**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Art and Design – Three-Dimensional Design

42052

(Specification 4205)

Unit 2: Externally Set Task

Report on the Examination

GCSE Art and Design (4201-4207, 4211)

General

This was the first year candidates could enter for both Unit 1 and Unit 2 as a full course award and claim certification for the new specification in all GCSE Art and Design endorsements.

Moderators reported that many centres had taken the opportunities presented by the specification to restructure courses and offer more flexible approaches to teaching and learning. Others had been more cautious, retaining the best practice from legacy course models, sometimes with the addition of workshops and one-off activities, to reflect the individual needs of their own candidates. Overall, whichever approach was taken, it would appear that the specification and its enhanced opportunities have been very well received by schools and colleges.

For Unit 1 there is no prescribed approach to development of work, but for the full course the submission must show the coverage of all four assessment objectives through "more than one extended collection of work, or project". For some centres the portfolio ethos was actively pursued with teachers encouraging candidates to take a lead role in the selection and organisation of work to be presented for examination. For others, candidates submitted two or three complete projects, as in previous years, with little selection.

Work for this unit may also be produced in the form of one sustained project supported by work generated by other experiences such as visits, workshops, experimental exercises in handling media and engagement with a wide variety of sources from which to develop individual responses. Alternatively, two or more projects of similar or different scope and complexity could fulfil the assessment criteria. Therefore, themes for projects, assignments and briefs were often wide ranging and varied and candidates were able to engage with a wealth of possibilities and developmental opportunities. In many centres, the use of starting points from the previous year's test paper was common practice.

For Unit 2, the extended preparatory time available for the externally set task, was well received. More time allowed centres to select a delivery approach to suit individual candidates' needs and working practices. Some centres chose to use the full lead-in time available from early January, allowing candidates the time to explore their ideas and intentions in greater depth. Other centres opted for a shorter preliminary time followed by a much longer period over which the 10-hour supervised sessions were spread to support candidates' 'momentum'. The flexibility afforded by the extended preparatory period was deemed to be a major factor in the success of this unit of work.

The externally set task papers for each endorsement were also well received, with many centres welcoming the familiar paper format, which allows candidates the choice between focused questions with suggested sources, or an open-ended starting point. Each paper is designed to ensure candidates have access to a range of different, equally valid, ways to achieve the assessment objectives. Please remember that candidates should be allowed to select their own question from the full range in the paper. Teachers should not pre-select questions on behalf of learners or offer them a narrower range to choose from. AQA regards this as a form of malpractice.

In both units, visually engaging assessment evidence in the form of sketchbooks, ideas books or journals, as well as mounted loose sheets were seen.

Teacher Standardisation Meetings

The meetings not only illustrate standards, but give teachers the opportunity to view a variety of practices in all specification endorsements from both Unit 1 and Unit 2. The generosity of centres in loaning work for training purposes at teacher standardisation meetings is gratefully appreciated.

Attendance at teacher standardisation meetings was deemed essential this year for centres new to the specification. At moderation, those centres that did not send a representative do not appear always to have fully grasped how to evidence the new assessment objectives.

Delegate feedback indicated that fundamental issues such as the administration of paperwork, deadline dates and reminders of the support available were a vital part of the meetings, but that the emphasis on standards and training through the marking of 'live' work is why the AQA teacher standardisation sessions are so highly valued. Understandably the absence of grade boundaries in this first year of full course certification was an issue for many delegates. Presenters endeavoured to allay fears and confirmed that although the raw mark boundary may change, the overall standard will stay the same and be carried forward.

The provision of CDs, for delegates to take away from the meetings, that included a 'visual reminder' of the training and marking sets and associated attainment commentaries was welcomed. This compensated for delegates now being unable to photograph the exhibition for copy-right reasons. Please note, the reminder notes and all other Teacher Resource Bank information are also available through the AQA website.

Administration

Administration was generally good this year, although in a few instances moderators did receive paper work after the 31st May deadline. It is essential that centres send two copies of their Centre Mark Form (CMF) or EDI printout to the moderator. This ensures the moderation sample is selected in good time, and the centre's copy is returned in advance of the agreed moderation date.

Transferring marks on to forms still posed some problems, for example, confusing Unit 1 with Unit 2 when adding marks on the CMF or adding up the marks incorrectly on Candidate Record Forms (CRF). Generally, however, inaccuracies such as these were dealt with by moderators during centre visits.

Please remember, it is a mandatory requirement that CRFs are signed by both the candidate and the teacher responsible for delivering the course of study. This is to signify that the work submitted is solely that of the candidate and is an essential part of centre administration. Thankfully, there were very few instances this year of incomplete forms, although the supporting information boxes (to expand on information about candidates' individual circumstances or to explain the awarding of marks) were rarely used.

Assessment and Moderation

The change to the sample selection process caused some confusion in centres this year. A single sample of candidates' work is now chosen according to the range of marks submitted across Unit 1 and Unit 2 for each endorsement. For this reason, it is much less likely that both units of work of the same candidate will be seen. The selection is also proportionate to the number of units entered for each endorsement So if a centre enters equal proportions of Unit 1 and Unit 2 for an endorsement, for example, 20 Unit 1 and 20 Unit 2, 15 units will be selected for moderation, 8 for Unit 1 and 7 for Unit 2 or vice versa.

In terms of the accuracy of centre marking, where centres had sent a representative to a teacher standardisation meeting, used the assessment criteria appropriately and with reference to AQA's standards, marking judgements were generally sound. Where this had not been done and where there appeared to be a lack of internal standardisation marking appeared to be erratic. In these cases, the use of marks that were too high or too low in the four-mark band was a common problem. Where teachers had marked to the requirements of the assessment objectives, using the key words of "Develop", "Refine", " Record" and "Present", and the distinguishing characteristics "Just", "Adequate", "Clear" and "Convincing" in the four-mark bands, they were better equipped to differentiate when proposing marks for their own candidates.

Moderation meetings and visits were generally very successful this year, with fewer instances of inadequate provision and/or presentation of samples. Whether submissions are presented in the form of an exhibition or carefully labelled folders, a quiet, undisturbed area is essential if the moderation process is to be effectively conducted.

Assessment Objectives

In both Unit 1 and Unit 2 candidates are required to evidence all four assessment objectives through appropriate means. The document "Interpreting the Assessment Objectives" offers valuable guidance for centres and is available through the AQA website.

Assessment Objective 1

The combination of instructions to "develop ideas" with the wording "informed by contextual and other sources" saw many candidates move beyond the frequently accessed artists typical to previous years' submissions. The breadth of possibilities under the heading of "sources" has been evidenced through what one senior moderator described as "an eclectic mix of increasingly contemporary and very stimulating practitioners" as well as song lyrics, dance displays, objects and artefacts, cultural gatherings, trips, visits, exhibitions, poems, posters and films. Where candidates had simply downloaded information from the Internet, little evidence of analytical or cultural understanding was seen, and their own work was rarely "informed" as a result.

Assessment Objective 2

In some cases, refinement was simply evidenced through the eventual selection of one version of the same image that had been replicated in a range of media with little consideration of alternative possibilities. In others, candidates had experimented extensively to evidence the creative selection and rejection of a wide range of media in a journey of exploration through a project or series of stand-alone experiences. Digital media was in evidence across all ability ranges, with candidates often using software packages such as 'Photoshop' to good effect in considering a range of possibilities. Screen shots were also used by some candidates to effectively demonstrate the manipulation and refinement of ideas.

Assessment Objective 3

Recording in a wide range of both two and three-dimensional media was seen this year, with digital recording used effectively for a variety of purposes, and a balance of primary and secondary sources was noted in the most successful portfolio and test submissions. These included documenting work in progress, design ideas and working drawings, as well as recording through drawing. One moderator reported that "drawing as a recording tool appears to be as strong as ever" whereas another reported that drawing continues to "wither on the vine". Candidates also evidenced their own insights and opinions through written annotations, with thoughts and reflections complementing associated visual materials. Once again however, the presentation of written information that had simply been downloaded from the internet or copied from books without subsequent development rarely formed evidence for the marking criteria.

Assessment Objective 4

Personal responses were varied, with some showing ambition and creativity as a result of individual journeys of enquiry. Many candidates progressed their ideas through a wide range of projects or client-orientated briefs, often showing sound understanding of process and intention. Encouragingly, fewer examples of pastiche were reported this year. Please remember, an "informed and meaningful response demonstrating analytical and critical understanding" does not have to be seen as a separate outcome, and there was more evidence this year of candidates showing personal responses through collections of related work centred on a particular theme, sketchbook investigations and/or design sheets. Equally some excellent examples of fully resolved outcomes were submitted in a wide range of styles, media and sizes that evidenced the candidates' abilities to handle materials sensitively and with a clear understanding of their appropriateness, given intended purposes.

Three-Dimensional Design 4205

Unit 2: Externally Set Task 42052

Despite the changes to the specification, the familiar format of the question papers helped centres and candidates make a smooth transition from old to the new. Many candidates were familiar with the appearance of questions as the centre had used past papers as a starting point in Portfolio projects, and candidates generally used skills developed in Unit 1 to enrich their submissions for Unit 2. Most centres appear to have allocated approximately six weeks for the preparatory period before starting the timed test although some centres were reluctant to use the unlimited time period due to pressure from other timetabled subjects. However, many moderators commented that given the extra time now available, candidate submissions varied little in quality and quantity from that seen in previous years and that, some candidates had not demonstrated their real potential.

Those centres that had prepared their candidates fully during Unit 1 were seen to generate the best work in Unit 2 responses. Distinguishing characteristics of this practice included effective time management, purposeful recording, experimentation and analysis of relevant sources and refinement of intentions through the development of three dimensional maquettes, test tiles and models.

Question Paper Starting Points

1. The Everyday

This was a very popular question with candidates, allowing easy access to a range of sources. The named practitioners provided solid starting points and allowed candidates to seek alternative artists to inspire them. Claes Oldenberg was a popular choice, with candidates producing their own large scale everyday objects in a range of materials including papier mache, wire and steel, plaster impregnated bandage and wood. Others focussed on the surface textures of food, architecture, personal possessions and household objects. The use of plaster to cast some of these items led in turn to the construction of other objects. Many candidates effectively recorded their experimentation using digital cameras. The more adventurous candidates were able to develop their studies of objects into stylised or simplified images to produce patterns on clay slab or coiled constructions.

2. Self-Image

Candidates who attempted this question focussed mainly on body casts although a few did venture away from Antony Gormley references to produce some very personal outcomes. Digital photography was used as the main source of first hand study. Here candidates demonstrated their ability to use the computer as part of the recording and analysing of elements detailed in the question. Whilst some candidates cast parts of their body as final pieces, others developed this idea further using these forms as moulds in which to produce felted sculptures, latex figures and papier mache forms. Although in many cases, there was evidence of written, personal communication, some candidates gave no indication of their ability to study form, shape and texture in two dimensions. Source materials in the form of downloaded internet images or magazine cuttings featured prominently in some submissions.

3. Theatre Design

Very few candidates attempted this question but those who did produced some interesting responses. Some centres visited their local theatre costume department to provide valuable and direct access to original sources. They used digital cameras to record a variety of masks, costumes and props from behind the scenes and back stage. One centre had made use of their local museum and library loan service to enable candidates to photograph, draw and handle masks and artefacts from a range of cultures. Outcomes for this question varied widely from simple painted stage flats, to highly original tribal inspired masks suitable to be worn in a West End stage production. The ingenious efforts of a number of centres to enhance candidates' opportunities to engage directly with relevant sources with the intention of stimulating creative designs and personal responses was rewarding for moderators to see.

4. Signs and Symbols

This question was popular with many lower ability candidates who followed a simple linear path focusing upon the named cultures on the question paper, but with little subsequent personal development. References to Egyptian culture featured prominently with candidates using downloaded images from the internet to source their ideas with little understanding of context or meaning. There was limited evidence of experimentation, research or development in some of the sub missions seen. More able candidates studied a much broader range of examples from around the globe including Aboriginal, South East Asian, South American and African cultures. There was evidence of understanding of the ability to communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas through a variety of signs and symbols. Many candidates were able to draw effectively on family and first hand cultural connections to produce some creative and exciting outcomes. Candidates explored the expressive potential of a range of materials including clay, plaster, cardboard and resin.

5. Mythical Creatures

Candidates responded in many ways to this question producing a variety of outcomes in a range of materials. Centres were able to easily source suitable references and liked the open ended nature of the question. Trips to local historical sites such as castles and churches to study stone carvings such as gargoyles and gravestones proved invaluable as sources of first hand study. Once again candidates used digital cameras to record their experiences, many manipulating their images on their return to the art studio. Many lower ability candidates simply downloaded images from the internet and development and personal input was subsequently restricted. Few candidates linked their work to stories, myths and legends to produce their own outcome, relying instead on copying existing images. Most responses seen were made of card, wire and plaster impregnated bandage which allowed candidates to work on a size and scale not normally attempted. Attention was paid to surface texture and colour with experimentation taking place in sketch books and technical journals prior to the completion of the final three-dimensional piece.

6. Imprint

Rather surprisingly there were very few responses seen to this question as candidates were often drawn to other, perhaps more obvious starting points. Those who did attempt this were generally more able candidates who used their time and resources to good effect. Most candidates started by researching suitable primary source examples. Investigations in books, magazines and on the internet led to local and national collections where candidates saw a range of decorative impressed techniques. Neolithic and Roman examples were easy to source and candidates were soon experimenting with their own items to imprint into clay. Small test tiles and glaze samples were seen in a number of the submissions, where candidates had implemented a range of simple tools to see how patterns and surface finishes were achieved. Some candidates produced work with a contemporary twist by using parts from computers to make impressions on the surface of slab built ceramics.

7. Structures

Many centres continue to like the open ended nature of this question and actively guide their candidates to it. The range of possibilities available saw candidates producing work derived from a more experimental cyclical approach which fostered research into materials and traditional drawing as a starting point. There was still criticism from moderators that, in some cases, candidates were still not making connections with appropriate sources to inform their contextual studies.

a)   This was by far the most popular choice with candidates using a range of starting points. Human and animal bone structures were chosen as sources, with science department collections used for primary drawing. Many found inspiration in local architecture, and digital images taken in and around local towns and cities appeared in many candidates' submissions. There seemed to be a real personal connection in terms of recording and gathering information. There was a great deal of experimentation and written analysis to reinforce judgements made on a practical level. Visual control and strong draughtsmanship allowed candidates to achieve good marks in the first three assessment objectives. However, moderators commented that sometimes the timed responses did not reflect the explorative nature of the preparatory work. Although the main material in use was clay, a wide range of outcomes built in metal, wood, plaster and moulded plastic were also seen.

b) Centres preferring a more traditional approach to this endorsement opted for this question. Candidates were provided with a range of suitable examples to use within the confines of the studio. Good structural observational drawing provided the backbone of many submissions with lively experimentation seen using a range of two dimensional materials, techniques and processes. Candidates were seen to concentrate on the structure without forgetting other elements such as surface texture, colour and form. Experimentation and analysis was also evident when candidates moved into working in three dimensions. The use of maquettes to inform and reinforce the creative journey enabled candidates to gain higher marks. Artists and designers such as Peter Randall Page, Leonardo Da Vinci, Antoni Gaudi and Karl Blossfeldt were all used as creative sources to allow candidates to see how others had taken similar starting points and created their own work. Outcomes were rich and varied. Moderators saw examples carved from light weight insulation blocks, woven out of art straws and constructed from paper and card.

c) The introduction of garden, environmental and landscape design to the specification has encouragingly inspired a number of centres, who had not previously entered their candidates for GCSE, to attempt this endorsement. Candidates had looked at the work of a range of suitable designers from Holland, Spain, France and Italy as well as those working in the UK. Formal structural elements such as walls, fences, hedges and water features were all considered and had clearly informed many candidates' submissions. Candidates had experimented with a range of surface textures, forms and shapes to arrive at a number of interesting solutions. The presentation of work varied from centre to centre. Some had experimented for the first time and produced a range of three dimensional maquettes, in the form of small box like solutions, others had undertaken a more professional approach and produced technical drawings, plans and scale models which were then digitally photographed and manipulated to produce images of their chosen object in situ. Fountains, tiled murals and sculptural forms were just some of the solutions seen.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available at www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html .
The UMS conversion calculator can be found at www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion .