

CCEA GCSE Contemporary Crafts
(Summer Series) 2015

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

contemporary
crafts

Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in Contemporary Crafts for this 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

Contents

Chief Examiner's Report	3
Principal Moderator's Report	5
Contact details	9

GCSE CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS

Chief Examiner's Report

Overview of the Qualification

The GCSE Contemporary Crafts qualification can play a vital role in preparing young people for progression into employment in the majority of the creative industries.

'The Creative Industries is the fastest growing sector of the UK economy growing at an average of 6% per annum and 10% globally. It contributes 7.9% towards UK GDP and almost 2 million people are employed within its 13 sub-sectors. It is a dynamic and innovative sector, characterised by a preponderance of small and micro-enterprises that rely heavily upon a constant influx of entrepreneurial, creative and flexible individuals. The Creative Industries coupled with the cultural sector also has a wider social significance and impacts on individuals, communities and society in ways that cannot be measured in simply economic terms.'

'Developing Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries: Making the Case for Public Investment': Department of Culture, Media & Sport.

With an ever growing range of employment pathways leading to the creative industries, from the film industry to fashion & textiles, design industries, communication sectors, museum and gallery sectors and the visual arts, the GCSE Contemporary Crafts qualification provides opportunities to develop creativity and innovation, with investigative and communication skills.

GCSE Contemporary Crafts consists of two components.

In **Component 1** (Controlled Assessment), students have the opportunity to:

- explore materials, techniques and processes;
- understand the importance of health and safety;
- make connections between their own work and work produced in the wider creative industries; and
- understand business models and employability options.

In **Component 2** (Externally Set Examination), students focus on understanding, responding and working to a brief.

The first year of the new GCSE Contemporary Crafts has provided an exciting wide range of responses to the qualification.

The practical components required knowledge and interpretation of stimulus, development and understanding of new skills, experimentation with materials, with problem solving and resolution.

Presentation skills and evaluation also played a key role.

General

For the first year of the qualification candidates showed an impressive range of skills and experimentation in various materials and processes.

The delivery of the subject needs to create a balance between this experimentation and the production of the final outcome with a sense of specialism in design/craft areas.

A variety of teaching approaches were used in the different centres for delivery of the qualification, ranging from a set limit on media and techniques used, through to full free experimentation.

Textiles and wood/metal work were popular and successfully used, with good references to practising artists and refined final outcomes.

Successful candidates showed an understanding of their material, the techniques involved in manipulation, design, and evaluation of design, and evidence of idea development.

Assessment Unit 1 Making: Exploring Materials, Techniques and Processes

This was an area of strength with a range of expressive and experimental materials and techniques used and investigated. Adventurous scales were worked to, with large sculptural objects such as outdoor furniture, the use of building materials for fine craft, lighting systems and full length screens produced. An ambitious and bold approach was taken by some centres with the most successful processes referencing designers and makers and contextual research.

Some Centres had provided all candidates with general principles and printed publications of materials, techniques and areas of work such as Health & Safety handouts. Candidates should however be encouraged to explore these areas further, as part of their own practice, otherwise each portfolio is identical.

There was evidence that full experimentation in Component 1 led to confident choices and outcomes in Working to a Brief.

Edited portfolios ranged in success from single sheets containing limited evidence of research and design development, to full portfolios showing clear progression and candidates showing careful selection of work for inclusion.

Assessment Unit 2 Working to a Brief

No responses were carried out to the more adventurous briefs including the Land Art option. These could be better encouraged through further information sessions for teachers.

Most candidates opted for the Flower Power Festival or The Ideas Factory with some highly successful outcomes in both areas.

Textiles and wood/metal based outcomes were particularly successful this year with a range of well-designed products ranging between commercial and personal styles.

Examples of Good Practice

One Centre encouraged candidates to develop a working commission by contacting local business and healthcare organisations with a possible site specific work for a local building. Candidates progressed through the full process of commissioning from meeting clients to researching client needs, site visits, producing work, through to framing and presentation. This was an excellent and highly commended approach to the qualification process, allowing candidates to work through the process of budgeting, developing communication and negotiation skills, giving insights into the working practice of an artist and craft maker and building confidence in their own skills and designs.

Industry references

Little or no evidence was shown of any gallery visits, whether Centre organised or with candidates being encouraged to initiate visits in their own time.

A wealth of exhibitions, galleries, studios, talks and workshops exists throughout Northern Ireland, giving ample opportunities for candidates to experience the creative industries first hand. Arts Centres across the region host free entry exhibitions and city based galleries and museums have a continuous programme of shows and events allowing candidates 'live' experiences and preventing the over use of websites for reference materials.

Candidates did try to connect their work and the work of artists and designers sourced on-line, though this would have been much stronger with the use of current 'live' work viewed first hand.

Points for the Agreement Trials

Attendance at Agreement Trials is very important for those teaching this qualification.

Initial work from year one of the qualification will now be accessible for those Centres teaching this qualification, allowing easier access to standards, requirements, examples, images and support.

Displays of Work

Presentation and the display of candidates' work were of a good standard. Final outcomes and work folders were well displayed, with walls used to exhibit the candidates' full body of work.

Centres are requested to ensure that each candidate's work is clearly labelled particularly where space is limited.

Concluding Comment

Thanks to all centres for their hospitality and co-operation during the moderation visits.

Centres are to be congratulated for all their hard work, ensuring that this new qualification has generated creativity, innovation, flexibility and entrepreneurship from both students and teachers.

Principal Moderator's Report

General

This is the first year of opportunity to record how centres have approached the teaching and learning experiences of candidates undertaking a GCSE in Contemporary Crafts. It was apparent from the evidence of work, that there were a wide variety of approaches used in each centre. Candidates have been exposed to many varied materials, media and processes, and teachers have, to their credit, been effectively navigating a path through uncharted waters, using their own personal skills and experience.

A recent document published by the ¹Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA), stated that, ‘The core purpose of studying Art & Design is making and providing solutions and challenges to our material, emotional, social and virtual worlds. Art & Design is about thinking creatively and critically, generating ideas, and innovation.’ This proposed aim, is core to Contemporary Crafts teaching, and there is growing evidence that the ‘critical thinking and specialist thought’ that the CLA advise are so important, are developed when one area is studied in depth. In this examination, teachers and candidates have the opportunity to study and research the area of craft design; allowing in-depth and focused learning to take place that is specific to the practice of making a viable product.

Assessment Unit 1 Making: Exploring Materials, Techniques and Processes

Portfolios showed appropriate responses to the Assessment Objectives and a good range of tasks were evident in Component 1. The themes were wide-ranging and varied, some based around the natural world and others based on the student’s personal interests. A theme is a starting point and where the candidate had support and encouragement to investigate and develop the theme, the outcome was successful and reflected the learning that had taken place. Some candidates used recycled materials as creative media for two- and three-dimensional responses.

In one centre, candidates started with a theme and from this, they carried out time-bound investigations in a wide range of materials. This experimental approach allowed the candidate to practise their foundation skills and to build a bank of skills to be used for more extended work within their ‘Making’ portfolio or when ‘Working to a Brief’. This centre had also introduced a ‘live’ working brief by liaising with a local care home to generate a competition where candidates could design and create a piece of work for the building. This type of contact with an outside organisation is a highly efficient way to encourage candidates to see the value of their work both aesthetically and commercially within the community.

Sources, that were the evidence of an analytical understanding of the wider social, economic and cultural contexts of the craft and creative industries were in the best instances, integrated within the themes and provided a sound basis for investigation, exploration, research and analysis. However, sadly, this remains an area where there is still much work to be done, to encourage candidates to look beyond the classroom and learn from the practice of others. Candidates must feel connected to the craft and design industry. We have a strong body of makers in Northern Ireland, made up of individual artists and craftspeople in addition to craft organisations and collectives. It is essential that teachers find opportunities to move outside the confines of the classroom to make this subject relevant.

Candidates adopted a style of presentation that suited their individual needs and evidenced the Learning Outcomes. Sketchbooks, learning files, ideas books and design sheets were all evident. In centres where candidates had not been encouraged to develop independent working skills in relation to research and reflection, these tended to contain photocopied sheets, making each work file/portfolio very similar. Whilst there is a place for information and worksheets to be distributed for learning purposes, candidates should be encouraged to transpose these into their own personal learning file.

¹ Cultural Learning Alliance (2014), Consultation report on CFE research: Arts Subjects at Key Stage 4

For the purpose of moderation candidates are required to produce an, 'edited portfolio' containing evidence of the ability to meet the assessment criteria. In some cases it appeared that no 'editing' had taken place and the candidate's entire course was submitted. Learning how to edit work to set criteria, is an important skill and students should be encouraged to engage in quality control, as their course progresses.

Assessment Unit 2 Working to a Brief

The paper was well received. Candidates were particularly drawn to 'The Ideas Factory' and 'Flower Power Festival'. In the centres moderated, candidates opted for the more conventional and less risky briefs. It is difficult to know whether this was teacher directed, or whether there is a lack of confidence about taking risks and possibly jeopardizing the outcome and ultimately their result.

Points for the Agreement Trials

Teacher feedback this year highlighted the need for further support and training for centres. Teachers stated that they were 'in the dark' when marking their students' work as, having no previous exemplars, they found it difficult to know where the standard was.

Teachers also voiced their frustration with the administration of the examination in relation to the paperwork. They found the Candidate Record Sheets confusing and one centre stated that they were unhappy with the breakdown of marks.

This year will see the opportunity to put past work on the Microsite and this in combination with a good Teachers' Handbook including clear 'visual reminders' may go some way to providing the support needed for next year.

The principal focus of the Agreement Trial should be to illustrate standards, by giving teachers the opportunity to see examples of 'live' work.

Attendance at Agreement Trials is essential for those teaching this qualification.

Administration and Moderation

There were very few problems with administration this year.

Where mistakes occurred they were quickly rectified.

In the majority of cases, marking was deemed to be fair and accurate, with some evidence of leniency encountered on occasions. In one instance, the sample had been considerably over-marked but the school accepted the Moderator's judgement and no request was made for re-moderation. In this instance the teacher suggested that more support should be given to enable teachers to establish an accurate standard when marking.

Work was generally displayed well; however, no labels were provided by CCEA, and this created some difficulty for the Moderator when identifying candidates' work. Some centres had created their own labels, another used GCSE Art and Design labels. Contemporary Crafts labels are essential for next year.

The work on show this year covered a wide range. One centre had examples of fine textile work and another had garden furniture made from recycled pallets; both equally valid in relation to the Assessment Criteria.

When the written word was used, it tended to be more descriptive than analytical or evaluative. This is an area that needs improvement.

In an increasingly technological world there was little evidence of the use of CAD or any other appropriate technology nor any evidence of understanding of how these technologies might be used by professional designers or makers.

Concluding Comment

Thanks must be given to those first few centres that opted to offer this new subject and also recognition of their hard work in preparing for the moderation.

The information gained this year will allow this subject to grow. It was clear to see that candidates enjoyed the course and could relate to its aims.

Contact details

The following information provides contact details for key staff members:

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