ART & DESIGN

Paper 0400/01
Coursework Assignment

Key message

*   Candidates should be advised to ensure their portfolio demonstrates a coherent journey which is well linked to their final outcome.

General comments

Most submissions were well presented and thoughtfully organised, with clear intentions. Candidate engagement was generally high, showing personal responses. Work was often sustained, with ideas supported by relevant recording throughout the creative process. Candidates' own photography was often included as part of the recording and development processes. The strongest work explored methods of recording from first-hand study, investigation was in-depth and intentions were clear and contextual sources informed ideas. There was insufficient focus and direction in the weakest work, leading to incoherent recording and development. Final outcomes lacked relevance and were disconnected from the portfolio.

Higher levels

Candidates investigated and explored their chosen theme with a commitment to demonstrate high levels of engagement. There was a genuine enquiry as they researched a range of sources in response to their chosen theme. Intentions were clear and subject matter was meaningful and investigated in depth.

Initial research always included studies from first-hand sources. Often resources were selected and handled with personal connection and engagement, linking the candidates' own experiences or interests with their work. At this level, each stage of the work was relevant and coherent and developed to show a clear progression of work.

Candidates' skill levels remained consistent in the portfolios through to the final outcome and they were able to select the most appropriate media use to communicate their intentions. Ways of using the media of choice was explored with confidence. Candidates made informed decisions through self-evaluation to select the best technique and media use for the final outcome.

Middle levels

The work at this level also demonstrated engagement and commitment but often the direction of study was less focused. There was a good ability to investigate from a range of appropriate sources demonstrating personal and imaginative ideas. Most candidates recorded from primary sources but there was a greater reliance on secondary-sourced imagery than at the higher level. Sometimes ideas were incoherent and at times the visual research was too wide for in-depth study.

Most candidates researched the works of other artists and cultures, but this did not always influence ideas. For many, this referencing inspired a personal direction, but some candidates were unable to make relevant connections between contextual sources and their own investigations to develop their work.

Many candidates successfully explored a range of media and good technical skills were evident throughout the work. However, there was less confidence in experimenting with alternative ways of applying media and more reliance on familiar techniques than seen at the higher mark range. At times, the technical skill seen in the portfolio and final outcome was inconsistent and demonstrated an inability to refine media use. The use of annotation to indicate which images were candidates' own work would have been helpful to fully access the candidates' ability range.

Lower levels

In work seen at the lower level the recording was limited and often lacked a clear intention of a theme. Many candidates used their mobile phone cameras to take photographs of starting points but they were often of poor quality and showed a lack of understanding of how to compose an image or organise visual forms. Other recording lacked detailed observation and refinement.

Few candidates explored the work of other artists or cultures and those who did were not able to make connections to their own work to inform development. Candidates were often unable to demonstrate the technical ability or show the confidence required to explore a range of media. The work was often limited to pencil, coloured crayons and some paint.

Some submissions focused on producing separate finished pieces without connection to a central theme. These candidates were unable to build on their ideas as each piece of work was a completed piece and did not inform the next. Ideas were prevented from developing and an uneven response to the assessment objectives was demonstrated. The final outcome frequently remained disconnected from the supporting work, rather than evolving from a progression of ideas in the creative process. Candidates at this level were unable to reflect on their work to inform a coherent and resolved response.

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Key Messages

*   Painting and related media was the most common area of study, with most candidates including photography. There were also a few 3D and design submissions.
*   Many candidates developed meaningful ideas from first-hand recording but there was also some reliance on secondary sources across the levels.
*   Clear indication of what is candidates' own work should be given, particularly in regard to photography.
*   The majority of submissions were organised well, labelled correctly and presented on A2 sheets.

General comments

Overall, the work submitted was of a good standard. It was labelled correctly and generally followed a coherent journey through the preparatory studies to the final outcome. Some submissions also included unrelated work, perhaps produced as class projects throughout the course. These did not inform the chosen exam question and so did not enhance the submission as a whole. Care should be taken to select the most appropriate work. A link with the chosen exam question should be determinable, no matter how abstract.

Candidates responded to the various question choices with a range in approach from observational to interpretive. Design and abstract influences were also seen. Most of the work submitted was created within the painting and related media area of study and included printmaking and collage processes. There were also examples of 3D, photography, textile and some graphics work. Digital manipulation also featured within work and in most cases proved a useful way to develop ideas further. Many candidates chose to include photographs of the making process. These did not help to inform the progression of ideas. Instead, examples of how the actual work progressed would have been more helpful to understand the candidates' intentions. Many candidates appropriately referenced the works of art practitioners or cultural sources, which made a positive impact on direction and encouraged personal development.

The strongest submissions contained imagery from first-hand study. A range of research methods were used such as drawing, painting, candidates' own photography and relevant references to other artists' works. Intentions were clear, encouraging focus and depth of investigation. Critical analysis effectively enabled reflection and appropriate decision making.

The weakest submissions lacked focus and direction, causing incoherent investigation. The creative process in the preparatory work often demonstrated few visual connections, preventing ideas from growing. This disconnection in the supporting work meant that candidates were unable to build on their ideas towards an informed final examination piece.

Higher Levels

Candidates working at this level demonstrated a good engagement with their chosen question which they researched in depth. Their supporting studies demonstrated a clear journey through thoughtful recording from a wide range of sources. Personal connection and genuine interest were sustained throughout the submissions. Some candidates visited a gallery or museum and reflected on artworks seen at first hand, which gave further depth to their research. There was a willingness to explore and try out new techniques and processes inspired by the artist research. Links between what candidates had seen and what they were discovering for themselves were being consistently made. Recording from observation was detailed and relevant, and demonstrated an excellent level of enquiry.

Media was fully explored, and candidates were able to recognise qualities which were then expanded further. Processes and techniques were combined to create unique ways of working with any given media.

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Submissions at this level demonstrated candidates' ability to edit their work to present a sense of focus and maturity to the work as a whole. The supporting studies directly informed the final outcome produced in the timed test, ultimately realising intentions. Personal connections made through visiting relevant places in connection with the chosen theme were particularly strong. Factory visits and collating information in person added depth to candidates' understanding and the overall success of the project.

Middle Levels

Most candidates at this level also explored their chosen question with commitment showing individual responses but their intentions were often less clear. Relevant sources were selected for investigation with purposeful recording, often from first-hand study but the progression of the work sometimes lacked focus. In some submissions, the recording was either too broad and impacted on the coherence of ideas, or insufficient which prevented in-depth development. Ideas did not always fully connect to the recording and so logical visual links were often missing.

Media use at this level sometimes lacked exploration and experimentation. At times, candidates were limited in their ability to select and use appropriate media because they were making copies of secondary-sourced images rather than responding to direct observation. Some evidence of recording from direct observation is necessary to demonstrate a consistent and confident ability to select and use appropriate media.

Other candidates at this level, demonstrated a willingness to experiment by manipulating images and trying out different media, resulting in some interesting ideas that had potential. However, often these candidates lacked the ability to develop their technical skills to produce a successful outcome in the exam. The development of ideas at this level did not always follow a coherent journey, as some candidates were unable to make effective choices when selecting the best imagery to try to progress further.

Referencing of artists and cultures was varied. Some candidates were able to identify and explore appropriate contextual references. They understood how to use these influences to inform a personal direction. Others were not able to make such connections between contextual sources and their own ideas. While many skilful transcriptions were made from artists' works, or patterns and imagery derived from cultural sources, this did not always influence the candidate's own original ideas and work.

Lower Levels

The work at this level was characterised by insufficient intentions and a reliance on secondary sources as a starting point for investigation. Work lacked purpose and the initial research was either incohesive or lacked any meaningful depth. Where recording was made from primary sources, candidates often used their mobile phone camera as a process for research. These images were often of poor quality showing limited technical ability to compose or light the subject effectively.

Frequently, work lacked the scope for development of meaningful ideas due to a lack of purposeful recording. There was some relevant referencing of contextual sources, but this was limited and did little to inform direction or development. Instead, artist images, usually downloaded from the Internet, were laboriously copied, serving little purpose other than to practice media handling.

Most candidates did not have the ability to sustain their investigation through coherent research, media exploration or meaningful development. The rendering of materials was often limited, and candidates used pencil, coloured pencils, pastels or paint. For some, the control was basic, usually accompanied by a lack of understanding of the formal elements and how to apply them. For many, the work generally demonstrated weak technical ability and refinement.

These candidates were unable to reflect on their work, to identify a cohesive and purposeful method of working. Opportunities were missed. The final outcome was often disconnected to the supporting work, rather than developing from the supporting work. Many outcomes would have benefited from composition planning and exploration of alternative ideas.