observations regarding how work was submitted on the Learner Work Transfer platform for Component One.**

- In terms of the submission of portfolios it was much easier to access the work presented in a PDF form than a zip file of separate J Pegs where it was more challenging to follow the visual line of enquiry.
- Many centres produced PowerPoint submissions with the first slides showing the candidate name, number and centre number then the Authentication form. The quality of photographic images was good, with images in focus and positioned straight.
- Examiners found it much more straightforward to mark work that had been presented as a 'rolling' pdf or ppt presentation.
- Viewing the work as individual photographs often felt like the flow of viewing the work was diminished as it took a carefully coordinated effort to view all the images in the intended order.
- Some centres included their own mark sheets, this is not a required as all work is externally marked for both components
- The random use of jpg files which had not been linked into a format which facilitated the use of a slide show (and therefore had to be individually downloaded) was also complicated and slow
- Centres that placed the authentication form with the ppt slides helped with administration logistics.
- There has been a mix of 'traditional' 4 sheet submissions and PowerPoints.
- The use of .rar file types which cannot be opened or read should be stopped
- Some centres submitted poor quality photographs of candidate's submissions.
- A considerable number of centres did not include authentication forms with their submissions. this slowed the marking process down as examiners had to request authentication forms from centres
- Power point presentations were straightforward to mark, and in some instances offered the candidates an additional opportunity to evidence their visual communication skills.

It is hoped highlighting the examples above will improve how digital submissions are submitted the following year. Please note, none of the candidates were disadvantaged by the way work had been submitted on LWT.

### **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

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 learner's 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
- one sheet of final outcome
- Digital Portfolios should be no more than 20 slides if done in a PowerPoint presentation
- Digital portfolio should be in chronological order, so that the sequence of the development can be followed by the examiner.
- All submissions should also include signed authentication forms

**It should be noted that in 2025 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 2026 series.**

Below are areas of strength and weakness of candidates' submissions highlighted by examiners in the 2025 series for:

## **Component 1 Personal Portfolio**

### **Areas of Strength**

- Project briefs were generally well constructed and offered students ample opportunities to investigate areas of their personal experience and produce meaningful outcomes.
- Many centres used starting points from previous exam titles and this gave all candidates the chance to interpret a theme in a more personal way.
- Some of the strongest work was based around personal stories and experiences unique to the students' environment.
- Where candidates have had opportunities to experiment meaningfully, this has often led to more confident and resolved outcomes.
- Work inspired by visiting a place of interest or art exhibition through the candidates own sketching, photography or critical understanding of the work seen, often resulted in more exciting, individual and personal creative journeys.
- Culturally diverse, exciting and perceptive projects undertaken, many of which were very personal. It was evident in centres where the resources and access to primary observations were encouraged, that many candidates were achieving sustained and effective projects. This meant that many could access the taxonomy of the 'Competent and Consistent' and 'Confident & Assured' performance levels.
- 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.
- Some submissions had used digital platforms, mainly Procreate on ipad, to photograph their drawings/sketches and then manipulate and explore a range of creative options using Procreate's digital tools.
- AI was also used in some submissions to kick-start concepts
- 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
- Annotations were focussed and informative, critical and reflective - not simply used as labelling or description.
- Some 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.

### **Areas of Improvement**

- Inevitably, there were several centres where a prescriptive and formulaic approach to the qualification had stifled creativity, curiosity and ambition for their candidates.
- In some centres themes and processes were much more restricted and students all followed the same journey. At times it felt this structure meant students could

not explore further their own particular strengths and interests which may have led to more successful outcomes.

- A lack of focus and intent left weaker candidates with ill-considered or non-existent realisations. Instead of reviewing progress there was description of feelings and thoughts. Lack of analysis led to stilted progression and missed opportunities.
- Some candidates showed low levels of basic skills and understanding of materials and media. Centres should use the Exemplar Gallery on the Pearson Website to understand the levels of achievement required to meet the common standard in all Assessment Objectives.
- Over-reliance on copying artists' work (pastiche) and not using this experience to produce personal responses
- Some Photography candidates focus far too much on creating mood boards based on the work of other photographers rather than using these images to inspire creations of their own
- In some cases, where the projects fitted into performance bands 'limited' and 'basic', the work was unstructured and disjointed, which amplified the lack of skill with media and techniques. The lower end submissions lacked the ability to make critical connections between their work and the sources that informed them. Some references appeared to be added to fill a gap, rather than to aid development.
- 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
- Some teachers do not fully understand the scope and range of the specification
- Meaningless annotation and written biographies shortened the space available for the candidates' own work.
- 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. A Fine Art candidate submission 2025





## **Component 1 Assessment objectives**

Below are general comments in relation to the four assessment objectives made by examiners in the 2025 series. They are generic and must not be seen as a blanket list of criticism or praise for individual centres.

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

- It was particularly encouraging to note that no project relied exclusively on secondary source imagery an evident and positive shift from the trends observed in previous years. This development highlights a deepening understanding among candidates of the importance of first-hand research and personal visual inquiry in the creative process.
- This Assessment Objective was often the least successfully met by candidates, who tended to use this opportunity to make a reference to one artist, make a transcription of part of the painting that links with their initial mind-map concept and consider the physical approach of the artist rather than their ideas and purpose.
- Higher scoring candidates demonstrated a strong ability to develop personal ideas that were meaningfully informed by the work of others. These candidates made purposeful connections with chosen sources and used contextual research to support and refine their own creative intentions. In such cases, investigations were focused, analytical, and clearly influenced the direction of the project.
- Annotations were often concise and insightful, showing increasing understanding of visual language. Poor quality images from secondary sources provided insufficient information to lead to personal development of work. Weaker students struggled to develop ideas beyond initial stages.
- Ideas were often formed very early, leading to repetitive studies of a similar image, leading to unresolved outcomes, often copied from a secondary source image or artists work.

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

- A particularly notable trend this exam series was the reduced reliance on the most frequently cited and internationally renowned figures from the art canon. Instead, there was an encouraging increase in the use of more localised, culturally specific, or lesser-known artists and designers. This shift brought a refreshing individuality and sense of ownership to the submissions, suggesting that candidates had been encouraged - or had taken the initiative themselves - to explore a wider range of creative influences. This often resulted in more personal, relevant, and contextually rich outcomes.
- Candidates who explored visual language to develop ideas through sketches and drawings had instant access to the full range of performance levels in this AO. Observed drawing from primary resources, or from their own photographic recording of images, created the platform from which the higher achieving candidate had an opportunity to fully develop new and exciting ideas.
- Assessment Objective 2 was a strength within many Component 1 submissions, where a secure level of technical processes and visual language was seen. This included drawing with a range of mark making techniques, lino printing, collagraphs, collages (digital and physical), acrylic, water-colour and oil

painting as well as using dry materials including oil and chalk pastel. Three-dimensional responses tended to be digital but were supported by card and paper maquettes as well as studio pen drawings.

- Some students lacked the language to analyse and evaluate images and objects successfully, instead overlong descriptions were given. This resulted in repetition of images and weak connections. More able candidates made sound connections to relevant work of artists and designers and were often resourceful in their investigations showing a lively curiosity about the work or others. Responses were confident and insightful adding rich contextual links to their own work
- A number of centres to their credit made good use of the limited resources they appeared to have. Digitally enhanced imagery (Photoshop/mobile phone camera filters) was experimented with, as were different photographic techniques to encourage the use of primary resources from candidates' and this was effective at building up idea development.

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

- Portraiture as a genre was a strength of this year's submissions, with strong photography, drawing and painted studies, informed by a wide range of contextual sources, including Expressionism, Fauvism and Pop Art.
- Digital Art was used effectively for many candidates, particularly weaker candidates who used this medium as an alternative to drawing and painting.
- Recording through traditional observational pencil drawing was evident across most of the personal portfolios. Where there was a commitment to the practice of tonal drawing, this often supported a better understanding of form, proportion and differences in surfaces.
- Annotation tended to be succinct and purposeful. Those centres submitting work of 4 sheets, were keen to utilise most of the available presentation space for visual responses. PowerPoint presentations had greater amounts of annotation that were more descriptive than analytical.
- Increasingly sophisticated and skilfully rendered imagery is being produced by many candidates. A range of skill levels was witnessed, from powerful and outstanding imagery to clumsy and simplistic recordings

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

- The most compelling and successful responses to this assessment objective were those rooted in sustained, personal, and genuinely investigative creative processes. These candidates demonstrated a clear commitment to enquiry, probing ideas, materials, and techniques in a way that reflected both curiosity and intentionality. The resulting work was often rich in meaning and highly individual, shaped by the candidate's willingness to explore and refine over time.
- Many candidates decided on their final realisations very early in the creative process, so their final outcome/s were often less refined, or a combination of several preparatory studies combined together, creating a rather unresolved and aesthetically confusing result.
- Candidates in upper performance bands expanded broad themes with intent and diversity, this led to sub themes being explored to be resolved fully into

broad and skilful outcomes utilising ranges of technique and media development.

- Where the projects had been thorough, comprehensive and resolved, the outcomes demonstrated the high level of skill and careful consideration of composition.
- Where the projects were disjointed, with limited connections, rather random outcomes occurred that seemingly had no relevance to the project's theme.

## Summary

A clear understanding of the IGCSE specification requirements, 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 online and face to face training and professional development covering various aspects of the specification can be found on the Pearson website for 2025-2026. 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.

## [Art, Design and Media | Pearson qualifications](#)

Centres should be commended for their hard work in preparing candidates for this qualification.

