

**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](http://www.ccea.org.uk).



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# GCSE CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS

## Chief Examiner's Report

### Overview of the Qualification

The creative industries contribute £1 billion GVA to the Northern Ireland economy and employs more than 5% of the entire workforce in Northern Ireland. In 2017 the Ulster University opened a new £20 million Creative Industries Institute to develop future growth in this highly important sector. The sector has also been cited as a key industrial pillar for the UK industrial strategy towards 2027.

The new Creative Industries Institute will focus on research and expertise across the creative sector including fashion and textiles, crafts, product design, creative technologies, ceramics and fine art.

Northern Ireland's Department for Communities is leading on the development of the creative industries. Flourishing economies are held together by a strong creative industries sector, with the creative industries being renowned for their potential for growth and job creation.

Promoting creativity has been recognised as a key priority by the NI Executive in rebuilding our economy.

Northern Ireland is abundant with makers, craftspeople and designers to support the growth in the industry, and our universities who currently produce around 850 graduates a year from Creative Arts & Design, are now established to prepare for growth.

The GCSE Contemporary Crafts qualification will play a dynamic pathway into preparing young people for progression into employment in the creative industries.

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 third year of the new GCSE Contemporary Crafts has shown an increase in confidence and development by students and teachers, and has resulted in an impressive range of skills development and exciting outcomes for students.

And, with an increasing number of centres offering GCSE Contemporary Crafts each year, the subject is developing a breadth of specialist skills in diverse areas such as textiles, product design and ceramics, among others.

## General

The work produced this year shows a diverse range of materials and techniques being experimented with, and used with skill. A wide range of work was presented this year with a varied approach to the course from different centres. Both contemporary approaches and traditional practice were delivered.

Again textiles, ceramics and 3d construction featured highly and successfully.

Some centres benefited from the experience of visits by practising makers and artists and results from this could be identified in students' practice.

Storyboards and some excellent portfolio work were used to good effect and enabled students to project plan. Others downloaded images from websites which did little to inform their work or investigative practices.

Some exciting sketchbooks were produced and good standards of presentation were reported by moderators.

Some excellent work was carried out by centres into crafts and makers business practice, helping students have a clearer understanding of the industry and the working practices of local makers. For centres who require resources and information on this the Contemporary Crafts microsite contains a list of contact organisations. Local crafts and makers collectives are also a good resource and members can be available for talks and demonstrations at little or no cost.

With an ever growing number of centres offering GCSE Contemporary Crafts, year three of the GCSE has shown inspiring development and understanding of the course by teachers and students.

## Component 1 Making: Exploring Materials, Techniques and Processes

The foundation of Contemporary Crafts is with the exploration and connections with materials and techniques. Evidence was shown through centres that full experimentation in Component 1 led to confident results and choices by students and also led to significant results in Working to a Brief.

Textiles, ceramics and product design featured prominently again this year with excellent results shown.

Some centres encouraged a business model approach with students producing personal business plans, business cards and researching areas around marketing and pricing of work.

Health & Safety considerations ranged across centres from printed handouts to full investigations and students' own reactions, leading to a better and more practical understanding of the area. In some centres each student had identical print outs leading to identical portfolios, with limited opportunities to develop understanding.

Edited portfolios have ranged over the first 3 years of the course from limited printed sheets to full portfolios. In some instances the works contained within the portfolios could have been displayed as pieces of work in their own right.

## Component 2 Working to a Brief

In Component 2 candidates are required to understand how professional craftspeople and makers work in relation to a client set brief. A 'live' brief is set to give students an example of working in the crafts industry.

Responses to the brief were creative and pushed boundaries of materials. The Enchanted Forest proved a popular subject with ceramics and textiles results across centres. Successful lighting products and lanterns were also produced in response to the brief.

## Examples of Good Practice

The development of the course is now clear in year three with a growing understanding by students of the crafts industry and the potential employment opportunities within it.

One centre had encouraged students to produce personal crafts business brands including display stands, business cards and price tags for work.

Where visiting artists had been engaged or students had explored the work of practising makers, evidence of development was clear in students work.

A range of exhibitions, galleries, studios, talks and workshops exists throughout Northern Ireland, giving excellent opportunities for candidates to experience the creative industries at work first hand. Craft NI, the Community Arts Partnership, local Council Arts Services and Voluntary Arts Ireland all promote free craft and makers events throughout Northern Ireland on a monthly basis and local Councils can direct centres to local Makers agencies where young craftspeople are producing work and are available to speak about setting up crafts businesses. Listings of maker's sites and crafts organisations can also be found on the CCEA Contemporary Crafts microsite.

## Points for the Agreement Trials

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

Examples of work from the previous summer is made accessible for those centres teaching this qualification, allowing them to understand standards for marking.

## Displays of Work

A wide range of display approaches were taken by centres, and moderators reported excellent examples across the course. Tribute should be made to teachers for their hard work which resulted in confident displays of final outcomes and preparatory work.

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

Work folders and sketchbooks should be given suitable consideration as they exhibit the candidate's understanding and also show the starting point for the development of the design idea or final outcome.

## Concluding Comment

The teachers and centres should be thanked for their continued passion for the development of Contemporary Crafts, and the exciting results being produced by students.

Year three of the course has shown innovation, creativity and exciting approaches from a range of centres with diverse specialisms.

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

# Principal Moderator's Report

## General

I am pleased to report on the conclusion of another highly successful examination series. In this the third year of the current specification of GCSE Contemporary Crafts, the work viewed by Moderators revealed that as teachers were becoming more familiar with the specification, there was an increasing confidence in the standard of practice in most centres, resulting in highly individual, creative and exciting work.

## Administration

Moderators reported that all centres were well prepared for the moderation and that the paperwork in most centres was accurate. However, in a small number of centres mistakes were discovered on the TAC 1 forms. These were mainly mathematical, computational errors on the Candidate Record Sheets, which had been subsequently transferred onto the TAC 1. It must be stressed that teachers should double-check the TAC 1 before sending it to CCEA, as mistakes are difficult to correct further into the moderation process. Internal standardisation is required to ensure, as far as possible, that the teacher has applied the assessment criteria consistently when marking work submitted for assessment. In many centres where there is only one teacher responsible for the teaching of Contemporary Crafts, it helps to have a colleague assist with marking. The 'Instructions to Teachers' booklet is recommended as an easy to follow guide that outlines all essential information to help prepare for the moderation.

## Display

Most centres presented their candidates' work in spaces that were secure, private and well suited to exhibition and display. Due to the three-dimensional nature of most entries, displays were on desktops and easily accessed. The Moderators welcomed the use of display folders in some centres, as this helped to organise loose sheets and show the development of ideas in sequential order.

All centres had gone to great effort to ensure that their candidates' work was accurately labelled and presented in a way that easily facilitated the moderation. This was welcomed, as displays that are not clearly labelled and work that is presented in a confused manner, can slow the moderation process.

## Marking

For the most part work was marked accurately and fairly, with occasional evidence of leniency encountered and very few samples were noticeably over-marked. There was some evidence of severe marking in centres that were new to the subject and over-cautious in awarding marks. Centres are advised to read section 6.4, Page 20, in the Contemporary Crafts Specification, for advice on how to award marks within a particular mark band.

The majority of centres had a good grasp of the examination requirements and it was evident that they had been teaching with close reference to the Contemporary Crafts Specification. However, in some centres confusion was evident surrounding the Learning Outcomes. It is important at this point to stress that a full understanding of the requirements of the Contemporary Crafts Specification, is necessary to ensure that teachers have the confidence and knowledge required when delivering this subject.

Some Moderators noted that at times, it was difficult to identify why a teacher had awarded a particular mark. This could have been rectified by the addition of comments on the Candidate Record Sheet, highlighting where evidence can be found. Accurate marking is essential. Teachers know their students' work and can easily recognise their individual achievement. Teachers can also identify the level of control and extent of assistance given by others.

The amount and type of assistance given should be fairly reflected in the mark awarded and recorded with a comment.

The Contemporary Crafts Specification advises that, ‘Teachers must annotate work presented for assessment, in particular the learning file (Component 1) and the written evaluation (Component 2), to ensure fairness for candidates and to assist with the moderation process. The annotations should detail why the candidate has been awarded a particular mark. This should consist of:

- summative comments on the work, usually at the end, and on the Candidate Record Sheet; and
- key pieces of evidence identified throughout the work, either in the margin or in the text.
- Addressing Assessment Objectives

The three assessment objectives in this subject are interrelated and connections must be made throughout the Candidate’s submission. The Moderators found that in Component 1, AO3 was an area of weakness for many candidates, especially in the top mark range. The ability to resolve learning through developing ideas towards the production of a final outcome must be evidenced. Centres should allow time for this and stress the importance of this element of the course. Candidates who were encouraged to be experimental and given time to put their learning into practice, generally produced work that was more individual, creative and exciting. The criteria for the top mark range demands originality, skill and creativity but the use of a formulaic teaching approach can hinder this. The opportunity to visit practicing craftspeople, designers and galleries or to have a professional contemporary craftsperson or designer visit the classroom is invaluable. These opportunities bring a relevance to the subject and increase aesthetic and commercial awareness.

## **Component 1      Making: Exploring Materials, Techniques and Processes**

There was considerable improvement shown in the edited Portfolios presented across many centres and Learning Files were significantly more comprehensive and individual. The Moderators commented very positively on the wide range of media and techniques that they observed in the centres they visited.

Many submissions were highly creative and displayed a good standard of making. It was interesting to see that trends and fashions within the contemporary craft and design industry had been noted and that many of the candidates had an awareness of the commercial and business components of the craft sector.

Most centres encouraged participation in local Craft Fairs and this gave candidates the experience of pricing work and selling to the public. This helped to expand their knowledge of professional practice, business models and employability options.

In those centres where Health and Safety had been clearly explained and was embedded in practice, candidates were able to confidently demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of safety regulations and procedures, throughout their Edited Portfolio and Learning File. However, in a small number of centres, Moderators expressed concern that the reference to Health and Safety in some candidates’ work was minimal at best.

The quality of written communication within both the Edited Portfolio and the Learning File has improved on previous years. However, in a few centres this continues to be very prescriptive, with some centres providing templates as a learning aid. This method can be effective with candidates who find written communication a challenge. However, it would be expected that progress be made to the production of independent annotation, with the use of a specialist vocabulary towards the end of the course. It should be a candidate’s own words that form the basis of the written element to be assessed in the final submission. It was also noted that some candidates lack the skill to confidently reflect on and edit their work. Learning the

skills to review, refine and edit will require considerable teacher support and are only acquired through practice.

## Component 2 Working to a brief

All centres responded well to the examination paper with an overwhelming choice of 'The Enchanted Forest' as the most popular design brief.

Component 2 offers candidates an opportunity to respond to a design brief using the knowledge, understanding and skills acquired in Component 1. The paper is written to offer a wide choice associated with the range of media, materials and making processes available in contemporary craft practice. The briefs encourage candidates to think creatively in relation to scale, function and materials when planning their response.

The Moderators noted the great enthusiasm evident in the planning and creation of an outcome at all levels, in all work viewed. Occasionally, the candidate's creative intention was not fully translated in the final outcome due to time constraints. Centres should note that the final outcome is to be completed during a set period of 10 hours but can be started at any time during the 14½ hours (minimum) assigned to the planning and preparatory stage of the examination. Candidates should be encouraged and supported during the planning stage to challenge and stretch their skills and develop work that will allow them to obtain the best mark possible in the final outcome across all the assessment objectives.

Good use of digital software to aid realisation of visual plans was noted in some centres.

It was pleasing to see that some centres had encouraged their candidates to think creatively, produce ambitious project plans and create inventive and original work. However, Moderators noted that in Component 2, some candidates presented inadequate or insufficient research associated to the work of appropriate practitioners within their chosen discipline and in many plans, reference to Health and Safety was limited or missing. The absence of these elements can have a significant impact on the awarding of marks in AO1 and ultimately the final grade.

This year has seen a notable growth of confidence in the delivery of GCSE Contemporary Crafts, leading to an overall improvement in the levels of attainment. Centres are more self-assured and have a clearer understanding of the ethos and potential of the subject. Consequently, the work produced has improved in creativity and quality and this is undoubtedly due to the hard work, effort and motivation of the teachers responsible for this subject. Agreement Trials are planned for the autumn term to facilitate discussion of teaching methods, assessment and the further development of this subject. It is advised that all teachers attend.

## Contact details

The following information provides contact details for key staff members:

- Specification Support Officer: Nola Fitzsimons  
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension: 2235, email: [nfitzsimons@ccea.org.uk](mailto:nfitzsimons@ccea.org.uk))
- Officer with Subject Responsibility: Anne McGinn  
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension: 2263, email: [amcginn@ccea.org.uk](mailto:amcginn@ccea.org.uk))