

GCSE (9–1)

Moderators' report

ART AND DESIGN

J170-J175

For first teaching in 2016

J170-J175/01/02 Summer 2023 series

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Introduction

Our moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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The specification

The specification is designed to offer a flexible approach to teaching and learning to a broad range of students. This report reviews the 2023 series of OCR GCSE (9-1) Art and Design J170 – J176.

Art and Design aims to build the relevant knowledge, skills and understanding for all art, craft and design specification titles. The specification is designed to encourage candidates to develop knowledge, skills and understanding together with creativity and imagination and present them with chances to take an individual interest in why art, craft and design matter and to be motivated and changed by studying an exciting and thought-provoking course of study. OCR GCSE (9-1) Art and Design offers candidates opportunities to gain insight into the practices of individuals, organisations and creative and cultural industries. The specification supports centres in developing a range of approaches to sustain the teaching, learning and assessment of candidates. It provides chances for candidates to experiment and take risks with their work while growing their individual style. OCR's GCSE (9-1) Art and Design suite offers seven specification titles for centres to choose from covering the depth and breadth of art, craft and design and includes the use of traditional methods and digital technology. The specification titles are: • Art, Craft and Design (J170) • Fine Art (J171) • Graphic Communication (J172) • Photography (J173) • Textile Design (J174) • Three-Dimensional Design (J175) • Critical and Contextual Studies (J176).

General overview

The return to full assessment featuring both the Portfolio and Externally set task components, examined by school staff and externally moderated saw a 'sort of' return to near normal. However, in many cases centres acknowledged that this had been a sometimes difficult experience for both candidates and staff. Some centres reported candidate difficulties in preparing and sustaining work across the weeks of the set task preparation time and then completing the ten-hour exam. Absence was often highlighted.

On the other hand, other centres were delighted to see the return of the Externally set task with the renewed purpose and vigour that the new challenge gave, finding that their candidates rose to the occasion and produced their best work.

Standards were strongly maintained this year, which is a reflection on the quality of marking within the centres, although where incorrect marking occurred, it was more often than not through over generous marking by the centre. Most centres had clearly used the marking criteria effectively, initially establishing a reliable and accurate rank order, agreed through comparative assessment, before assessing the work using the marking criteria, and then adjusting for a final rank order. The approach to marking becomes more difficult in single teacher centres, and here it is important for staff to seek collaborative marking with other staff from nearby centres, asking OCR for information regarding those centres close to them.

Administration and moderation

The majority of centres met the deadline for submitting their marks to OCR through Interchange by 15th May. However, many centres are still not forwarding the moderator required paperwork in advance of the visit. Moderators require duplicate copies of the MS1 forms (the total marks submitted to OCR) and copies of the mark breakdown sheets, (which show the marks for each of the AOs, the total mark, the class name or teacher, the student's name and candidate number. Form CCS443 is for the portfolio and CCS444 for the External Set Task) The moderator can then check to make sure that there are no transcription errors and ensure a smooth progression before the visit to the centre. Senior moderators and Team Leaders are required to collect work for the grade awarding, standardisation and other educational purposes and we thank the schools who have released samples of their work for these most important aspect of the moderation and awarding process. The majority of work is released back to centres during the autumn term, but the work required for moderator training and teacher courses is not returned until the following academic year.

Most centres provide careful, well labelled, rank ordered displays of the moderation samples, in a private and quiet area appropriate to moderation. In many centres the work is organised with finished pieces and evolutionary sheets displayed on boards, other centres displayed final pieces with sketchpads or folders on tables.

In specialisms including Graphic Communication, Photography and workshop orientated Three-Dimensional Design PowerPoints often accompany the final pieces to define the working process. If this is the case, then please will centres provide more than a single computer to allow moderators to check rank order by comparison. Some outstanding exhibitions of the work were seen, and centres and staff are thanked for the time and effort that goes into assembling these exhibitions which make the moderation task more straightforward but also benefit the candidates' understanding of necessary presentation.

Moderators reported that centres *'clearly take considerable satisfaction in guaranteeing that candidates' work is displayed to the best advantage for moderation.'* Moderators praised the time and effort that centres invested in this vital aspect of the assessment process.

Currently ten samples of work for each component are required to be displayed in rank order for the visiting moderator together with a further five sets of work to be available in the room but not displayed. The list from OCR shows a straight fifteen names, the first ten for each component, are the ones required to be displayed, and this is usually confirmed in an email from the visiting moderator.

This specification is 100% non-exam assessment; all components are internally marked and externally moderated by visit.

It is important that all schools have regard for the internal assessment and moderation procedure. There are still centres where independent marking of options or different teaching sets, appears to be occurring, particularly with the difficulties amplified over the last two years.

In assessing student work, correct rank order is paramount to centre marking of submissions regardless of component. This is the initial key to effective marking and moderation decisions. Teachers should work in tandem but one person (usually the HOD) must take overall responsibility for the submission of all marks collated to a uniform standard.

Some teachers still do not seem to understand the ultra-importance of rank order and its total effect on moderation procedures. This is fundamental to the moderation process and especially important that centres alleviate the main moderation difficulty in assessing, reporting and possibly remarking. The moderator is an independent experienced adjudicator but has little say in determining individual attainment, their role is to purely make sure that the centre is meeting the agreed national standard.

It is essential that the centre establishes a strict rank order of candidates' ability and achievement through the presented work. The assessment grid can then be implemented with further refinement through the subheadings of "just, adequately, clearly and convincing".

Select and present

This specification encourages students to select, organise and present work that represents the best of their achievement in response to the Assessment Objectives.

Some centres still need to recognise that selection and presentation is the key to success. This has often been stressed at standardisation where displays are concentrated and evident through distinct connections to the Assessment Objectives (AOs). It is important that candidates are aware of and have a clear understanding of the Assessment Objectives and what they mean and how they should be presented. Candidates need to see the clear lines of attainment through the AOs and fully discernible, selection, revision and completion are paramount. **Quality not quantity** is the key in the highest achieving centres. Most schools impressed on students that consistent quality and selection far outweighs a large quantity of unrelated and substandard work regardless of ability level. A minority of centres are still encouraging candidates to produce large volumes of work which fails to fully develop their ideas with development strands of exploration that does not really inform anything worthwhile as an outcome. Collected images are of little value unless further advanced through transposition, enhancement and involvement. At times work journals seen in centres were reduced to 'scrapbooks' rather than sketchbooks.

It is worth noting that many centres appreciated that exceedingly large volumes of collected pictures and long copied passages of bibliographical notation or Wikipedia transcripts serve no purpose. Astute, relevant, personal notation carries the highest reward. As a result, the candidates whose work was most successful not only presented a sensibly economical and convincingly documented developmental journey but also allocated sufficient time to create persuasive final statements. Although it is certainly uncalled for to present every single piece of work for assessment and moderation, it is without doubt in every candidate's best interest to select enough persuasive evidence to reflect their best achievements and therefore plausibly substantiate a teacher's assessment decisions.

The visual journey

Again, this year a most notable feature was that in some candidates the journey to the final piece was significantly truncated and did not expansively tell the story of the candidate's journey from the initial starting point to the final finished piece, rather there were gaps in the tale particularly in the way the composition or design emerged, there being a lack of consideration for alternative ideas, arrangements and designs. This is a **key** point for the future in that much of the best work seen was thought provoking,

highly skilled and produced through attention to detail in both selection and rejection. With outstanding candidates, they constantly revise and experiment, this taking place throughout their submission until they arrive at a solution they are 'almost happy' with. It is the lack of satisfaction, the drive to improve, the seeking for perfection that permeates such submissions and reflects the maturity of the candidate and the completion of a journey that fully encapsulates all the AOs.

The lowest marked students bypass the objectives, and the 'journey' becomes all too often curtailed into simple replicated images and a preconceived rehearsed example for outcome, often in a large unfamiliar scale or untried media involving collage or basic card construction or multiple prints of the same motif in different colours. The full creative journey in an accessible and 'readable' form is essential to the presentation of student work.

Annotation

Annotation is not essential particularly if the visual journey is comprehensive and tells the tale clearly. However, many students find it useful to comment briefly on their decision making, how they see the connection between work they have looked at and their own work, why they have selected certain photographs from contact sheets, or why their design/composition/idea has changed or evolved in a certain way. In this instance a short comment can reveal the thinking behind these decisions informing the teacher/examiner, the moderator and aiding the understanding of the candidate's visual journey.

Component 1: Portfolio

There was a broad range of themes across the samples seen by moderators ranging from very personal journeys where candidates picked their own starting points such as gluttony, human form, or current concerns with wildlife, the future of the planet or other protest movements. A choice of teacher led courses included starting points like natural forms, portraits, and sea life as well as the use of themes and starting points from previous Externally set task papers. There were several examples of candidates developing ideas on emotive and stimulating themes such as 'Refugees,' 'Mental illness', 'Gender' or aspects of cultural connections. These were often dealt with in perceptive and personal ways. Despite candidates often using the same starting points, the resulting work produced outcomes that reflected quite different personal approaches and realisation of intentions. The most successful centres had a variety of starting points and styles of work, artist influences and exposure to different media. In addition, the centres that encouraged experimentation with a variety of media and blends of artist principals produced more original outcomes. Most centres are providing candidates with a varied, creative and personal approach but where centres follow a prescriptive course this tends to restrict individuality and an independent approach.

AO1: Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources.

The range of images and artwork used is becoming more diverse. Candidates explored work of a large range of mainly contemporary artists to provide context to idea development rather than the traditional 'masters,' historical or specific art movements. Centres without doubt urged candidates to make critical and contextual references as part of their documentation of their creative journey. Generally, candidates understood the importance and relevance of making suitable connections to their study, often exploring obscure (internet sources) but meaningful sources as well as more well-known and easily accessible references, and where these artists were chosen in response to individual developments then success often ensued. There was a noticeable increase in the reference to graffiti and street art this year.

Unfortunately, there seemed to be fewer school visits to galleries, museums and places of interest this year although there were examples of individual candidates making personal trips, especially to local art galleries and museums, something which always positively impacted on the candidates' work.

There was a wealth of historical, cultural, modern and contemporary practitioners referenced across the whole range of the specialisms. A centre using the Critical and Contextual Studies specialism, J176, visited a local prehistoric dolmen, a passage grave and a reconstructed Neolithic house and museum as well as visually exploring the local landscape, animals and prehistoric tools and artefacts (from the museum) using this visit as a springboard for work in both 2D and 3D. It was noticeable how candidates in the Graphic Communication specialism studied typography and contemporary design while 3D candidates should be careful not to just study the classic designers of furniture, etc. but also have an eye to contemporary design in the high street, in IKEA and magazines, ensuring the links and relevance to what they are designing and making.

A considerable number of centres, to their credit, encouraged candidates to investigate and analyse contextual encounters and document the progress of their creative journey primarily through visual language. Nevertheless, teachers and candidates in centres acknowledged that relevant annotation could serve to clarify, in a body of work, their understanding (and that of teachers and moderators). Biographical notes are not required, nor are copy and paste 'chunks' from Wikipedia or other sites, rather the following questions should form the basis of the questioning of the selected imagery:

- What am I doing?
- How am I doing it?

- Why am I doing it?
- What contextual encounters have I had?
- How have those contextual encounters generally influenced me?
- Why and how do those contextual encounters relate to, and openly support, the growth of my creative endeavours?

The notion of annotation does not imply a demand for extensive written text.

Contextual reference is still seen in some centres as the 'add on' Assessment Objective. At times students covered AO1 by simply collecting images related to intent via various internet search engines and then pasted the material into journals. This was given unwarranted marks in some centres. Contextual reference is seen at its best when the candidate becomes totally immersed in their chosen sources by culture, gallery visits, holidays, family, personal interest, teenage angst, local environments or a growing awareness of political issues. The selection of critical resources then becomes highly relevant rather than appended.

AO2: Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes.

This objective was seen at its best where centres encouraged candidates to link it closely with AO1 and build on the investigations in the working processes and approaches of the artists, movements and artwork studied. Some centres fail to understand that this objective requires critical reflection on the discoveries made in AO1, the recording done in AO3 and the exploration of ideas through materials, media and techniques and how this has an impact on what is happening in AO4. Greater experiment with composition is linked to more sophisticated outcomes.

Much emphasis was placed on providing candidates with opportunities to explore the qualities of a diverse range of materials, processes and technique with relevant and well-intentioned progression. Refining ideas through exploring and selecting appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes varied from centre to centre. Centres seem less assured when guiding candidates through refinement. The most successful submissions were those in which media had led to refinement rather than repetition which tends to close down ideas and kill development, something frequently seen in less successful work.

Exploration must have purpose and genuinely assist in the development of the idea because extensive experimentation can sometimes lead to candidates merely reverting to reproducing initial imagery and therefore the potential benefits of the exploration and change are lost. At best the exploration of media is strongly linked to refinement to assist the final outcome.

There was greater use of ICT software to experiment and edit visual imagery this year being widely used to support idea development and experiment.

AO3: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses.

In many centres moderators saw a strong emphasis on honing drawing skills, specifically through tonal studies and the implementation of techniques such as drawing grids and exercises, as well as expressive mark making. There were plenty of examples at the upper mark range of superbly executed primary observational recording together with media experimentation and manipulation, which was then reviewed and refined with thoughtful annotation. Examples of tonal skill were shown through a range of media demonstrating blending and layering with thought to the overall composition. At the lower end of the mark range candidates tended to use recording to do transposition techniques with experimentation in media that involved line and felt tip, here there was a strong reliance on secondary sources.

While much strong observational drawing was witnessed, equally draughtsmanship of an indifferent quality was seen. Reference to secondary sources or the candidates' own photographs is a perfectly legitimate recording practice but some seemed unaware that accuracy in transcription is vital. There was a wide variation in the quality and emphasis that many of the specialisms placed on recording. In graphics and 3D, it was noted that drawing skills were at times weak but enhanced by digital processes to make the most of the potential, but a focus on a higher more developed level of recording would have enriched potential ideas. Recording of the production of a piece of work in progress successfully supported the process of making and final designs in both 3D and textiles where the various stages were recorded with clarity, a point that should be adopted by more centres. Snapshot photographs supported by pertinent annotation is an excellent way of documenting production stages.

Photography is an important part of the recording process but needs to be of good quality and focused. Mobile phone cameras are becoming increasingly advanced, but if used as a recording medium then further selection and considered editing are required. Centres need to be aware that the quality of the photograph is an important aspect of recording with the need to carefully consider compositional rules, and really think about the context and how it relates to the theme, too often moderators are seeing too many 'snapshots' of themes of little true reflective merit. At times photographs amounted to nothing more than random and irrelevant images. Manipulation and artistic justification must be carefully considered and contribute to thought-provoking skill-based outcomes. The key to successful photography submissions is quality of image, proficiency in technique, revision, selection and presentation. Considerations of viewpoint, composition, light and location, indeed the 'formal elements' are important. In the photography specialism it is essential that centres deliver from the carefully written specification and avoid a concentration on technical 'know how.' Art and Design Photography should always be presented for moderation as achievement through quality of image and not as a technical exercise.

Moderators noted that this Assessment Objective was at times an area of weakness for candidates in the middle mark range and tended to be an area of generosity when marking students' ability to record observations.

AO4: Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language.

All centres had guided candidates through the syllabus encouraging creativity and a personal response, often ensuring that candidates played to their strengths. The moderation team reported many submissions that were excellent examples of well-developed and sophisticated responses with genuine exploration, well considered development of ideas and often adventurous experimentation in media.

A notable feature this year was a variation in size with many of the moderation team feeling that they had seen outcomes that were smaller in scale compared with previous years. On the other hand, some candidates produced much larger final pieces with compositions that worked well at the smaller scale shown in the sketchpads or preparatory sheets but when enlarged significantly did not translate successfully to the larger scale. Centres need to be aware that occasionally candidates appear to believe that 'bigger means better' when often they do not have the time, skill or medium to achieve the result they wish for. Working large scale in unfamiliar media as a reward for finalising a component can be counterproductive. Some of the centres working in the Three-Dimensional Design specialism need to bear this in mind as several large-scale construction pieces were seen that would have been better aligned to a smaller, complete polished finish.

Moderators commented on seeing more disjointed partial submissions this year with the development seen in the preparatory work not always realised with sophistication in the final piece. At the lower end of the mark range, more exploration and development work would have resulted in far more confident outcomes. In this range the **journey** is all too short from concept to completion.

Sometimes shortcomings in meeting the requirements of Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3 clearly resulted in unresolved final pieces. Correspondingly some centres were inclined towards generosity in marking the work produced through the Assessment Objectives, especially in respect of Objective 4. Consideration must be given to the whole submission and not just the final piece(s). It is highly improbable that underachievement in responding to the demands of Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3 will produce greater success in respect of Assessment Objective 4. Attainment in Assessment Objective 4 is primarily dependent on performance in the preceding studies and not just the final piece(s).

Component 2: Externally set task

Many centres approached the return of the Externally set task with trepidation but felt that their candidates really rose to the task and produced their best work. Moderators report that the paper was well received and provided a good variety of titles that allowed candidates to follow their interests and use the skills they had learned during the earlier phases of their studies to help develop their ideas. A full range of starting points was seen with many candidates producing very personal responses. Isolation and Journey were very popular choices among candidates although Surface and Texture were well used within Textile Design, Photography and Three-Dimensional Design, while this theme also provided some highly experimental responses. News produced some really interesting topical results while agriculture was the least popular theme but was often done very well. Occasionally a centre limited the choice of question sometimes imposing only one theme on their candidates in order to provide a range of particular resources or take them through a range of structured starting points. This limited their creative endeavours and produced work that lacked independence so that the display revealed a similarity that made differentiation difficult.

Most centres demonstrated successful time management both during the preparatory phase and the ten-hour examination, using the time well to create a cohesive presentation of ideas, with a main outcome of manageable size for completion in the ten hours. Again, some candidates limited the Refine element (AO2) when evolving the final idea or composition to a single solution rather than considering alternative arrangements or variations that improved upon the initial idea. Some candidates used visits to museums or galleries as well as other places for primary recording of ideas and inspiring the early development of a theme. Personal journeys, holidays, family and individual interests were woven into responses to the paper. A visit to Tate Modern was the starting point for exploring artists associated with the candidates' selected theme at one centre although generally there was some excellent referencing and cross referencing of artists' works and contexts. There was strong use of photo-manipulation in some centres including the deconstruction of the candidates' own photographs to produce reinvented composition and manipulation to create new images.

The amount of work varied enormously but overall candidates had enough range and depth in their work to show confidence in the Assessment Objectives. It was good to see such a broad approach to the starting points where most centres encouraged candidates to explore and experiment in a range of materials which on the whole showed successful refinement of ideas and produced a successful realisation of intentions.

Summary

Despite the obvious, continuing difficulties that many centres have experienced, the variety of outcomes and depth of experimentation found by the visiting moderators matched and sometimes exceeded that seen in previous years. It was noted that in some centres there was a dip in the candidates' ability and inclination to work independently towards all the Assessment Objectives in the Portfolio unit and the Externally set task. In contrast, the general consensus was that next year's candidates, the current Year 10, were performing admirably and showed great promise.

As a final reflection there are perhaps only two overriding considerations for success at GCSE Art and Design, the creativity and learning of the individual candidate and the commitment of the teacher. The latter is fully appreciated by the moderation team who are grateful to art staff in centres for the work they do and for the effort that goes into the presentation of work for moderation.

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