

Moderators' report

AS LEVEL

ART AND DESIGN

**OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE
in Art and Design (Art, Craft and Design,
Fine Art, Graphic Communication,
Photography, Textile Design,
Three-Dimensional Design and
Critical and Contextual Studies)**

H200-H206

For first teaching in 2015

H200-H206/01 Summer 2025 series

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Introduction

Our Moderators' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on centres' assessment of moderated work, based on what has been observed by the moderation team. These reports include a general commentary of accuracy of internal assessment judgements, identify good practice in relation to evidence collation and presentation, and comment on the quality of centre assessment decisions against individual Learning Objectives. The report also highlights areas where requirements have been misinterpreted and provides guidance to centre assessors on requirements for accessing higher mark bands. Where appropriate, the report will also signpost other sources of information that centre assessors will find helpful.

OCR completes moderation of centre-assessed work in order to quality assure the internal assessment judgements made by assessors within a centre. Where OCR cannot confirm the centre's marks, we may adjust them in order to align them to the national standard. Any adjustments to centre marks are detailed on the Moderation Adjustments report, which can be downloaded from Interchange when results are issued. Centres should also refer to their individual centre report provided after moderation has been completed. In combination, these centre-specific documents and this overall report should help to support centres' internal assessment and moderation practice for future series.

Online courses

We have created online courses to build your confidence in delivering, marking and administering internal assessment for our qualifications. Courses are available for Cambridge Nationals, GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016).

Cambridge Nationals

All teachers delivering our Cambridge Nationals suite are asked to complete the Essentials for the NEA course, which describes how to guide and support your students. You'll receive a certificate which you should retain.

Following this you can also complete a subject-specific Focus on Internal Assessment course for your individual Cambridge Nationals qualification, covering marking and delivery.

GCSE, A Level and Cambridge Technicals (2016)

We recommend all teachers complete the module on Online courses – NEA for their subject. These courses provide subject-specific information about course content; how to prepare for planning, marking and submitting; and support with understanding the marking criteria.

Accessing our online courses

You can access all our online courses from our teacher support website [Teach Cambridge](#).

These free online courses currently cover the end-to-end NEA process for teachers. You'll find the link to the **Online courses** under the **Assessment** or **Training** tab – hover over **Assessment** or **Training** on the horizontal menu and select **Online courses** from the dropdown.

These self-paced online courses are intended for any teachers. During the course, you will engage with interactive content on subjects such as guidance on unit content, structure and administrative processes.

If you have any queries, please contact our Customer Support Centre on 01223 553998 or email support@ocr.org.uk.

General overview

Component 01: Personal Investigation H200/01 – H206/01

The Specialisms

OCR AS Level in Art Craft and Design: H200

OCR AS Level in Art and Design, Fine Art: H201

OCR AS Level in Art and Design, Graphic Communication: H202

OCR AS Level in Art and Design, Photography: H203

OCR AS Level in Art and Design, Textile Design: H204

OCR AS Level in Art and Design, Three-Dimensional Design: H205

OCR AS Level in Art and Design, Critical and Contextual Studies: H206

The AS Level in Art and Design is fully co-teachable with OCR's A Level qualification. Correspondingly many observations within this report are common to both AS and A Level, especially mutual in terms of centre approaches to delivery, emphasis and assessment. Indeed, a centre will have the same moderator for both AS and A Level, usually during the one moderation visit.

The number of entries for AS Art and Design is slightly lower than the previous year, however the quality of work being produced is still on par with the standards reached in earlier AS sessions.

Some centres provide AS Art and Design as an independent qualification, whereas others take advantage of the opportunity to enter candidates for an AS Level to guarantee acknowledgement of their efforts, in case they do not proceed to study this subject at A Level.

In 2025 candidates had the opportunity to thoroughly investigate their centre set or personally chosen themes utilising resources from both within and outside the Art and Design department before showcasing their work in moderation, as noted by both teachers and moderators. Furthermore, as noted by a number of moderators, themes that are individually selected frequently lead to outcomes that are not only more personal but also better supported through the Assessment Objectives.

The highlighting of skill, knowledge, and understanding constitute a fundamental element of this AS Level qualification and should serve as the foundation for all work generated by candidates. Furthermore, skill, knowledge, and understanding encompass cross-curricular opportunities, facilitating the sharing of transferable skills among various subjects and providing candidates with the opportunity to acquire skill-based knowledge and understanding through diverse and creative methods.

The quality of AS work observed this year demonstrated the hard work and commitment of most candidates. Many moderators expressed pleasure at the quality and volume of candidates' submissions. One moderator wrote, 'I frequently came across work that showcased the finest aspects of this AS qualification. Many candidates consistently tackled all the assessment objectives thoroughly, resulting in outcomes that were skillful, distinctive and engaging'.

Moderators indicated that among the most notable attributes of the AS qualification were the variety of projects and the contextual research undertaken by candidates. Visits to museums and galleries

significantly contributed to expanding candidates' viewpoints, allowing them to effectively incorporate this acquired knowledge into their selected themes. This enhanced their work with knowledge and informed methodologies, demonstrating their ability to link academic concepts with the creation of their own practical work.

To provide first-hand experiences and relevant research materials, many candidates undertook self-arranged visits to relevant locations, galleries or museums, often in their local areas. For candidates, the opportunity to experience art, photography, craft, or design first-hand, or to engage directly with a practitioner, was profoundly influential. This exposure enabled them to express personal, informed, meaningful and independent ideas in a direct manner towards intended outcomes.

Once again in 2025, a considerable number of moderators indicated that the most successful submissions consistently demonstrated evidence of a well-structured creative process that was **carefully selected** before the **presentation for assessment**.

The AS course provided many candidates with the opportunity to work from a centre set theme. Other candidates responded to contemporary issues such as environmental change, equality, mental health, family, poverty, my culture and well-being concerns within their own selected and researched themes.

Other 2025 themes included: People and Music; Self-Portraiture or Identity; Our Street; Popular Culture; Travelling; Conflict; Fantasy Art and Urban Life.

Good Practice

Consider 'quality' not 'quantity'.

Where candidates have completed multiple projects throughout the course, select one project or theme that demonstrates the highest quality evidence for all assessment objectives.

Avoid submitting sketchbooks that evidence inconsistency in skill over time.

Moderator Tips

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

Avoid presenting the 'course' for moderation.

Administration and moderation

Comprehensive guidance regarding 'Non Examined Assessment' and the visiting moderation process, before, during, and after the visit is available on the OCR website. This includes essential instructions, required documentation, and details on how to communicate with your moderator before the scheduled visit. Centres are reminded that it is vitally important that communication, usually via email, is swift and conducted in a timely manner during the moderation session. All centres had uploaded the marks through Interchange and received a confirmation email with a list of the candidates required for moderation. Many centres forwarded the relevant documentation to moderators well before the May 31 deadline, however in several cases this was not done. These early submissions greatly supported the scheduling process, offering moderators increased flexibility to arrange visits. Indeed, moderators are happy to arrange early moderations as required. Centres are reminded that attempting to dictate specific moderation dates, often to coincide with School/College exhibitions is not acceptable unless exceptional circumstances have been discussed and approved with OCR.

The 'non exam assessment – centre marks form: NEA/A/H200-H206' must be sent to the moderator in advance of the moderation visit.

The majority of Centres continue to use the Interactive Assessment Summary Form, and it is strongly encouraged as this assists in the avoidance of arithmetical error.

Full instructions are to be found on the reverse of this '**NEA/A/H200-H206**' form

Digital files should be labelled to remove candidate names and ensuring clear and consistent identification of files. Candidate names should also be removed from within the presentation.

The format this should take is:

Centre Number / Specialism / Component / Candidate Number / Mark

e.g.

43215_H201_PI_0789_80.

This should be completed in advance of the moderation in 2026. See [Teach Cambridge | Resources to prepare learners for assessment](#) for the forms you'll need.

Moderation

In 2025, moderators reiterated that centres derive significant satisfaction from ensuring that candidates' work is showcased optimally for moderation. Once again, moderators collectively commended the dedication and effort that centres devote to this crucial element of the assessment process. Generally, submissions were presented vertically on walls or display boards, accompanied by sketchbooks or other supplementary studies. Frequently, the work was meticulously labelled, thoughtfully organised, and, importantly, **arranged in rank order**.

A notable success in several centres this year was the use of mobile trolleys to transport laptops displaying digital portfolios directly to the physical location of each candidate's work. This approach significantly improved accessibility, particularly in respect of work not being placed on floors. This allowed moderators to make immediate and meaningful comparisons between digital and physical outcomes. It also ensured that digital submissions were viewed in the context of the candidate's full body of work, enhancing the coherence of the presentation.

Digital portfolios were increasingly used across centres, and when well-organised, they enabled candidates to select and present their strongest work with clarity and purpose. This format proved particularly effective in showcasing time-based media, interactive elements, and layered investigations that might otherwise be difficult to present in print.

Moderators noted that accessibility was best supported when:

- Digital work was displayed on screens large enough to view detail clearly.
- Navigation was intuitive, with clear file naming and logical sequencing.
- Sketchbooks and journals were placed on tables rather than the floor.
- Adequate space and lighting were provided for both digital and physical work.

Centres are reminded that:

- A table and suitable working surface must be provided for the moderator.
- Digital submissions should be accessible via more than one screen where possible.
- A member of staff should be available throughout the visit to assist with administrative or technical queries.
- A parking space should be reserved for moderators travelling by car.

These thoughtful and practical arrangements contributed to a smooth moderation process and ensured that candidates' work was presented in a professional and accessible manner.

Good Practice

When the visiting moderation period draws near, please ensure your exams officer or centre representative with responsibility for marks submission understands the necessity of prompt communication, forwarding relevant emails to the centre's Art team without delay.

Check and double check the transfer of marks from the centre Marks Forms with assessment objective breakdowns, to Interchange to avoid transcriptional errors.

Moderator Tips

The sample request email from OCR will not be in rank order. Ensure that all OCR selected samples are displayed in rank order, in a quiet venue.

Whenever possible centre representatives should be available if needed by the moderator to discuss the samples throughout the visit. This should not cause alarm; often moderators need to speak with teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the candidates' work.

Personal investigation: Component 01

The submissions for AS Level this year showed that most candidates demonstrated self-confidence, independent thought, and an understanding of visual components, which effectively enhance their personal responses to the chosen topic or subject matter.

Regrettably, a limited number of candidates exhibited insufficient effort or ineffective working methods, which ultimately prevented them from realising their potential or fully capitalising on the available opportunities to be found within this AS qualification. Unfortunately, once again in 2025, a limited number of candidates exhibited a significant imbalance regarding the responses to the Assessment Objectives and did not result in suitably resolved outcome(s) or submissions. Disappointingly, a small number of candidates did not listen to or act on the advice given by their teachers.

The ongoing and consistent rise in the amount of work produced using digital applications across all specialisms is significant; however, centres must ensure suitable access that allows the moderator to effectively compare the outcomes of individual candidates is available during moderation.

Teachers must also remain vigilant regarding safeguarding protocols and the suitability of both visual and written materials for inclusion in a public qualification when evaluating themes and content.

Many centres encouraged individually negotiated themes, which proved highly effective in fostering independent thinking and sustained inquiry. Candidates who began with a clear Statement of Intent often produced more cohesive and critically engaged investigations.

It is important to note, that teachers should be mindful of safeguarding practices and the appropriateness of content, both visual and written, for entry into a public examination when considering themes and content.

The most successful submissions demonstrated:

- A clear theme or idea from initial research through to final outcome(s).
- Thoughtful integration of contextual references.
- A willingness to explore with scale, media, and presentation formats.

Moderators also noted both the value and impact of first-hand research, with many candidates visiting galleries, museums, and local environments to positively inform their work. In some cases, travel provided unique visual material, while others made effective use of their immediate surroundings to develop observational studies and photographic series.

Overall, the AS Personal Investigation continues to be a powerful vehicle for creative expression.

For the purposes of assessment, candidates will provide evidence of all the Assessment Objectives through the **careful selection and presentation** of their work.

Teachers are reminded that the work produced in response to this AS Level Art and Design Specification, as specified in the '**Core Content**' section, indicates clearly that the aims which the qualification set out have been achieved in terms of candidates being able to show:

- *intellectual, imaginative, creative and intuitive capabilities*
- *investigative, analytical, practical, technical and expressive skills, aesthetic understanding and critical judgement*

- *independence of mind in developing, refining and communicating their own ideas, their own intentions and their own personal outcomes*
- *an understanding of the inter-relationships between art, craft and design processes and an awareness of the contexts in which they operate*
- *knowledge and understanding of art, craft, design and media and technologies in contemporary and past societies and cultures*
- *an interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of art, craft and design.*

Good Practice

Ensure the 'selection and presentation' of candidates' work has been considered before Centre marking. The entire AS Level 'course' in all its forms should not be presented.

When candidates are given choice to respond to something that interests them, there will be improved engagement, motivation and outcomes.

Moderator Tips

Quality over quantity is an important consideration when investigating sources for Assessment Objective 1. Copious artist references dilute legitimate critical understanding and analysis to inform the production of practical work.

Pertinent and relevant annotation provides direction, and evidences candidates' understanding of sources and how they intend to use knowledge and understanding in the development of their work.

AO1: Develop ideas through sustained and focused investigations informed by contextual and other sources, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding.

In 2025, candidates demonstrated a broadening approach to developing ideas, with many showing a clear commitment to sustained inquiry and critical engagement. The most successful investigations were those where candidates used contextual sources not only to inform their thinking but to challenge and refine their creative direction over time.

Across both components, candidates explored a wide range of starting points, from personal narratives and cultural identity to conceptual themes such as transformation, concealment, and psychological space. These investigations were often enriched by well-chosen contextual references, with candidates drawing from both historical and contemporary sources to support their ideas. In several cases, candidates used culturally specific artists to deepen the relevance of their work, moving beyond the more familiar canon.

Where AO1 was the strongest element in a submission, candidates demonstrated a clear ability to synthesise research into their own creative language. This was evident in the way they analysed visual strategies, thematic content, and material processes, and then applied these insights to their own work in a purposeful and reflective manner. In some centres, candidates used their Related Study or Statement of Intent to frame their investigations, which helped to maintain focus and coherence throughout the creative process.

Moderators noted that candidates who revisited and re-evaluated their contextual sources as their work progressed were more likely to produce outcomes that felt resolved and conceptually grounded. This iterative approach, where research and making informed one another, was a key feature of high-level submissions.

However, in some cases, contextual research remained superficial or overly descriptive. A reliance on biographical summaries or uncritical copying of stylistic elements limited the depth of analysis and hindered the development of personal voice. Centres are encouraged to support candidates in moving beyond superficial engagement by prompting critical questions about the work studied and to reflect on how it relates to their own intentions.

Overall, AO1 was most effectively addressed when candidates approached their investigations with curiosity, and a willingness to interrogate both their sources and their own creative decisions.

Good Practice

Develop ideas through investigations informed by selecting and critically analysing sources from either/both contemporary and historical backgrounds, making direct connections to practical work.

The sources investigated clearly influenced the selection of materials, media, techniques and processes, supporting the exploration of a theme and the realisation of intentions.

Moderator Tips

Candidates should provide evidence of their understanding of the purpose, intentions and functions of art, craft and design and how these impact on their own work.

AO2: Explore and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, reviewing and refining ideas as work develops.

Candidates in 2025 engaged with a wide range of materials and processes, often combining traditional and digital approaches with increasing fluency. Stronger submissions demonstrated purposeful exploration, where media choices clearly supported the development of ideas.

Investigation was most effective when it led to refinement, through sketchbooks or studies, digital portfolios, or test, maquettes or planning pieces, and informed decision-making. Candidates who revisited and adapted their methods as their work progressed produced more coherent and resolved outcomes.

Media such as oil, acrylic, printmaking, textiles, and sculpture were used alongside digital tools such as Photoshop, Illustrator, and Procreate. In some centres, candidates extended their practice into animation, VR painting, and 3D construction, with sculptural installations and digital edits supporting ambitious final pieces.

There was a noticeable rise in explorations within printmaking, with candidates producing ambitious outcomes through intaglio, lino, and notably, screen printing, often combining these processes with mixed media to enhance surface and texture.

However, in less successful submissions, exploratory work lacked direction towards intended outcomes. Repetition of techniques without reflection, particularly in photography or printmaking, often resulted in repetitive outcomes. Centres are encouraged to guide candidates in selecting and refining processes that meaningfully advance their ideas.

Where AO2 was strongest, candidates demonstrated not only technical skill but also discernment; knowing when to push, adapt, or abandon an approach in pursuit of a more resolved creative outcome.

Good Practice

Drawing should be appropriate to the Specialism entered. It is essential to ensure that the quality of recording matches the wider body of work produced and sustains achievement.

An inventive use of media, materials and techniques and processes, rather than replication without direction, provides for sophisticated refinement.

More successful submissions linked media, materials, techniques and processes to critical understanding.

Moderator Tips

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

Use image editing techniques that link to the sources investigated.

Ensure the exploration of materials, media, techniques and processes is with purpose to the evolution of a selected theme/project/study.

AO3: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions, reflecting critically on work and progress.

Recording in 2025 continued to take diverse and often inventive forms, with candidates using drawing, photography, annotation, extended writing, and digital media to document their thinking. In the strongest submissions, recording was purposeful and clearly aligned with the candidates' intentions, offering insight into both visual development and conceptual progression.

Drawing remained a core strength across many centres, with candidates showcasing the confident use of line, tone, and composition. Observational studies, ranging from still life and portraiture to architectural and botanical forms, were often used to explore formal elements such as foreshortening, scale, and spatial depth. In several cases, candidates extended this through mixed media layering, collage, and digital manipulation to test compositional ideas and visual effects. These often led to hybrid approaches leading to new ways of creating outcomes.

Photography was widely used to support recording, particularly in documenting installations, capturing source material, or experimenting with light and movement. In some centres, candidates used projection, or animated sequences to push the boundaries of traditional photographic recording.

Annotation varied in quality. Where it was most effective, candidates used it to reflect critically on their decisions, articulate intentions, and evaluate progress. However, in less successful submissions, annotation was either overly descriptive or absent, limiting the clarity of the creative journey.

Moderators noted that recording was most successful when it was selective and reflective, rather than repetitive. Candidates who revisited and refined their visual and written responses as their work evolved demonstrated a deeper level of engagement and understanding.

Good Practice

Recording in all its forms and appropriate to the specialism entered, should provide evidence of insights, knowledge and understanding in support of all the practical work produced.

Moderator Tips

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

AO4: Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and, where appropriate, makes connections between visual and other elements.

Outcomes in 2025 continued to reflect a broadening of presentation formats, with many candidates moving beyond singular pieces to produce installations, layered mixed media work. In a small number of centres, candidates incorporated projections, audio, and sculptural elements, demonstrating an awareness of how display can enhance meaning and impact.

Where AO4 was strongest, candidates had clearly selected and organised their work to showcase the most resolved and conceptually aligned outcomes. These submissions demonstrated a coherent link between development and final realisation, with thoughtful decisions about scale, format, and context.

However, some candidates submitted large volumes of work without sufficient curation, which diluted the impact of their final pieces. Centres are reminded to guide students in selecting work that best reflects their intentions and technical strengths.

Overall, AO4 was most effectively addressed when candidates presented outcomes that were personal, purposeful, and visually compelling: supported by a clear understanding of how to communicate ideas through form, media, and presentation.

Good Practice

Quality not quantity. Assessment Objective 4 is the overall submission and provides evidence of the evolution of a theme, from conception to realisation, not just a 'final piece'.

The outcome(s) should demonstrate a sustained application of the creative process in a focused way.

Moderator Tips

There was some evidence of superficial connections to contextual sources, which had limited impact on candidates' practical work or outcomes. A deeper critical understanding of formal elements and the visual or contextual qualities in the work of artists, practitioners or designers would have strengthened candidates' ability to develop their ideas and effectively realise their intentions.

The specialisms

Digital technologies across the specialisms

Art, Craft and Design (H200/01)

This year saw a notable breadth in the combinations of 'areas of study', with Fine Art and Textiles, Printmaking and Photography, 3D reliefs and installations, Fashion and Graphics all contributing to rich, diverse creative responses. Digital technologies played a significant role across many submissions. Digital sketchbooks often took the form of Sways, PowerPoints, and other cloud-based presentation tools, enabling candidates to organise and present their work effectively. These platforms enhanced accessibility but require careful preparation: Centres are reminded to provide necessary access passwords and to verify that links and embedded media function reliably for moderation purposes.

Technological innovation was also evident in the creative use of laser cutting, 3D printing, and mobile digital art applications such as Procreate and Photoshop. Some candidates explored animation and moving image work within their sketchbooks, although moderators noted challenges when such content was flattened in exported PDFs. Ensuring that digital submissions preserve interactivity and motion is essential for fully conveying candidates' intent. Overall, these approaches reflect growing confidence in using technology as an integral part of the creative process.

Fine Art (H201/01)

Painting and drawing remain central to Fine Art, forming the foundation of many submissions.

Candidates are increasingly integrating digital technologies to expand creative possibilities, including:

- Tablet-based apps for intuitive digital mark-making and experimenting with layers, brushes, and textures.
- Graphic tablets for working directly in digital software to support illustration and complex compositional editing.
- Animated illustrations, GIFs, and time-lapse recordings provided insights into creative journeys, demonstrating technical skill and reflective practice.
- Video and sound elements were incorporated into installations, enriching the sensory experience.
- Projection techniques, such as projection mapping, were used to layer moving content onto three-dimensional forms and spaces.
- Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) featured in a few innovative submissions, allowing interactive engagement through mobile devices or headsets.

These practices show digital technologies as complementary tools in Fine Art, extending expressive outcomes rather than replacing traditional skills.

Graphic Communication (H202/01)

Moderators observed a growing sophistication in candidate' use of digital workflows, with seamless integration across mobile and desktop platforms:

- InDesign was widely used for desktop publishing and e-publications, many featuring moving image, hyperlinks, and interactive elements to enhance audience engagement.
- Digital tablets running mobile Adobe apps and creative tools like Procreate enabled candidates to sketch, explore, and prototype on the go.
- Mobile outputs transitioned smoothly into desktop software such as Photoshop, Illustrator, and After Effects for further refinement.

These professional workflows reflected an increasing awareness of industry practice and a confidence in presenting work in dynamic, accessible formats.

Photography (H203/01)

In this specialism, moderators noted increasing sophistication in candidates' use of digital technologies, which complemented traditional photographic practices. Submissions demonstrated:

- High-resolution still and moving image capture, including 4K+ video, slow motion, and cinematic techniques.
- Advanced editing workflows using professional software for visual and audio elements, supporting polished films, animations, and multimedia outcomes.
- Tethered shooting with live image previews to refine lighting, focus and composition during sessions.
- Portable lighting systems, LED panels and modifiers, allowing creative control in both studio and location settings.
- Emerging practices such as 360-degree recording for VR experiences, drone photography for aerial perspectives and augmented reality site-specific content triggered by location.

These approaches reflect a confident integration of traditional and digital methods, enabling ambitious, innovative, and professional standard outcomes. Centres are reminded to ensure all digital content submitted for moderation remains accessible, with interactive and media elements functioning as intended.

Textile Design (H204/01)

Responses to this specialism continue to fall broadly into two pathways: Textile Design and Fashion. Textile Design was explored in various forms, including constructed, dyed, expressive, and printed textiles. Common processes included free machine embroidery, screen printing, photo-transfer printing, appliqué, and fabric manipulation.

Digital applications were increasingly evident, with candidates using:

- Vector-based software for repeat pattern development and technical drawings

- Tablet apps for digital illustration and surface design experimentation
- CAD programs for virtual garment design and pattern cutting
- Sublimation printing workflows and laser cutting to translate digital designs into textile outcomes

These approaches reflect a growing confidence in blending traditional textile techniques with contemporary digital workflows.

Three-Dimensional Design (H205/01)

The increasing uptake in this specialism can be attributed, in part, to the growing synergy between Art, Design, and Technology departments. This has fostered shared expertise and access to advanced tools, broadening the creative and technical scope of candidates' work.

Moderators reported significant growth in the use of digital processes, including:

- CAD modelling for conceptualising and refining products, architectural spaces and structural forms, supporting both aesthetic and functional design considerations.
- Tablet-based 3D modelling apps, allowing candidates to draw and manipulate complex forms directly in digital space.
- Mobile scanning technologies, such as LiDAR, used to capture accurate 3D data of objects and environments for further development.
- Outputs from these processes frequently included high-quality renders, prototypes, and physical realisations through 3D printing and CNC milling, demonstrating an awareness of contemporary workflows from industry to production.

This integration of digital tools with traditional methods highlights a growing sophistication in candidates' approach to design, enabling them to create outcomes that are ambitious, innovative, and reflective of professional standards.

Critical/Contextual Studies (H206/01)

Critical and Contextual Studies continues to engage a dedicated cohort, with candidates demonstrating an increasingly sophisticated use of digital tools to support research, analysis and presentation.

Moderators noted:

- Handwriting recognition software transforming handwritten tablet notes into editable text for ease of drafting and revision.
- Speech-to-text tools supporting accessibility and efficiency in writing processes.
- Advanced grammar and style checkers contributing to high-quality academic language.
- CAD software applied to plan exhibition spaces, supporting the visualisation of how critical and contextual research might be presented physically or digitally.
- Graphics software such as Photoshop and Illustrator used to create promotional materials, including posters, flyers and digital content to support exhibitions and contextual presentations.

- Final outcomes often presented professionally through digital printing, e-publications, or interactive online formats.

This integration of traditional research methods with contemporary digital workflows demonstrates candidates' growing confidence in presenting critical and contextual work to a professional standard.

Common misconceptions

First-hand observational drawing is not a requirement for high achievement. Recording should be appropriate to the specialism and the candidate's intentions, whether through drawing, photography, digital media, or other relevant methods.

Centres should not conflate the moderation display with a centre exhibition.

Moderators do not mark work; their role is to compare the centre's assessment against national standards. Internal marking and moderation ensure consistency within the centre, while external moderation confirms alignment with national expectations.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that the rank order of work is accurate and clearly presented. Each component and specialism must be displayed separately for moderation, with clear labelling and logical organisation.

Quality is more important than quantity. Candidates are expected to organise, select, and present their work to reflect their best achievements. Submitting excessive or inconsistent work can obscure the clarity of the creative journey and may disadvantage the candidate.

Assessment Objective 2 requires candidates to **explore** their theme or topic through purposeful investigation and refinement, not to 'experiment'.

The Related Study must be presented as a distinct element, separate from contextual research embedded in the practical portfolio. Candidates should clearly identify their own work and distinguish it from collected or referenced material, using a bibliography.

Moderators also reported the following recurring issues in 2025:

- Work displayed in corridors or open spaces prone to interruptions, which is not suitable for moderation.
- Moderation taking place near disruptive activities such as band rehearsals or dance classes.
- Work presented on the floor or in confined spaces without appropriate surfaces for review.
- Lack of a clear desk or workspace for moderators to use laptops and paperwork.
- Teacher assessments factoring in 'creative risk-taking' or the candidate's journey; neither of which are part of the formal assessment objectives.

Centres are encouraged to review their moderation arrangements to ensure they support a smooth and professional process, with appropriate consideration for accessibility and health and safety - providing moderators with a quiet, well-lit space, a clear working surface, and unobstructed access to the work being assessed.

Avoiding potential malpractice

Maintaining the integrity of candidate work is essential. All submissions must be the candidate's own. While AI may be used as a reference tool, it must not be used to generate or complete any part of the assessed work. Any use of AI must be clearly acknowledged and appropriately referenced.

Candidates should also be cautious when sharing their work online. Posting any part of their submission on social media, websites, or forums before the assessment window has closed, including the Review of Results period, would risk unauthorised use or plagiarism by others. Centres must ensure that any online platforms used to store or share work are secure and access is controlled.

In the Externally set Task, all preparatory work must be completed and submitted before the 15-hour supervised period begins. Candidates must neither submit work undertaken before the issue of the paper, nor continue to develop preparatory materials during, or after, the timed sessions.

Centres are reminded that all submitted work must be appropriate for a public examination. Submissions must not include offensive, explicit, or discriminatory content in any form - whether visual, written, or audio. This includes obscenities, lewd imagery, or remarks that are sexist, racist, or otherwise harmful.

By reinforcing these expectations, centres help ensure a fair, respectful, and secure assessment environment for all candidates.

Summary

Helpful resources

OCR is the first port of call for helpful resources and teacher support. Below is a small selection of the resources/guides available

Teach Cambridge

Teaching Activities

Planning

Teacher Guides

Sample Assessment Material

Candidate Exemplar

OCR e-learning platform embedded in Teach Cambridge

Summary Brochures

Switching to OCR

This report reflects the feelings of the entire moderation team who recognise and applaud the tremendous encouragement and care Centre staff have consistently shown their candidates both in the delivery of their courses and their professionalism throughout the moderation period.

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

The opportunities for never-ending creativity combined with the showcasing of skill and knowledge is but one of the many features that makes this OCR AS Level specification such a rewarding experience for all candidates and those who teach.

Further information regarding professional development, either face to face or online, for this AS Specification 2025-2026 will be available on the OCR website, www.ocr.org.uk or by contacting OCR Training on 02476 851509 or by email to cpdhub@ocr.org.uk in September 2025.

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

ExamBuilder is the exam paper builder platform for a range of our qualifications. [Find out more](#).

Free for all OCR centres with an Interchange account, it allows unlimited users per centre. We require an [Interchange](#) username to verify your centre's users for ExamBuilder.

If you do not have an Interchange account, please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username.

Once you have an Interchange username, use the form on [this page](#) to sign up for ExamBuilder, or ask an existing user at your centre to create an ExamBuilder account for you.

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

Tell us what you think

Your feedback plays an important role in how we develop, market, support and resource qualifications now and into the future. We want you and your students to enjoy and get the best out of our qualifications and resources, but to do that we need your honest opinions to tell us whether we're on the right track or not.

You can email your thoughts to resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk or visit our [feedback page](#) to learn more about how you can help us improve our resources.



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