

ART AND DESIGN

Paper 9837/01–03
Combined 1) Portfolio
2) Critical and Contextual Study
3) Project

General comments

The Pre-U Art and Design team was delighted to welcome new centres this year, several of which were attracted by the new specification which brings together the various art and design endorsements under the same code. This heralded a new flexibility and cooperation in many departments and their candidates benefited from the resulting opportunities and cross-pollination of ideas. This does, however, call upon staff to undertake rigorous standardisation across the different areas of study to ensure effective parity and consistency of marking. It was never the intention that endorsements should lose their individual identity and each is likely to have a different and appropriate approach to research, recording, experimentation, development and outcome. What is important is that the delivery of each specialist pathway provides appropriate ways for its candidates to match and fulfil the requirements of the assessment objectives.

Established centres have continued to flourish. Most are now confident in the demands of the qualification, producing ambitious and fresh work of quality. All centres must be thanked for the considerable effort and time spent in the mounting of extensive and well-presented exhibitions. These often gave great pleasure to the visiting moderators and examiners. The best supported individual candidates whilst simultaneously celebrating the centre ethos. A few centres charged each candidate with the curation of their own work which, when done well, offered a satisfying conclusion to the course and was very much in the spirit of higher-learning.

For ease and clarity of moderation, the practice of providing a discrete **Component 1** exhibition is to be encouraged. This practice can also serve to elevate the impact of a candidate's **Component 3**, when viewed separately. Where this is not possible or desirable, centres must ensure that there is a clear demarcation between the different components with work correctly labelled and sign-posted. A table should be provided for the moderation of **Component 2** and the viewing of portfolios.

Component 1: Portfolio

The challenge of this component lies in the need for centres to provide a bridge between the prescribed structure of GCSE and the independent enquiry expected of higher level study. Centres are afforded considerable flexibility in the delivery of this component but an appropriate balance between student management and support and the encouragement of independence is vital, if candidates are to maximise learning opportunities. The best centres ensured that the component provided a foundation of skills-based knowledge and experience across a wide range of materials and processes, as appropriate to the specialisms of their department. These activities were underpinned by observation and drawing, alongside an opportunity to explore and experiment with genuine enquiry and intelligence. Candidates regularly reviewed and refined their work and provided evidence of analytical thinking, as well as appropriate critical and contextual understanding in workbooks and journals. Exposure to a range of artists and designers, and the opportunity to see live work remains extremely important. Some candidates are too casual or indiscriminate in their internet research, too easily borrowing stylistic approaches. They suffer from the lack of opportunity to reflect upon and respond to the qualities inherent in good examples of work. Candidates need, however, to be taught the vocabulary and analytical processes needed to record their reactions. This will enable them to make beneficial links with their own emerging practice, an approach which will pay

dividends as the course unfolds. Supporting annotation and critical and contextual text is more effective as a learning tool when purpose and meaning has been clearly considered by candidates, as opposed to simply filling work journals and sketchbooks with background artist's research. The latter does little to communicate understanding or reflection.

At its best this component should encourage the emergence of confident, well-motivated candidates who, in addition to a range of skills, have the beginnings of an individual voice which will excite creative independent thinking in **Component 3**.

Successful elements of Component 1

- The pathway and individual experiences of each candidate is comprehensively and chronologically recorded in an annotated sketchbook or journal. This should provide evidence of personal reflection and review, along with the analytical study of linked artists and designers.
- The practical work is underpinned by solid observation and drawing (or recording in other appropriate ways).
- There is evidence of purposeful experimentation and risk-taking within a context of skills-based learning.
- The practical work presented for assessment should fully reflect the scope of the course but is necessarily edited to highlight the most successful.
- There is evidence of an emerging voice and independent, confident thinking.

Component 2: Critical and Contextual Study

It is pleasing that this component is generally undertaken with care, centres offering appropriate support and guidance to facilitate the production of thorough and purposeful studies. Many centres made good use of the long summer holiday to charge candidates with the task of undertaking independent research, leading to the consolidation of initial ideas and the formation of a solid question or well-defined area of study. The choosing of suitable topics and the filling-in and submission of the OPF's should not be undertaken lightly. The moderators are looking for focused proposals which identify a good question or well-defined area of study, underpinned by an extensive bibliography and a proposed list of visits. Those candidates who fall short of this requirement run the risk of being asked to resubmit. The best proposals offered a rationale which provided a clear remit for research, allowing the candidate to answer a specific question. The practice of choosing subject matter which relates to the candidate's practical concerns in **Component 3** is to be encouraged. There should be no repetition across any of the components but where candidates are able to gain insights and develop a meaningful dialogue between their own and others' work; this will raise ambition and understanding. Although not compulsory, such an approach is in line with the expectation of a higher-level synthesis of ideas that characterises Pre-U Art and Design. All candidates are advised to research and create an historical context for their chosen area so that they might fully appreciate the role and significance of their chosen focus along with a high-level awareness of appropriate cultural, sociological, political or personal contexts. This aspect was often missing in the work of designated design students.

Academic conventions should be followed by candidates who must present a rationale and conclusion, footnotes, references and a bibliography. Candidates, who might find this approach rather dry, are reminded that the research period can be considerably enlivened by arranging interviews with artists, designers and curators and by visiting galleries, studios, factories, craft centres, trade fairs, fashion shows and workshops. Even greater flexibility of approach is afforded by the new specification, although candidates, who use alternative means to a traditional essay, must provide a printed transcription which complies with the necessary word count.

Practical work is not a requirement of **Component 2** and it was pleasing that nearly all centres heeded this advice, to the considerable benefit of the written study.

Successful elements of Component 2

- The topic chosen afforded the opportunity for in-depth and sustained research.
- The rationale outlined clear parameters for the study and a well-honed question which could be answered in the conclusion.
- An historical and contemporary context was created along with a high-level awareness of appropriate cultural, sociological, political or personal contexts.
- Academic conventions were followed and included: a rationale, conclusion, footnotes, references and a bibliography.

- The best studies offered lucid, analytical writing which included informed personal opinion.
- A strong argument was sustained and developed throughout the study.
- The better candidates were used to analysing the work of others and used an appropriate specialist vocabulary.
- Studies were well-planned and appropriately structured within the scope of the 3500 word count. There was not an over-reliance on biographical material.
- Some candidates developed strong links between **Components 2 and 3**, ensuring a rich and fertile dialogue which increased understanding and raised ambition.
- It is helpful if the OPF containing the approved comments are presented with the study at moderation.

Component 3: Project

Once again responses to the examination theme were satisfyingly diverse and often highly original and ambitious, many candidates using the stimulus as a springboard from which to explore personal strengths and enthusiasms. The best outcomes were challenging in terms of execution, scale, concept and invention. Many candidates understood that this component requires a substantial and sustained period of enquiry to support the making of significant outcomes. Whilst a coherent body of work is expected, some candidates should be reminded that the repetition of similar artworks is not an effective way to achieve the highest mark levels. With the amount of uninterrupted time afforded by **Component three**, candidates should consider how best to further push the quality and content of their image-making without indulging in repetition for the sake of quantity. On-going development and evaluation is expected throughout the duration of the component, as is confidence and fluency with materials. Candidates should, ideally, make use of the skills and knowledge gained in **Component 1**.

Work journals, in whatever way they are presented, play a significant role in exposing and clarifying each candidate's thinking. The best contained outstanding investigation and recording which, over time, was translated into meaningful and seamless experimentation and development. Weaker students often spend too long brainstorming and offer a paucity of relevant material to support their journey and outcome.

Good candidates greatly benefited from their choice and understanding of critical and contextual sources, making use of analytical skills gained over the course. Weaker candidates offered a paucity of critical sources, their responses rarely moving beyond the preferential or the slavish copying of technique and style. At best, critical and contextual sources should comprehensively inform the candidates' practice in such a way as to inspire a high level of ambition and risk-taking appropriate to the Pre-U qualification.

Candidates are encouraged to supply a word-processed statement of intent which should be displayed alongside the work. This aids both moderation and marking and generates interest and understanding if the assessment materials are used for public exhibition.

Successful elements of Component 3

- Confident handling of materials and processes to facilitate an individual approach and resolution of ideas.
- Evidence of on-going development demonstrating that candidates were not afraid to experiment, invent, review and refine work as the project progressed.
- An appropriate choice of scale, media, materials and processes.
- Work was underpinned by strong observation and recording.
- Candidates further developed the skills and processes explored in **Component 1** and created beneficial links with **Component 2**, to enable a creative dialogue between different elements of the course.
- Work journals and other supporting materials provided a seamless account of the candidate's development over time.
- Critical and contextual sources were appropriately chosen and analysed with care and insight, to the benefit of the practical work.
- Candidates offered a distinctive voice and a fresh and committed response demonstrating enthusiasm and curiosity.
- Outcomes were fully resolved and sufficient time had been devoted to them.
- A statement of intent was provided with a conclusion and review of the project.