

**GCSE (9–1)**

**Moderators' report**

# ART AND DESIGN

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**J170-J175**

For first teaching in 2016

**J170-J175/01/02 Summer 2024 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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## General overview

The OCR GCSE Art and Design (9-1) 2024 series showcased the creative talents of candidates across our broad range of specialisms, including Fine Art, Graphic Communication, Photography, Textile Design, Three-Dimensional Design and a small but increasing number of centres offering Critical and Contextual studies. The 2024 series maintained the trend of previous years, with a diverse array of submissions that reflected the evolving landscape of art and design education.

Moderators reported that many centres had provided stimulating and well-structured courses designed to build skills and contextual understanding. The integration of traditional techniques with contemporary digital practices was particularly notable, demonstrating candidates' adaptability and innovation in a rapidly changing field. The fusion of digital media, in all its forms, has become much more commonplace and provided opportunities for candidates to submit work for assessment and moderation that presented a lively mix of approaches. This was seen throughout the specialisms and not just evidenced in Graphic Communication or Photography. The effective use of mixed media, materials, techniques and processes appropriate to the specialism studied was a notable strength in the 2024 series. Candidates combined various materials and techniques, enhancing the visual and conceptual impact of their projects. Where this worked well, the selection of media was clearly linked to findings established through the investigation of sources. This interdisciplinary approach not only showcased versatility but also enriched the overall aesthetic quality of the submissions.

Another striking feature of this year's submissions was the level of individuality and originality evidenced in both the Portfolio and Externally set task components, with candidates selecting projects, starting points and question paper themes, creating work that stood out for their unique perspectives and imaginative approaches. In addition, it was noted that candidates displayed a commendable willingness to experiment with unconventional materials and methods, resulting in highly individualistic and exciting artworks.

Candidates demonstrated creativity and originality across all specialisms as testimony to centres providing stimulating and well-structured courses. The submissions were characterised by unique perspectives, adventurous exploration, and imaginative use of materials. This creativity was evident across all specialisms, from conceptual depth in Fine Art to innovative technological solutions in Graphic Communication and Three-Dimensional Design. The technical skills of the candidates were commendable. Many candidates demonstrated a high level of proficiency in their chosen media, with meticulous attention to detail and a strong understanding of techniques. This was particularly evident in Textile Design, where intricate patterns and fabric manipulations correlated with an increase in evidence of confident recording through drawing in all its forms, highlighting the candidates' technical skill and craftsmanship.

A significant number of candidates engaged with contemporary social, political, and environmental issues for both the Portfolio and the Externally set task components. These works demonstrated a deep awareness of global challenges and very often submissions demonstrated a commitment to using art as a medium for social commentary. The ability to articulate complex ideas through visual art added depth and relevance to the submissions. This was supported very often by centre-organised visits to galleries and museums, supporting candidates in their contextual research.

Moderators noted where candidates had engaged in a visit to a gallery or museum, the breadth and diversity of sources investigated had a positive impact on the creative journeys throughout both components. Sources selected provided inspirational influence on both the selection of media, materials, techniques and processes employed by the candidates responding in a variety of ways to the visit, using these experiences to enhance and extend their ideas. Where visits were more generalised, with candidates seeing a range of art first-hand and where it was not necessarily linked to the theme of their

Portfolio or Externally set task, the influence of visits was still tangible in submission. This was evidenced through the collection of postcards, leaflets, gallery floor plans, notes and annotations in sketchbooks and often direct drawing from exhibitions.

The impact of seeing art first-hand on candidates should never be underestimated. While the visual documentation of museum and gallery visits found in sketchbooks or journals can provide tangible evidence of critical understanding, application of independent judgements and personal interpretation of the work seen, the benefits are often absorbed by candidates and can subconsciously provide intellectual and emotional responses throughout the creative process.

While the OCR GCSE Art and Design (9-1) specification does not specifically require students to record written annotation, effective notes can provide further insight into the candidates thought process and decision making. Some candidates find it useful to comment briefly on their decision making, how they see connections between sources investigated and their own work, why they have selected certain media, materials, techniques and processes in their work, or a description of why they may have refined their work over time. In this instance, a short comment can reveal the thinking behind these decisions informing the viewer and aiding the understanding of the candidate's visual journey. This was not just noted by moderators for work relating to external visits, but prevalent through sketchbooks and preparatory supporting work.

## Administration and moderation

Centres are reminded that an overview of the visiting moderation process, pre-moderation visit, during and post-moderation, instructions and information is available on the OCR website. This provides details of all the necessary forms that are required to be communicated with the moderator before the day of the moderation visit.

For the 2024 series the most centres met the 15th May deadline and indeed some centres are to be thanked for agreeing to a moderation visit before the submission of marks deadline. The early submission of marks provides capacity and subsequently the flexibility of moderators to offer a range of early dates for visiting moderation. It should also be noted that many of the moderators in the GCSE panel are teachers and while moderators aim to be as flexible as possible in agreeing a mutually convenient date for the moderation visit, this is not always possible. Some centres still try to specify when their moderation visit should occur. However, this approach is not appropriate unless the centre has informed OCR of exceptional circumstances that necessitate a fixed date for moderation.

All centres uploaded their marks through OCR Interchange and received an automated confirmation email with a list of the candidates required for moderation. It should be noted that for each specialism of OCR GCSE Art and Design (9-1) qualification, the centre (usually via the centre representative responsible for all examinations) will receive two sample requests: one email with one list of candidates required for moderation for Component 1: Portfolio and another email with one list of candidates required for moderation for Component 2: Externally set task.

The Portfolio CCS443 and the Externally set task CCS444 centre marks forms were used by the majority of centres and were sent to the moderator in advance of the moderation visit. As part of the administration process the moderator is required to check marks on the centre marks forms to those submitted via OCR Interchange. While most centres used the interactive forms, some centres continue to hand transcribe marks, which often resulted in arithmetical errors and the necessity for centre marks to be amended through the clerical error process.

Centre Authentication Forms (CCS160) were held in the centre and available for the moderator to view.

Most centres continue to display their candidates' work to the best advantage. It is to be noted that centres continue to make considerable efforts to make sure that candidate work is displayed to the best advantage for moderation. Moderators recognised the time and effort that centres invest in this vital aspect of the assessment process. Typically, this was with exhibitions vertically on walls or display boards alongside supporting sketchbooks or sheets. Where space to exhibit candidate work was difficult, work was displayed in rank order on tables. Centres are reminded to make sure that the work can be, or is, spread out in order to be viewed as a whole submission. Where space was limited, many centres provided a map of the moderation exhibition. Indeed, a plan or map of both components is very helpful in ensuring the smooth running of the moderation visit.

The automated OCR sample request email does not list candidates in rank order, however it is essential. Further to this, many centres numbered the rank order on labels, alongside the candidate's number which also provided for an efficient moderation visit. Venues set aside for moderation included classrooms, halls, lecture theatres and, in one case, the entire Art department corridor with the moderation visit conducted over the weekend. The spaces were generally well-considered, quiet and well-lit which is an important consideration for displaying the candidates' work to the best advantage. Some moderation exhibitions were presented in spaces with traffic flow and inadequate signage which was not ideal for moderation purposes.

Moderators reported that most centres had displayed the 15 sample candidates work in two separate rank orders, one for the Portfolio and one for the Externally set task. Where this was not the case,

centres quickly corrected or when necessary, rearranged the work to comply with the regulations. Centres are reminded that each component should be presented separately and in rank order for moderation purposes. The Portfolio should be work produced to a centre or candidate set starting point, consisting of a sustained project or theme presented in an appropriate format for the specialism and areas of study. The practical portfolio should be viewed as a whole and judgements regarding the extent to which all of the Assessment Objectives have been met should be made across the submission as a whole.

Where digital submissions were presented for moderation, centres are to be thanked for their continued efforts to make sure candidates' work is viewed to best advantage. Moderators noted that it is now the norm for centres to offer multiple screens/monitors or devices to allow for comparisons across the moderation sample in rank order. In addition, guest login details to centre-based networks or cloud-based storage are always welcome in ensuring efficient access to candidates' digital submissions.

The importance of the rank order should not be underestimated. Ensuring a correct rank order during internal marking is vital to ensure effective and efficient moderation. Indeed, the establishment of a correct rank order, where cohorts are taught in groups and/or by different teachers, is best practice to make sure that internal standardisation takes place, between different groups and across different specialisms to ensure consistency in the assessment process.

## Component 1: Portfolio

Component 1 comprises a portfolio of work that can be produced to a centre- or student-set starting point leading to final artefact(s)/product(s)/personal outcome(s). This portfolio consists of a project, theme or course of study and is presented in appropriate format(s) for the specification title and area(s) of study chosen.

Candidates should:

- develop ideas through investigations and demonstrated critical understanding of sources from a given starting point
- produce material informed by context that is relevant to the development of their ideas
- refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with media appropriate to their chosen specification title and area(s) of study
- record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses
- present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions.

Portfolio experiences varied from centre to centre. Predominantly, themes and starting points were selected by centre representatives, either working to the strengths and experience of the staff responsible for the delivery or skills-based activities that provided evidence of retrieval of knowledge and understanding from a Key Stage 3 curriculum. Where this approach was evident, the freedom to make mistakes and develop problem-solving skills was clear. However, in many submissions and through conversations with centre representatives, evidence of early skill-based exploration was subjected to careful selection and presentation, with early pages in sketchbooks being bound together so as not to form part of the work presented as evidence of meeting all four Assessment Objectives. Moderators also reported an increasing number of centres using past OCR GCSE Art and Design question paper themes as starting points for the Portfolio. Centres noted that this approach provided opportunities to re-cycle and re-use previous resources, saving time and ever-decreasing faculty and department budgets. This also allowed for centres to use their previous candidate's preparatory work as exemplar material, providing candidates with a range of possible directions for their work.

Moderators also noted that themes for the Portfolio often centred around the candidates' personal interests, with many centres allowing candidates the freedom to explore topics such as 'identity', 'self-image', and personal issues, with mental health and well-being remaining at the forefront of candidates minds. Where centres provided heavily student-led focus for the Portfolio, moderators noted that submissions often held the appearance of an extended response to the investigation of sources, or sketchbooks that appeared as journals rather than the conduit towards an outcome. Individuality and independence were evident but this sometimes did not provide sufficient evidence across all four Assessment Objectives.

The natural world also featured prominently as a theme mostly within the introductory phase, focusing on fundamental skills at the start of Year 10, with many centres utilising natural forms and illustration processes based on plant life. Sketchbooks remain a popular tool, showcasing candidates' enthusiastic and purposeful presentation of ideas. Moderators noted that where sketchbooks were used to document a cohesive journey through the creation of either component, sketchbooks served as both a practical and inspirational resource, providing opportunities for candidates to freely explore their ideas, documenting the evolution of their work leading to the realisation of their ideas. It was also noted that where sketchbooks appeared as 'scrapbooks' littered with visual imagery, both collected and created by candidates, they often lacked a coherent journey through the Assessment Objectives and were limited in clear evidence of the course of study.

### Good practice

Digital image editing appears commonplace in Fine Art, with submissions providing evidence of both traditional mark-making techniques and processes, enhanced with digital editing.

The realisation of intentions evidenced a variety of individual outcomes and Portfolio journeys, showing most candidates had some freedom to explore their interests; centres seem to have taken on board that if you give the candidates a choice to respond to something that interests them there will be improved engagement, motivation and outcomes.

### Moderator tips

Avoid the overuse of decorative backgrounds which distracts the quality of candidate work. This may look exciting but is not always necessary and does not enhance the appearance of candidates' work.

Some centres continue to present the 'course' in candidate submissions, with multiple sketchbooks and large quantities of work presented for moderation. This often exposes inconsistencies in the work and fails to present candidates' work to the best advantage.

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

The trend continues towards candidates exploring a range of contemporary artists and creative practitioners. While references to the work of more traditional 'masters' were still used to provide context to idea development, many candidates made reference to a broad and diverse range of contemporary sources. These were often researched via internet search engines and the use of social media sites as a research tool becoming increasingly prevalent. References to contemporary practitioners with a strong online presence were common and references to contemporary music, film, games, street art and popular culture featured extensively in some submissions. Candidates were also seen to use AI to generate source material for the development of ideas.

Centres urged candidates to make critical and contextual references as part of their documentation of their creative journey. A broad and diverse range of historical, cultural, modern and contemporary practitioners was referenced across the whole range of the specialisms. References to more commercial applications of art and design in a broad range of fields such as media, advertising, publishing, interior design, architecture and product design also supported the development of ideas across all specialisms.

Generally, candidates understood the importance and relevance of making suitable connections to their work, sometimes exploring obscure internet sources but meaningful sources as well as more well-known and easily accessible references. When these artists were chosen in response to individual ideas and developments then success often ensued. Where sources were relevant and meaningful to candidates, these broadened horizons and acted as a springboard for further exploration. Where source material was more challenging in terms of the visual language, techniques or concepts explored, the qualities of the work were sometimes misunderstood or poorly interpreted by candidates, who consequently experienced more difficulty in developing their own responses.

An increasing number of school visits to galleries, museums and places of interest took place this year and some candidates' creative fields were also widened by gallery-based workshops and events. Locations of interest included historical sites such as Kenilworth Castle and National Trust properties, Sea Life centres, wildlife parks, gardens, artist studios and degree shows. For many candidates, visits informed the approaches taken. While workshops by visiting artists and artists in residence remained rare in 2024, these were still taking place and, where seen, made a positive contribution. There were also examples of individual candidates making personal trips, especially to local art galleries and museums, and this invariably made a positive impact on the candidates' work.

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.

Contextual reference is still seen in some centres as the 'add on' Assessment Objective. At times candidates covered Assessment Objective 1 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. The rationale for the selection of source material should be apparent. Contextual reference is seen at its best when the candidate becomes totally immersed in their chosen theme, drawing inspiration from sources such as culture, gallery visits, holidays, family, personal interest, teenage angst, local environments or a growing awareness of political issues. The selection of appropriate resources then becomes highly relevant in the development of ideas and the creative journey of the work.

### Good practice

A diverse range of both contemporary and historical sources continue to be investigated by candidates.

Where sources investigated clearly influenced the selection of materials, media, techniques and processes, outcomes benefitted.

### Moderator tips

Encourage candidates to investigate their own selection of sources and contexts that are relevant to the starting point or their chosen theme from the Externally set task question paper, to help them create original and inventive realisation of intentions.

Avoid using sources that are unrelated or solely internet based.

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

Most centres continue to place emphasis on providing candidates with the opportunity to explore a wide variety of materials, processes and techniques to further an intended outcome. The ever-increasing availability of media references linked with digital platforms was seen to enhance the refinement of the candidates' work. Through the refinement or exploration of a particular theme or strand of enquiry, it was apparent that many candidates demonstrated an understanding of the relevance of the necessity to experiment with different techniques and materials and make purposeful changes.

Some centres employed various approaches to refinement, including copying artists' techniques and applying them to their own ideas, continuously assessing their work as it develops. Moderators commented that there were many centres were employing 'in-depth' approaches to the refinement and exploration to genuinely assist the direction of the work submitted. Centres continued to explore popular materials, techniques, and processes such as painting and drawing, a variety of printing techniques and montage. Successful examples included artist research media exploration to build on existing ideas, linking materials, techniques, and processes to the contextual sources investigated for development. Submissions where refinement was less successful, there would invariably be more repetitive images or inappropriate selections of materials which appeared detached from the overall direction of the work, offering very little to further ideas and diluting the benefits of exploration.

Photography has had a positive impact on the refinement of some candidates' work. The growth of digital manipulation and editing processes continues to increase. Purposefully used in several specialist areas of study, these included digital drawing, GIF animation, photographic manipulation and editing as to develop composition planning and stylised painting techniques. Image transfer supported the advancement of work in both Fine Art and Textile Design, exploring the qualities of a diverse range of mixed media techniques.

In Textile Design moderators noted techniques and processes explored by candidates offered a dynamic way to create a range of outcomes. Techniques such as dyeing, printing, weaving and embroidery allow some candidates to experiment with colour, texture, and patterns, translating their artistic ideas into tangible forms. By incorporating these methods, candidates created unique pieces that combine both art and craftsmanship, enhancing their understanding of design principles and materials. Textile processes also provide opportunities for interdisciplinary projects, encouraging students to draw inspiration from various cultural and historical contexts, thereby broadening their artistic perspectives and enriching their portfolios.

The growth of Textile Design continues to increase as a specialism. The expansion of this area of study has revealed the advantages of enhancing visual imagery through innovative ways of incorporating collage, photomontage and 3D designs in this specialism. Techniques such as dyeing, printing, weaving and embroidery allow students to experiment with colour, texture, and patterns, translating the development of their ideas into tangible forms such as wall-hangings, soft furnishing and garment design.

### Good practice

Moderators noted, particularly for 3D Design, centres were instilling the importance of drawing ideas, before candidates then used mobile apps/software to translate and transform their ideas to digital format.

While the creation of a garment for Textile Design was the popular avenue towards the realisation of intentions, moderators also noted that candidates were increasingly creating outcomes with a Fine Art bias.

More successful submissions linked media, materials, techniques and processes to critical understanding gleaned from investigations for Assessment Objective 1.

### Moderator tips

For successful refinement, avoid repetition of imagery but instead develop ideas to create original work.

Use image editing techniques that link to sources investigated.

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

In the OCR GCSE Art and Design (9-1) specification candidates are expected to demonstrate their ability to record their ideas, observations, insights and independent judgements, using appropriate specialist vocabulary, as their work evolves. Drawing in all its forms, underpins the very nature of our subject and evidence of such should be found throughout a candidate's submission. Evidence of recording might take the form of primary observation, secondary drawing from sources, photography, design ideas, modelling in clay, machine stitch, annotation throughout a sketchbook or notes recorded during a museum, gallery or location visit.

As outlined in the core content of the specification and evidenced during moderation visits, recording through primary and secondary observation, note taking, thumbnail sketches, compositional planning and understandably, pencil tonal drawing were common place. Moderators noted that, drawing to record ideas in Textile Design was considerably more wide-ranging in approach, and took place prior to the creation of textile designs. Many candidates had adopted a Fine Art approach and levels of quality in creating drawings and supporting studies - largely in pencil and coloured pencil that were then translated into free machine embroidery and stitch. It was pleasing to see candidates in this specialism demonstrating their skill and technical abilities in drawing and the subsequent translation of drawn designs presented through stitch, wire, hand and machine embroidery, both of which were time-consuming and required significant skill and patience in comparison to approaches used in other specialisms.

Moderators reported that recording ideas through photography in all specialisms is fast becoming commonplace and was often further enhanced by digital manipulation, prior to transposition to different scales or interpretation through the exploration of different media. Moderators noted the use of figurative work where candidates recreated paintings through photography using props and costumes to help develop compositional ideas and by using this method several compositions could be recreated quickly. Further recording took place as these ideas were translated into sketches and drawings.

In Graphic Communication, analysis of products and branding was truly effective in helping candidates to reflect on their intentions and to progress. Graphic Communication submissions continue to explore the creation of typography, both hand-drawn font styles and digitally created typefaces. However, moderators noted that where the inclusion of both approaches was evident in submissions, unless the hand-drawn font styles were particularly sophisticated in the art and techniques of arranging type, then the differences in skill and technical achievement were often amplified by the contrast. Photography used to record graphic designs and product placement imagery using AI approaches enhanced the visual impact of those initial designs, making for very professional print and package designs, where the recording was skilful and refined outcomes were successful.

Digital drawing and painting through applications such as Photoshop, Illustrator and Procreate were used by many candidates as a means of recording and refining ideas. Used successfully with skill and flair, these applications serve as a purposeful tool in the creation of evidence demonstrating candidates' knowledge and understanding of the characteristics, properties and effects of using digital media to communicate intentions. Success was demonstrated in many centres where the combination of photographic recording and candidates' own drawings were digitally edited to create alternative designs prior to transposition, using traditional methods of mark-making. This process of record was not just the domain of Graphic Communication, but moderators reported observing an increase in the use of raster graphic editors in all specialisms, but more so in Fine Art and 3D Design. While the OCR GCSE Art and Design (9-1) specification states that candidates are not expected to demonstrate technical mastery of drawings skills, but should use drawing skills for different needs and purposes to support the development process, raw drawing, (in the same way that raw photography should evidence

understanding of the photographic compositional rules), before being digitally manipulated should demonstrate skill and achievement appropriate to the specialism.

For some, written ideas communicated truly personal and fascinating insights into the candidates' work and clearly communicated their understanding of the role of art and design in our society. While appropriate specialist vocabulary through either visual communication or written annotation, or both appears in the content for each specialism, the use of specialist vocabulary can take many forms. Moderators noted a range of approaches to annotation that provided insight and commentary communicating rationale and critical evaluation of practical work as it developed. This was more commonplace in Component 1. Thoughtful and reflective comments throughout sketchbooks, journals, PowerPoints and candidate work presented on sheets provided clarity and sometimes confirmation of the creative journey.

Digital recording for Photography remains the most popular format for recording ideas in the specialism. Moderators did notice an increase in the exploration and manipulation of cyanotype printing, using candidates' digital prints and a refreshing resurgence in physical manipulation of printed photographs, being used to create photomontage and the refinement of compositions, avoiding the overuse of Photoshop. It was reported that well-composed raw photographs which provide evidence of candidates' understanding and application of the formal elements and rules of composition were sometimes considered by candidates as secondary compared to the process of digital editing.

### Good practice

Recording in all its forms should show skill and quality appropriate to the specialism studied.

Recording in all its forms should provide evidence of insights, knowledge and understanding in support of the realisation of ideas.

### Moderator tips

Where transposition of imagery is used, make sure accuracy is at the forefront of candidates' approach.

Where a range of materials, techniques and processes are used to record ideas, evidence of skill should be comparable across each alternative media.

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

Careful presentation of the realisation of intentions in a range of formats was prevalent in moderation exhibitions. For the Portfolio, most centres presented sketchbooks or sheets and a final outcome. This was mirrored in Photography, with submissions presented digitally, but sometimes in A3 sketchbooks and outcomes appeared as final prints. Moderators noted for the Externally set task, outcomes were succinct, in part as a result of the 10-hour supervised time frame.

Some centres understand that candidates are required to present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and this refers to the Portfolio considered as a whole, a cohesive package, rather than marks awarded for Assessment Objective 4 using evidence from a single outcome or final piece.

Candidate collaboration across specialisms was noted this year in moderation samples. As an example, particularly evident in Photography, the inclusion of contemporary Fine Art sources investigated to develop ideas for potential image manipulation was seen in the realisation of photographic intentions. In one submission the compositional studies of Robert Rauschenberg's screen prints were investigated for Assessment Objective 1, with candidates recording imagery on their chosen theme, digitally manipulating the presentation of their final prints, and concluding their realisation of intentions reflecting on Rauschenberg's compositions.

This collaborative approach was also noted in centres where Graphic Communication and Photography were delivered. Graphic Communication sources were investigated to provide a distinct graphic design flavour to candidates' preparatory studies for the Photography EST, with the incorporation of image/text work linking to the themes of the question paper. Photography was used in the realisation of intentions for the Graphic Communication specialism, with candidates recording imagery, which was then digitally manipulated to create their designs for packaging, advertising and interior architectural designs. Indeed, product placement was noted as prevalent for Graphic Communication, with candidate designs photographed as still-life, presented as contact sheets in the Portfolio and critically reviewed and refined through analytical annotation, prior to the selection of the best photographs for assessment.

Where candidates provided evidence of comprehensive planning and preparation, including compositional sketches, materials testing, further contextual research and candidates' own photography, (observed across all specialisms), submissions appeared far more successful and less disjointed. Where submissions followed a linear process, artist research, recording of ideas, exploration of materials, and realisation of intentions, submissions lacked well-considered refinement and evidence of reflection and review as the work develops, subsequently impacting on a successful personal response and limiting evidence of understanding formal elements and visual language.

Outcomes were generally well developed from early ideas of contextual understanding into the contexts of their chosen theme, culture, artist movement or popular interest. Refreshingly, intentions have evolved from sources focused on historically traditional artists to a more diverse range of influences as mentioned above. Centres and candidates are increasingly using popular interests such as street art, fashion, film, popular shows, graphic novels, and animations in their final submissions. Alongside this, moderators noted that many candidates now investigate cultural links, world affairs, politics, global issues, youth issues and mental health issues, providing highly exciting submissions.

While Assessment Objective 4 is not a 'final piece' it is important to note that moderators reported that outcomes for both components were mostly two-dimensional (with the exception of 3D Design), presented on paper, card or canvas, using media such as acrylic paint, watercolour or combinations of traditional media such as pencil combined with watercolour. Mixed media experiments most definitely influenced the imaginative creative directions taken. Surfaces, textured and layered backgrounds, a variety of papers, relief effects and photomontage in Photography assisted in creating submissions that

clearly evidence the candidates' best work. However, as one moderator noted, *'much decoration going on in sketchbooks as part of "Present". Many candidates must have spent hours on this - especially at the start of the course, running out of time and care later on. Emphasis on presentation which cleanly and clearly organises and presents work and decorative effects used only where relevant to intentions might help centres and their candidates to better focus efforts towards evidence relevant to AOs'*.

### Good practice

The size and scale of outcomes appears to be on the increase. While the specification does not stipulate how submissions should be presented for each specialism, there appears a trend for candidates to create some sizeable work.

More candidates are giving consideration to how their work should be best viewed, during the creative journey of each component. This has provided for some very unique and exciting moderation exhibitions.

### Moderator tips

Frequently there was evidence of superficial connections being made to contextual sources which had little impact on candidates' outcomes. A greater critical understanding of the formal elements and visual/contextual qualities within the work of artists and practitioners would have impacted positively on candidates' ability to develop ideas and inform the realisation of intentions.

## Component 2: Externally set task

A majority of centres approached the return of the EST for the second year since the pandemic with much more confidence and enthusiasm. The evidence seen across centres reflected that the attainment of candidates is returning to pre-pandemic levels. Whereas in 2023 some centres would have preferred the submission of one component to continue many centres mentioned that they felt invigorated by the Component 2 themes.

There was a real sense of candidates rising to the occasion and creating their best work. Moderators reported that the EST themes were well received and the range of starting points were broad and interesting and allowed candidates the opportunity to explore and develop some very personal interests and responses.

The themes of 'Garden' and 'Kings and Queens' were very popular choices among candidates and inspired a wide variety of effective and creative responses, predominately across Art, Craft and Design, Fine Art, Textile Design and 3D Design. Within those specialisms moderators saw a vast array of exciting work; for example developing and creating Textile and Fashion designs inspired by contextual references to royal historical costumes connected to the work of fashion designers such as Vivienne Westwood and John Galliano.

For 3D Design creating jewellery inspired by ancient royal dynasties and in Fine Art and Art, Craft and Design there were successful references to natural environments, garden design and landscaping from a range of different cultures and organic structures.

'Shopping' produced some interesting results relating to consumerism and Celebrity captured the imagination of many candidates, enabling them to consider social commentary and media, this worked

particularly well in Photography and Graphic Communications where both themes could be explored using traditional and digital methods.

Space had been explored in many different ways from connecting to NASA and space exploration, through to experimentation with ideas of compositional space.

On occasion there were some centres that limited the choice of starting points from the Externally set task, sometimes imposing only one or two themes, structuring the candidates' experience and providing resources. Moderators noted this limited their creative endeavours and produced work that lacked independence and curtailed the possibility of truly creative personal responses.

Diversity of sources investigated by candidates, selecting cultural references, world issues, including political references were exciting and sustained in their selection of theme and approaches to the Externally set task. The realisation of intentions were often used to share candidates' ideas, thoughts and understanding from a social morality perspective, making a difference, standing up for what is right and using it as a powerful tool to communicate ideas.

Overall, most centres demonstrated successful time management both in the preparatory phase and the ten-hour supervised time. Moderators report that most candidates used the time well to create a cohesive body of work, from concept to completion. Moderators noted that where candidates were able to sit the 10 hours' supervised time in two sessions the consistent block of time maximised potential with candidates able to confidently approach the realisation of intentions.

For many centres, the journey through the Assessment Objectives is clear and evident. Recording ideas through drawing in a range of media, the use of photography and the collection of visual resources were used to good effect to develop ideas and help candidates to explore techniques and processes. Skills learned in the earlier phase of their studies helped generate ideas. In a majority of centres, there was a broad range of contextual references and sources, these were often referenced by candidates in the early stages of the journey. Some candidates had experienced gallery and museum visits and embarked on personal experiences to record ideas. As in previous years, the time constraints for some meant that true refinement of ideas, processes and the planning of realisations could be cut short and become less developed. However, for most the 10-hour outcome was completed and thought regarding the scale and materials helped most achieve their personal responses/realisation.

Across all specialisms photography and the use of the candidates' photographic images continues to support the progression and the development of ideas. The use of photographic imagery has connected to the use of more digital work being seen across centres, allowing candidates to explore composition and manipulate to create new images.

Specialism cross-over was again noted by moderators, and this evolved from strong programmes of study already practising these approaches in Portfolio component. Photography and Graphic Communication methods and processes were adopted to appropriately explore and refine ideas, leading to strong intentions being identified, through the visual imagery created by candidates alongside constructive annotation. Fine Art submissions included evidence of textile processes, Graphics Communication often incorporated photographic recording, Fine Art recording techniques and processes were evident in Textile Design submissions and vice versa. Photography was often used in Fine Art submissions to aid idea development that was approached through photomontage, digital manipulation, layering techniques, printing on textured surfaces, weaving with drawing and painting onto different grounds and surfaces.

The work seen and the variety of styles, ideas, use of materials and personal responses were very varied. However, there was enough range and depth in the candidates' work to show confidence in the

Assessment Objectives. Overall, it was pleasing that most centres are encouraging freedom and independence through the structure of their delivery of the Externally set task themes.

## Select and present

Candidates should carefully **select**, **organise** and **present** work that provides evidence of meeting all four Assessment Objectives in both components.

GCSE Art and Design is typically delivered over a two-year course. Perhaps some of the work created at the beginning of the course lacks skill and achievement in comparison to later work. Candidates, supported by centre representatives should choose their best work for the Portfolio final assessment.

*Candidates should not present every single piece of work they have created for assessment...*

This vital aspect has been emphasised in previous moderator's reports and it is positive to see a marked improvement by many centres with candidates clearly considering careful selection, organisation and presentation of their best work for assessment. Moderators noted from conversations with centre representatives that there is increased understanding of 'quality over quantity', but centres are still apprehensive and unsure of how much work is required for assessment.

Some centres still need to recognise that selection and presentation are the key to success. This has often been stressed during the national OCR GCSE Art and Design standardisation meeting, where submissions for both components are concentrated and evident through distinct connections to each Assessment Objective. It is important that candidates are aware of and have a clear understanding of the Assessment Objectives what they mean, and how they look in reality.

Candidates need to see the clear lines of attainment through the Assessment Objectives and fully discernible, selection, revision and completion are paramount. Most centres impressed on candidates that consistent quality and selection far outweigh a large quantity of unrelated and substandard work regardless of levels of achievement. A minority of centres are still encouraging candidates to produce large volumes of work which fail to fully develop their ideas with tenuous strands of exploration which subsequently fails to inform a meaningful outcome.

Collected secondary source imagery, while permissible in the OCR GCSE Art and Design specification, holds little achievement value unless further advanced through transposition, exploration of media, materials, techniques and appropriately linked processes and can be seen to hold purpose towards the realisation of intentions.

Moderators noted that at times work journals and sketchbooks were viewed in moderation samples for both components, but less so for the Externally set task were reduced to 'scrapbooks' rather than sketchbooks and sometimes candidates presented the same image photocopied and then presented with assorted colours, different marks, or different shading, something which does not reflect the development of their ideas or particularly lend anything to the creative journey.

### Good practice

Consider quality not quantity.

Where candidates have completed multiple projects throughout the course, select the project that demonstrates their creative journey 'over time' and provide evidence for all Assessment Objectives.

### Moderator tips

Select and present the candidates 'best' work for moderation.

Avoid presenting for moderation the 'course'.

## Common misconceptions

First-hand observational drawing is not a requirement for a high level of achievement. Recording should be appropriate for the specialism undertaken.

Moderators are not involved in marking work, rather they make a comparison to national standards to discern if centre assessment is accurate. The internal marking and moderation process is in place to ensure consistency of marking within the centre, whereas moderation by the awarding body ensures that centre marking is in line with national standards.

Moderators are unable to amend the rank order of the work displayed and it is therefore the responsibility of the centre to make sure the order is correct. Centres are reminded that each component and specialism should be displayed separately.

The quality of work submitted is crucial rather than the quantity. The specification requires candidates to organise, select and present work for submission, thus a concise portfolio of high-quality studies is far more desirable. Moderators do not need to see the course, or indeed candidate improvement, but clear evidence of achievement.

The following as reported by moderators during the 2024 session are common misconceptions:

- moderators can moderate work in corridors and open spaces, which are often busy or are prone to interruptions and distractions
- teacher assessment can include giving weight to 'creative risk-taking' or the candidate's journey, neither of which are in the Assessment Objectives
- that it is appropriate for noisy activities to be taking place in nearby spaces/locations during the moderation being facilitated
- candidates' work can be presented on the floor or combined with teaching and learning exercises produced as part of the course
- moderators can view candidate submissions in very tight, confined spaces with poor lighting
- moderators do not need a desk with a power supply nearby. The moderator requires a suitable clear surface on which a laptop/paperwork will be used.

## Malpractice

The integrity of candidate work must be always maintained, with no third-party involvement in either supporting pieces or final outcomes. For example, AI content creation tools such as ChatGPT may have been used to generate written notes.

It is also possible for candidates' own work to be plagiarised if made available, via online technology, on social media or online forums. Candidates posting their work online, in part or full, before an assessment session is complete, including the period for Review of Results, should be avoided.

Online platforms where work is stored must be secure.

In the Externally set task, preparatory work must be submitted before the 10-hour time period. Centres should not allow candidates to continue working on any preparatory materials either during, or after, the 10 hours has taken place.

Centres are reminded that candidates' submissions must not include inappropriate, offensive or disturbing material including obscenities, lewd comments or drawings, offensive comments aimed at others, and sexist or racist remarks.

## Summary

This report highlights several recurring themes and key points identified by moderators during the 2024 series.

Most notably is the importance of thorough and consistent recording of ideas, with candidates expected to clearly document ideas, creative processes and decisions, throughout their creative journey in ways appropriate to their specialism and their individual strengths.

Practical skills and technical proficiency in a variety of media are crucial, with successful candidates demonstrating strong observational skills and innovative use of materials, with the inclusion of digital recording becoming increasingly prevalent in the qualification.

This report highlights the successes of the candidates seen during moderation and the quality of teaching found in the deployment of the OCR GCSE Art and Design (9-1) specification. By building on these strengths and addressing the common misconceptions, candidate evidence for the Assessment Objectives will continue to evolve and support the development of the next generation of artists and designers.

## Helpful resources

See OCR's [Teach Cambridge](#) website for a range of resources, guidance and information on: teaching activities, schemes of work, teacher guides, sample assessment material, candidate exemplars, OCR Train, Switching to OCR, summary brochures.

**OCR wishes to thank teachers for their encouragement and assistance during moderation visits. The support materials available for both candidates and teachers were greatly influenced by this and the suggestions made.**

A small selection of GCSE work displayed for moderation in 2024 is shown in the exemplar photographs in this report. OCR would like to express our gratitude to all the candidates, teachers, and moderators who made this possible.

For further information regarding professional development for this specification 2024-2025, visit the [professional development area of OCR's website](#) or contact OCR Professional development training on 02476 496398 or email [professionaldevelopment@ocr.org.uk](mailto:professionaldevelopment@ocr.org.uk).

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