

GCSE



**Chief Examiner's and  
Principal Moderator's Report  
Art and Design**

Summer Series 2023





## Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of this specification for the Summer 2023 series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at [www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk).



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# GCSE Art and Design

## Chief Examiner's Report

### Subject Overview

This report has been compiled with the help of our moderation team and informed by evidence in centres. This is the first complete series without optional unit omission since before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Supporting the return to 'normal' in the current context has been challenging for reasons including absenteeism, and skills and confidence deficits. Thank you to all teachers for supporting the journey towards pre-pandemic standards.

It was wonderful to see some evidence of a return to previous levels of excellence and in some cases a renewed energy and enthusiasm for creative, varied, and innovative work. However, in general the standard was inconsistent and varied to a concerning degree. Whilst a return to pre-pandemic standards was not expected this year there is clear evidence of unprecedented generous marking across levels and particularly at Levels 4 and 5. There was less rigour, technical skill, maturity and ambition in developing and realising ideas than is expected at this level, however marking by teachers was over generous and did not reflect that.

### Moderation

The Moderation Briefing Meeting for this series took place at Saint Catherine's College Armagh. We would like to thank the Head of Department, Principal and staff for their cooperation, organisation, warm welcome and hospitality. This year was our first year using EModeration. This led to a much smoother operation for both schools and the moderation process. Feedback from centres and our moderating team will help to improve this process further.

During centre visits, moderation was sometimes challenging due to inappropriate presentation of work such as overlapping portfolios, and work presented at height. Work sometimes had to be viewed on the floor. Centres are reminded that moderators require space in a suitable room where the work can be viewed properly. Centres should present the sample in rank order, and clearly labelled, as outlined in the Instructions to Teachers booklet. The display for Moderation should take precedence over an exhibition for parents. Centres are asked not to arrange a viewing for parents on the afternoon of the moderation visit, to allow the moderation process to be completed without pressure. Centres are free to modify and change the display to be suitable for parents after the moderation process is complete.

### Internal Assessment Overview

In many centres the standard of marking and the application of the assessment matrix was good. However, in a significant number of centres marking was lenient or inconsistent, and not in line with the agreed standard. An escalation in marking results in an escalation in grade boundaries. Attendance at Agreement Trials and rigorous internal standardisation is fundamental to maintaining appropriate and consistent standards and grade boundaries.

Moderators reported that teachers spoke of taking absence and other pandemic related issues into consideration when assessing work. As a result, marks were inflated to one or more levels higher than the agreed standard in many cases. Centres are reminded that individual pupil circumstances cannot be considered by teachers in their marking.

If there is an application for special consideration marks are adjusted later through our Post moderation procedures.

It was evident that some teachers had not read all instructions and/or circulars. Information is frequently updated, and the instructions often change year on year, particularly in the current context.

## Component 1

### Part A Exploratory Portfolio

Candidates demonstrated an understanding of the formal visual elements mainly through investigating artists. In some cases, practitioner-led workshops were used successfully as starting points for developing work and ideas. However, many centres rely on a small number of the same practitioners. This has led to very similar work being produced across many centres. A personalised and context specific approach would allow for more diversity. Unfortunately, the knowledge and understanding gained from such workshops did not always inform candidates' own ideas development. Printmaking remains popular, but there is over-reliance on tracing imagery rather than candidates creating their own imagery. In a significant and increasing number of cases, there was an overreliance on artworks and imagery found online that lacked credibility.

Centres that explored a well-considered range of media and processes, provided opportunities for candidates to explore at a more meaningful level. Less successful approaches involved teaching an extensive range of techniques without opportunity to focus in and refine and develop, applying learning to more independent work. Teachers commented on the necessity of a formulaic approach because of pandemic related issues such as attendance, confidence, and motivation. However, candidates must have the opportunity to develop their own ideas and outcomes with guidance from teachers.

Practices for recording observations ideas and experiences varied across centres. Many relied heavily on secondary imagery rather than direct observation. In some centres candidates initially used photography skills to record and investigate with varying levels of success. Stronger candidates used their own photography to record sensitively and skillfully and inform further investigations in other media. In some centres observational drawing was sparse or absent entirely. Some recordings showed an obvious overreliance on using the lightbox and other tracing methods. Recording from primary sources and using drawing to develop original imagery is a requirement of the course. (See Page 8 of the specification).

### Part B Investigating the Creative and Cultural Industries

Delivery of this part is continuing to evolve and develop in interesting ways. In the best centres there was a clear progression of learning from Part A through to Part B with candidates applying and building on learning. Successful approaches included working on a theme that carried through Parts A & B, and setting clear briefs for Part B that developed their learning from Part A. The use of briefs to lead work was significantly improved in this series. The *Guidance and examples for teachers booklet* is available on the website under "Assessment", and provides a wide range of approaches which can be adapted.

Assessment objective one remains the most challenging particularly for candidates in centres that have not fully adapted to this specification. Candidates struggle to show confidence and understanding of purpose without a clear and appropriate brief. When this is the case even the most technically skilled and diligent candidate cannot achieve high marks.



Where a brief was present from the beginning candidates demonstrated better skills in selection, discrimination, and refinement with purpose. To show understanding of the creative and cultural industries some centres had photoshopped work into galleries or other settings. Sometimes this was simply an 'add-on' and did not display any critical understanding of purpose or intention. Most investigations of relevant artists were secondary. Stronger candidates made good links with their intentions and ideas.

Centres that explored a well-considered range of media and processes in Part A, provided more opportunities for candidates to explore at a more meaningful level in Part B. In centres that used a more formulaic or prescribed approach, work produced was much less individual, creative, and ambitious.

Candidates produced more original outcomes, when they were given the opportunity to work creatively, purposefully and with understanding. The formulaic approach allowed less able candidates to gain marks at lower levels and the outcomes were safe and predictable.

Best practice was seen when candidates made successful connections to their preparatory work leading to outcomes which were more individual and personal. In a number of centres outcomes were disappointing and not reviewed and refined in a meaningful way. In some cases, final pieces were disjointed and separate from previous development work. The restriction of time may have played a part in this. Weaker candidates tended to complete 2D outcomes which followed a standard formula. Overall, outcomes were less ambitious than in previous years.

## Component 2 Externally Set Assignment

The Externally Set Assignment theme for this series was 'Contrast.' Feedback on the theme and paper was positive, and there was significant improvement in how the paper was used. This was the first ESA since before the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was great to see candidates apply the skills and knowledge gained through Component 1 to more independent work. We saw wide ranging and interesting interpretations of the paper.

Whilst most candidates responded to the theme and the Art and Design starting points and visual references in Section 2, there was a marked increase in the number of candidates using/adapting the briefs in Section 1 of the paper. Teachers commented on the briefs being 'usable' and in line with the approach they had taken to Component 1, Part B. Moderators reported that the paper was accessible and supported success across all levels. Less success was achieved when whole centres worked on very similar projects. Centres are reminded that all candidates must be given full access to the paper, and choice as to how they respond. This component should not be teacher led. Over directing candidates' work for the ESA can constitute malpractice. (See Appendix 3 Page 15, *Instructions to teachers*). There is concern that in some centres work is very tenuously linked with the ESA and almost appears to be a preplanned project made to fit with the theme.

The most successful candidates investigated the references in the paper with purpose and carried out further independent research and analysis. More able candidates were perceptive and critical in their analysis, leading to creative, well-informed, and independent ideas development. Many candidates used the references in the paper to great effect. Less success was achieved when the investigation of practitioners lacked purpose and relevance to the ESA. This was often due to restricted access to the paper, or when the project was teacher-led.

Good practice in using Component 1 to develop knowledge, skills and independence positively impacted candidates' confidence and success in the ESA. Where this was the case candidates were fully involved in rigorous, exciting, personal, and meaningful ideas development. When an entirely whole class and teacher led approach to Component 1 was evident, candidates lacked confidence and were often unable to achieve marks at a level matched to their technical skill.

There remains a pattern in some centres of technically skilled candidates achieving a higher mark in assessment objective three than in the other objectives. This tends to be a pattern in centres where there is an over emphasis on technical mastery of traditional forms of drawing rather than the other core knowledge and skills in Art and Design such as critical appraisal, idea generation, development and realisation. Section 3.3 of the specification gives a wealth of examples of approaches to drawing which should help broaden development and generation of ideas by using a diverse range of approaches.

There is clear evidence of many centres regaining confidence in encouraging more ambitious outcomes in a range of disciplines. However, some have retained a prescriptive approach for example, specifying the format and media candidates worked in. As with Part B this led to outcomes that were not appropriate to intentions, interesting ideas abandoned and, in some cases, restricted achievement. Assessment objective four was overmarked in many centres.

## Contact details

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