

ART & DESIGN

Paper 9479/01 Coursework Assignment
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Key messages

- Successful work contained clear intentions and careful presentation to show candidate achievement. Other submissions would have benefited from candidates selecting their most relevant work to demonstrate their ability to refine ideas as the work progressed.
- Portfolios often contained a central focus with ideas developing around the theme. Recording was investigated with purpose from a range of sources to demonstrate a personal response.
- The strongest work contained detailed recording and in-depth investigation from thoughtfully selected primary sources. Topics were explored through a range of well executed media, including the candidates' own photography.
- Less successful submissions contained an over-reliance on downloaded images from the internet or from other secondary sources. This prevented personal development and limited an original response.
- Several submissions contained many creative ideas and images but without evidence of a clear starting point. It was often difficult to identify a clear progression of ideas. This incohesive development prevented the communication of how ideas had evolved and where images originated.
- Candidates are strongly advised to distinguish between their own work and that of others. Clearly labelling their own photography and citing other references will communicate their achievement more effectively.

General comments

Many submissions were clearly labelled and presented in an appropriate manner on A2 paper or thin card. The most successful portfolios were well organised, and candidates were able to identify and present the most purposeful work to support ideas. Other submissions either exceeded the recommended size, or presented sheets of different sizes and orientations. Canvases on frames were included where photographs would have been more appropriate. Some submissions contained multiple pull-out flaps, preventing a clear picture of candidate achievement. Candidates should consider that selecting the most relevant work for the portfolio demonstrates their ability to edit and show a clear progression of ideas, while also following the quantity requirements of the syllabus.

A range of thoughtful topics often reflected sustained personal engagement. Many candidates referenced personal issues such as identity, anger and isolation. Other themes focused on the local community and environment, friendships, families, ecological issues, rituals, still-life and portraiture. Many of these topics enabled candidates to engage with first-hand sources and contextual references within their surroundings. Some candidates focused on interpretative ideas, which sometimes presented challenges in sourcing original first-hand starting points. In these instances, candidates often relied on the use of secondary-sourced material, using found images from the internet, preventing a personal response.

Most candidates realised their work within the area of fine art and mixed media. There were a few examples of graphic design, textiles, fashion, printmaking and 3D. Photography was a valuable contribution to the recording which enriched the possibilities within the starting points. There was much inclusion of digital manipulation, often used as a tool to explore and develop ideas.

Visits to art galleries, studios and museums stimulated creative responses in the strongest work. Quality references enabled strong development, often supported by thoughtful annotation to express intentions and show connections. Other examples included lengthy passages of annotation which were either descriptive or biographical. This often had little impact on the progression of the visual work.

Higher levels

The topics reflected candidate interest and it was this interest that engaged the creative process from conception to realisation. These submissions were personal and candidates had thoughtfully selected a range of reference material relevant to their theme. The recording of visual stimulus was executed in detail and the quality of the observations demonstrated an excellent understanding of the formal elements. The work was original and focused and reflected excellent technical competence.

Recording from direct observation initiated investigation and idea exploration. Many candidates observed from accessible sources such as objects, people or places within their own environment. Conceptual ideas were also explored which were inventive in execution. These candidates demonstrated the skill and realisation of how to effectively consider unusual starting points and alternative ways of developing an idea. Investigation from first-hand experience was often extensive and continuously informed subsequent development. Reflecting on achievement at each stage of the work enabled refinement.

Many candidates recorded and developed ideas by setting up scenes or posing models through photography. Other candidates used photography to investigate and develop ideas throughout the work. Stronger candidates evidenced their ability to fully explore the subject matter while developing ideas through relevant photographic techniques. These included making and using pinhole cameras, cyanotypes, film and digital photography. Inspiration was taken from the works of other photographers and art practitioners. Some candidates chose to manipulate their photographs by scratching, tearing and cutting into the images.

A range of media and processes were explored with fluency, showing the ability to successfully select and combine different approaches. Materials were used to great effect and in sympathy with the concepts which candidates attempted to convey. Where digital applications were used, candidates focused on developing their own original imagery to move an idea forward, rather than merely using filters to repeat an idea.

Investigation of contextual referencing informed intelligent decision-making. These references supported media or idea exploration and built on intentions. Annotated critical analysis was concise and supported development, highlighting the key areas that enabled refinement. Clear presentation visually communicated the creative journey in a cohesive manner.

Middle levels

Many candidates demonstrated ability to gather their visual research from a range of thoughtful sources but intentions were less clear, impacting on their ability to focus on coherent ideas. Many candidates explored a range of primary and secondary sources to inform ideas with varying degrees of purpose, but some examples included unrelated material that did not support the final outcome. The continuity within the work was often inconsistent. Frequently, many ideas demonstrated a good level of technical skill, but often without the support of related first-hand recording. In contrast, some imaginative starting points were apparent in response to a chosen theme, but these candidates often lacked the skills to convey their ideas.

Initial research often informed idea development. A range of ideas and further opportunities were realised and time was spent planning for the outcome. In some instances, effective decision-making was challenged by the candidates' inability to develop intentions with confidence. Consequently, a more obvious direction of creativity followed with less evidence of risk taking. Ideas were often less thought out, with candidates unaware of how to select the best ideas to take forward. This led to unresolved final outcomes.

Visual investigations of contextual sources generally supported ideas and techniques but these references were not always relevant or informative to the candidates' own work. While some candidates were able to inform their work through exploration of colour and technique, others would have benefited from challenging their ideas through critical reflection. Investigating the works of relevant art practitioners or cultural referencing could have enriched the direction of study, enabling individual development.

Approaches to materials and processes were sometimes experimental, and open to different ways of communicating ideas. There were often interesting and imaginative explorations of media, and the work was frequently lively and engaged. However, some candidates were unable to realise the potential in their media use to move their work forward confidently. Some portfolios were individual and engaged, but other work contained an insufficient depth of enquiry to enable a sustained and resolved body of work.

Lower levels

Many portfolios at this level did not include first-hand recording. These submissions often contained insufficient research from original sources and relied heavily on secondary-sourced imagery from the internet. Intentions were unclear and focus was limited, preventing any meaningful depth of study or cohesion. These candidates were less able to critically reflect on the progress of their work.

There was a lack of adequate observation and recording skills. Origins of visual work was often unclear as sources were frequently not cited. However, some candidates generated recording from primary sources but often this was limited in scope and range. Insufficient visual stimulus reduced idea possibilities. Sometimes candidates chose a theme where it was difficult to source first-hand imagery. These candidates would have benefited from a theme that provided opportunity for easier access to first-hand sources.

There were many submissions where candidates were clearly keen to start with their ideas straightaway. However, with an absence of initial observational studies, the work lacked development of technique and originality. There was often much annotation which did not inform the work. Sometimes, the written work outweighed the visual content.

Candidates at this level used a limited range of media which restricted development. The lack of experience and understanding in the materials rendering was clear. Inconsistent media use throughout these submissions highlighted these candidates' inability to recognise the strengths in their work.

Many photographic submissions were presented and often contained limited visual research with little or no exploration of ideas or technique. Other photography submissions simply contained a range of photographs without full exploration of the theme or development. There was very little evidence of investigation into the photographic process. There was little evidence of reference to other photographers or art practitioners to inform subject matter, development or technique.

It was often difficult to comprehend the journey of an idea and how the work in the portfolio connected with the final outcome. The work was generally not cohesive in terms of project development, without purposeful investigation.

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Paper 9479/02 Externally Set Assignment
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Key messages

- Some centres submitted work on large boards and canvasses which were difficult to handle, and some were also encased in plastic sleeves that made it difficult to see the work.
- Where digital media was used, the best work included candidates' working processes and methods. However, some had no description of the process used and this had a negative impact on the level of attainment.
- In the strongest work, candidates had made intellectual choices when studying and investigating the works of other artists and cultures and these supported the development of ideas and intentions.

General comments

Overall, work was well presented and followed a logical progression relating to the chosen exam question. The most common area of study was drawing and painting and related media. Other areas of study included photography, textiles, design, digital media, and sculpture. The most successful submissions included recording from first-hand sources. Photography was also a valuable contribution to exploring possible starting points.

Higher levels

At this level, submissions demonstrated clear intentions enabling candidates to confidently select a range of appropriate sources for research. Candidates often selected a question that clearly reflected their interests and so focus remained sustained throughout. Submissions included relevant observational studies that accurately recorded detail and explored a variety of viewpoints, altering scale and conditions such as lighting and distortion. This visual research thoroughly explored candidates' chosen question and provided much material for them to develop, and this informed their progression of ideas. Candidates used a range of media including photography to inform their studies especially when considering unusual viewpoints.

Candidates explored the full extent of their chosen media and were able to combine materials and approaches to communicate their ideas effectively. Their media use showed excellent control with sensitivity to their subject matter and underlying concepts. At this level, candidates using digital technology in their supporting studies and/or in the final outcome and clearly indicated the process behind arriving at a manipulated image.

Development of ideas was evident throughout the supporting work. Candidates used their research into other artists' work to inform their ideas and approach with materials as well as composition and presentation. At this level, they did not just copy the work of their chosen artist but were able to analyse and translate this into their own imagery.

The presentation of the work was thoughtful and there was a sense of development within the supporting works leading up to the final outcome that was well planned. This allowed candidates to produce an informed outcome in the timed test. The submissions included concise and purposeful annotation, indicating a clear direction and ability to make progress with their intention. The sequence of the work flowed in a chronological manner showing the connections between their ideas and the work of others. Candidates demonstrated excellent understanding of the formal elements to effectively communicate their ideas and intentions both in the supporting studies and in the final outcome.

Middle levels

Some of the candidates at this level demonstrated the ability to record and select appropriate sources for research. In many submissions, this recording provided a good basis for development and media exploration. Other work was less coherent and candidates' ability to focus on a clear in-depth direction was less obvious. This work tended to be disconnected, confusing and unresolved.

At this level media manipulation was often inconsistent. However, there was a willingness to experiment. Most candidates were able to demonstrate a higher skill level when copying other artists' work or secondary-sourced images but were less confident with media use when developing their own observations. Often the artists selected were not relevant to the candidates' ideas and therefore the work carried out was not purposeful to their progression.

Candidates often used photography in submissions at this level, either as a recording tool or to inform the development of ideas. In purely photographic submissions, candidates used photography well to explore the chosen question demonstrating a good understanding of the visual elements such as tone, composition, colour and pattern. However, they often found it difficult to develop ideas from these initial photographs, especially in relation to technique and media use. Reference to relevant artists would have helped these candidates to focus and progress their ideas.

In some submissions, idea exploration was imaginative, evolving from effective initial recording. Some candidates explored successful compositions through image, colour and media manipulation. Others were less able to connect and progress their visual recording into developed responses. These candidates produced many creative ideas but were not able to effectively communicate how the images had progressed from the initial recording. In some cases the supporting work did not directly relate to the final outcome.

Lower levels

Work at the lower level was characterised by a lack of cohesion throughout the submission. Despite the questions offering opportunities for the recording of everyday objects, submissions at this level lacked evidence of first-hand observations.

Where recording was in evidence, it was frequently second hand and not always credited. When candidates did include the work of other artists, it was not always relevant to their own work and it did not inform the development of ideas. Sometimes candidates included a picture of their chosen artist and provided a biography rather than research the actual artwork.

Many candidates relied heavily on second-hand sources or images drawn and created purely from their imagination. The work would have benefited from more in-depth investigation of the chosen question during the initial stages.

Candidates at this level would have benefitted from further support with basic drawing skills and use of media to record ideas and develop their work with more confidence. Media use was not fully explored and technical skills were often limited. Where candidates demonstrated satisfactory technical ability there was little evidence of media exploration or of trying to develop their media skills in any way. For example, by working on different backgrounds or experimenting with mark-making techniques. Many candidates were unable to recognise or build on their strengths. There was little inclusion of purposeful contextual referencing to inform media use or encourage a personal approach to idea development.

Often the final outcome was not informed by the supporting work and at times it was not connected at all to the images seen in the supporting work. All candidates would have benefited from more planning, exploring alternative compositions and colourways for example, before creating the final outcome in the timed test.

ART & DESIGN

Paper 9479/03 Personal Investigation

Key messages

Some submissions had 3D relief work, casts and organic matter attached. Candidates are reminded that any 3D objects or organic matter should be photographed to be included in the portfolio, rather than submitting the actual items.

There was some unnecessary imagery including dead animals and blood that were not relevant to the communication of ideas or the development of the investigation.

The use of additional flaps should be avoided. More focused editing of the work would help to show the creative process more clearly.

General comments

Most investigations focused on paint and related media as well as some textiles, fashion, 3D and mixed media. Most candidates presented their submissions on A2 sheets with the practical exploration integrated within the written analysis. Some work contained only a written analysis, in the form of an essay. This did not inform the candidates' ideas or any practical exploration. There were also submissions containing written content that did not connect to the practical work, or inform the direction of the investigation. Some submissions were not presented sequentially and had adjacent pages upside down and back to front, making them difficult to follow. There was evidence of AI generated images included in a few submissions but in most cases candidates highlighted the sources used.

There were many examples of gallery and museum visits included within the personal investigations that were relevant to the theme and subsequent development of candidates' work. Many local artists were included within the studies due to their accessibility and their shared cultural experiences with candidates.

USB sticks, QR codes and CDs should not be sent.

Higher levels

Candidates at this level demonstrated a good balance between their critical and technical skills. Submissions were characterised by thoroughness and an implicit understanding of the assessment objectives.

Relevant sources were confidently chosen, enabling intelligent investigation. Recording was purposeful and candidates were fully engaged with the work. Ideas were recorded from a variety of sources, mostly from first-hand experience and direct observation.

Critical thinking was clear throughout the written analysis and visual exploration. Candidates made effective use of interviews, visits to studios, galleries and exhibitions to inform their selection of subject matter, concept development and use of media. Insights were perceptive, communicating intentions in a mature and articulate manner through the use of specialist vocabulary and terminology.

The exploration of materials and processes was excellent. Examples of sensitive and incredibly detailed drawings and paintings were submitted alongside original and technically advanced photography. Sculpture, design and fashion were also seen with evidence of equally high technical ability and creative flair.

Candidates were able to develop ideas to a mature resolution. Some presented a final outcome but in other submissions the conclusion of the study was apparent in the way the work progressed. Candidates

demonstrated a high level of commitment and independence by presenting a number of personal, creative outcomes throughout the investigation.

The most effective submissions were those that integrated the practical development with the written analysis as this communicated ideas more clearly. The content of the submissions was selected well and the material was edited to enhance the intention, making the work more focused.

Middle levels

Candidates working at this level often took the same approach. They copied the work of an artist and then applied this style to their own subject matter. Although this was a logical starting point, this limited the opportunity for personal growth and experimentation as some candidates were unable to take this further. A deeper understanding of the artists' intentions and motivations may have encouraged candidates to develop their own visual language as opposed to adopting someone else's.

The quality of practical work was varied. Often, candidates demonstrated a high level of skill in their copies of artworks but they were unable to transfer these skills to their own work with the same level of confidence. Many candidates attended workshops to learn a new skill but they were unsure of how to use this to develop their personal, creative responses. There were some submissions containing irrelevant media experimentation that was not carried through into the practical work.

There was some inconsistency at this level. A number of candidates chose strong, individual and personal themes and were able to select relevant artists to investigate. However, some did not include enough written analysis of the work by others, or the written analysis was not relevant to the theme they were exploring.

There was evidence of strong recording skills from a variety of sources in relation to the subject matter and visual stimulus. Candidates carried out detailed observations with a sense of purpose but the potential was not fully realised and lacked refinement.

There was a clear connection between the development of candidates' artwork and the artist references, demonstrating an effective integration between the practical and written work. The visual language used at this level was refined enough to communicate relevant concepts and maintain a good level of personal and independent study.

The work showed a good level of engagement, but the intentions were less clear. This affected candidates' ability to focus on a meaningful and coherent area for exploration. Most submissions would have benefited from more selective editing of material to present a more convincing investigation.

Lower levels

Work at this level was characterised by a lack of consideration for the assessment objectives and the aims of the component. Many submissions omitted any practical or personal work by candidates.

While there was evidence of recording from first-hand observation, there was a reliance on the works of others. Many candidates did not include any recording of their own from primary sources. Candidates would have benefitted from a wider variety of relevant starting points, using a range of reference material.

The written content was largely biographical. Some candidates visited a local artist or practitioner providing a unique opportunity to learn new skills directly from the artist and gain an insight into their work. Unfortunately, this did not usually increase their ability to analyse others' work. In most cases the practical sessions were evidenced through photographs of the artist at work but this did not support the development of candidate responses.

In some examples, the choice of artist appeared to have limited relevance to the candidates' own work. Engaging with professionals from similar backgrounds is positive but it is important that their work is of high quality and is relevant to the area of interest.

The use of art specific vocabulary was limited and annotations were mostly descriptive rather than analytical. Candidates were not able to translate knowledge gained through artist research into their own media exploration and development of personal responses. Often the analysis or research was not written in the candidates' own words.

Work at this level lacked a sense of engagement and personal connection. Some of the practical outcomes were unrelated to the chosen artist or were a simple imitation. Candidates would have benefited from a clearer intention and closer consideration of the theme they were exploring. This would have supported depth of research and purposeful development leading to a more personal response.