

ART & DESIGN

Paper 9479/01
Coursework

You should refer to the *Guidance on the Administration and Online Submission of Art & Design for 2026*, which will be updated and published in September 2025.

Key messages

- This was the first June series in which centres submitted their work via Submit for Assessment. The work was generally well presented.
- Work was presented in logical, chronological order in the strongest submissions. Some work was presented out of order or in different orientations.
- Stronger responses demonstrated clear intentions, a coherent theme and carefully organised work throughout the submission. This enabled clear ideas to be investigated and developed in depth and with purpose.
- Submissions focusing on topics that enabled candidates to engage with first-hand sources within their surroundings often provided good opportunities for a personal and meaningful response.
- Candidates must clearly identify via labelling which work is their own and which is the work of others.
- In future, it would be helpful if candidates word-process rather than hand-write any included annotation in order to improve legibility.
- Some work was submitted as separate files. This made it difficult to see the progression of ideas because it was not always clear in what order the work was meant to be viewed. Centres should ensure in future that each candidate submits one .pdf file containing all their Component 1 work.
- Candidates should not include hyperlinks, QR codes, zip files or interactive elements in their submitted work.

General comments

Submissions were generally presented well and work was photographed or scanned effectively. Many submissions were presented appropriately. Thoughtful editing, layout and sequencing of the work showed the creative journey clearly.

In many submissions the digital documentation of close-up detail was of good quality, with surface texture, marks, colour and form clearly visible. In some submissions the digital documentation was of poor quality. There were problems such as poor lighting, inconsistent focus and misalignment of photographs. Some of the hand-written annotation became pixilated and difficult to read when enlarged. Candidates should carefully review their responses to ensure that all work is legible before submitting.

In some submissions it was difficult to identify the final outcome. A good strategy is to position the final outcome clearly at the beginning of the submission and label it as the final outcome. Some submissions were split into in separate documents, but the documents were not in chronological order and this made the work difficult to follow.

A range of topics were explored. Themes included ecological issues, friendships, families, emotions, turmoil, celebrations, landscape and portraiture. Many submissions demonstrated purposeful engagement. Some submissions demonstrated sustained, critical investigations; others lacked coherence or depth. Some submissions focused on interpretative ideas and found that access to first-hand sources was limited, which resulted in reliance on secondary imagery as a starting point for investigation of ideas.

Fine art remained the most commonly explored media. Responses were based on mixed media, painting, printing, collage and inks, as well as combinations of these. Many candidates demonstrated good engagement with media exploration. There were submissions showing graphic design, textiles, fashion, print making, photography and three-dimensional design approaches. Photography was a popular method of

recording and enabled a variety of starting points for research and development. Many candidates also chose to use digital manipulation as an effective tool to explore and develop. Where photography was explored as an area of study, editing the images more thoughtfully would have helped many candidates.

Many candidates had visited galleries, attended exhibitions and conducted artist interviews, and this stimulated alternative responses. However, some candidates relied too heavily on contextual sources and the copying of artists' work and did not carry out sufficient recording from first-hand sources. In some submissions there was too much written work; this dominated the visual work and did little to inform ideas. Annotation should be concise and purposeful in order to support the development of the work. Most submissions consisted of a coherent portfolio with a connected final outcome, but in some submissions the progression of ideas was unclear, especially where the starting point was vague.

Higher levels

The strongest responses were mature and reflective and demonstrated a clear line of enquiry throughout the portfolio. There was a consistent response to each of the assessment objectives, with the portfolio demonstrating an understanding between observation and contextual connections.

These submissions identified, sustained and developed an appropriate personal theme or idea from the initial research through to the final outcome. First-hand research demonstrated high-quality observation from life and described relevant objects, locations and people in order to inform ideas. Candidates reflected on how the work of contextual sources informed their own investigations in a meaningful way rather than just mimicking styles. Viewpoints and perspectives were investigated with intention, which communicated surface qualities and form. Many candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of aerial and linear perspective to create a sense of space and scale and the illusion of depth.

High levels of technical skill were seen, as well as confident handling of media. Candidates worked fluently across a range of processes. Media were used to express concepts and intention. Refinement of ideas was demonstrated through trials of multiple ideas and media exploration before arriving at the final outcome. Some of the final outcomes were ambitious, thoughtful and visually resolved.

Contextual study was purposeful, and candidates applied analysis of the visual elements and conceptual awareness to support their ideas. Many candidates looked for new subject matter to inform their ideas or to re-focus their recording in order to inform original development. Submissions were coherent, with a clear sense of visual direction and progression.

Middle levels

Submissions at the middle range often demonstrated good engagement, and many submissions identified an area of focus to enable a personal response. The direction of the work, as well as the candidates' sense of enquiry and technical ability, tended to vary. Ideas lacked the level of intention and focus shown in the strongest responses. The creative journey sometimes lacked idea cohesion and was difficult to follow.

Many submissions demonstrated good understanding of the formal elements, with relevant recording from first-hand observational study. The observations were used to create compositions that were appropriate to the chosen area of investigation. Some submissions used lighting to create emotive and engaging scenes. However, the quality and number of first-hand observations was variable. In some submissions the recorded studies lacked connection to the chosen theme. Contextual references were often present, but they were not always effectively integrated or appropriate to the candidates' ideas. Some candidates imitated surface styles, concepts or colour palette, but without analysing the context or applying the influence meaningfully to their own work.

The work tended to lack depth, coherency or direction in terms of the development of ideas. Many candidates produced effective research and recording and experimented with media and processes. However, their ability to reflect critically and evolve an idea meaningfully over the course of the portfolio was often less developed. Some submissions explored ideas that had potential, but a lack of analysis or reflection on the work led to incoherent development. This frequently limited the quality and resolution of the final outcome.

In some cases, candidates remained within their area of comfort rather than expanding their skills through meaningful experimentation. This prevented the work from moving forward. In other cases, submissions demonstrated exploration of an excessive variety of media. This resulted in an inability to identify the most

appropriate media to represent the ideas or subject matter effectively. Taking more creative risks and carrying out more self-reflection would have helped many candidates at this level.

Lower levels

Many of the submissions at this level struggled to meet the requirements of the assessment objectives. The content of the portfolios was generally incoherent, and the portfolios lacked continuity, direction and depth. There was a lack of understanding about how to build a coherent visual journey around a theme from the recording and development through to a resolved final outcome, supported by first-hand study and connected contextual sources. Most submissions approached the chosen area of investigation with limited focus and with unclear intentions that were not fully formulated. This prevented meaningful depth of study.

The work was often presented as a sequence of unrelated experiments or isolated pieces rather than as a coherent, sustained investigation. It was often unclear where the sources had come from, with many submissions relying on secondary and internet-sourced images and websites such as Pinterest and other uncredited images. As a result, the ability to demonstrate original thinking or observational skill was limited. Initial research tended to lack range, purpose and depth of investigation. Where first-hand sources were used, observational skills lacked strength, with the qualities seen within the subject matter not recognised or not translated successfully. Some candidates were able to record the outline shapes of objects with some success, but a lack of understanding of the visual elements limited the quality of investigations and outcomes.

The selection of materials was not always appropriate to the task or to the chosen subject. The handling of media was often basic. In some cases, candidates rendered their work in only one or two media but demonstrated good technical skill. However, their inability to explore, experiment and refine appropriately prevented these skills from developing.

There was little or no evidence of contextual research. When artist influences were included, they were often superficial or unrelated to the candidates' ideas. The progression from initial research to final outcome frequently lacked clarity, with candidates unable to reflect on their work or refine their ideas; it was often unclear how or why they had arrived at the final outcome.

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<p>Paper 9479/02 Externally Set Assignment</p>
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Key messages

- This was the first June series in which centres submitted their work via Submit for Assessment. The work was generally well presented and in chronological order.
- In future, it would be helpful if the coversheet indicated which question the candidate has selected.
- Links to artists were included in most responses, although their relevance to the candidates' initial ideas and development differed.
- Many candidates recorded subject matter from direct observation, but there was also a reliance on secondary sources, which limited a more personal response.
- Candidates must clearly identify via labelling which work is their own and which is the work of others.
- In future, it would be helpful if candidates word-process rather than hand-write any included annotation in order to improve legibility.
- Some work was submitted as separate files. This made it difficult to see the progression of ideas because it was not always clear in what order the work was meant to be viewed. Centres should ensure in future that each candidate submits one .pdf file containing all their Component 2 work.
- Candidates should not include hyperlinks, QR codes, zip files or interactive elements in their submitted work.

General comments

All questions received responses, and many candidates took the opportunity to select a theme which interested them, resulting in engaged, personal responses.

All the stimuli provided opportunities for direct, first-hand observations from the candidates' environment and the more successful responses made effective use of this in their starting points and development.

Fine art was the most common area of study, with photography also commonly used to record ideas. Some submissions contained a mixture of approaches. There were also some textile, photography, design and three-dimensional submissions.

Higher levels

The strongest responses were well structured and demonstrated thoughtful development.

Candidates developed a clear theme, which they explored with sustained focus. The chosen theme was supported by high-quality, first-hand research and observation, including the candidates' own photography and life drawing.

There was suitable and selective use of artist research, which was integrated purposefully into the submissions rather than just imitated. Candidates demonstrated how their chosen contextual sources informed ideas and decisions rather than simply replicating styles.

The strongest responses showed skilled and sensitive use of the formal elements (line, colour, tone, texture) to communicate mood and meaning. There was often confident use of scale, layout and surface to develop spatial and emotional intensity.

Appropriate media were selected and experimented with at each stage of the submission, from the initial ideas to the final outcome. The development was clearly visible, with exploratory pages showing meaningful decision making and refinement.

At the development stage, the supporting annotation demonstrated relevant critical understanding and self-reflection as ideas progressed. Alternative compositions were thoughtfully and thoroughly considered in order to explore the most effective way to express the final outcome.

The final outcomes were strong, creative and convincingly resolved. They were informed by the investigative journey and did not appear separate or pre-designed. Many were emotive or conceptually rich.

Middle levels

Submissions in the middle range often displayed some strength, but there was inconsistency across the different assessment objectives.

Many candidates began with a clear idea, but lost clarity and cohesion as their work progressed. Supporting studies were present, but there was often little depth or direction.

There was often an imbalance between primary and secondary sources for studies. Candidates frequently chose to copy from photographs, and this resulted in work that lacked depth of field and an understanding of form and other visual elements.

Direct observational studies were sometimes included, and these demonstrated some skill. However, there was insufficient development of ideas and conceptual progression.

Artist research was often superficial or visually imitative. It therefore did little to support the development of ideas.

Media were used in ways that were sometimes expressive or creative, but not always appropriate to the intent or scale of the work. Manipulative skills were generally less confident and less refined at this level. As a result, candidates were less able to convey their ideas clearly.

Where written annotation was included, it tended to be more descriptive or biographical rather than reflective.

The final outcomes were competent but predictable. There was often a mismatch between ambitious ideas and the ability to realise these ideas visually.

Taking creative risks and more experimentation would have helped most candidates. This would have enabled them to fully explore their ideas. Demonstrating evidence of reflection and refinement in the development of ideas would also have helped most candidates.

Lower levels

Submissions at this level generally struggled to meet the expectations of the component across the assessment objectives. Submissions often demonstrated a lack of personal engagement, which resulted in disjointed or clichéd responses.

Many submissions at this level relied on secondary sources (often low-resolution online sources), with little or no first-hand observational work. Subsequent studies lacked detail and depth to move ideas forward.

The selection of media at this level was inappropriate or mismatched with the intended outcome. There was minimal evidence of exploration of media or testing of alternative media.

Where artist research was included, it was often unconnected to the candidates' ideas or only applied superficially.

There was little evidence of development of ideas or critical thinking. In many cases, the final outcome was unrelated to the supporting studies. In other cases, the ideas were not sufficiently explored before final decisions were made.

More focused recording from primary sources at the initial stage of the project would have helped most candidates at this level. They could have drawn from life or photographed their own environments, and this

could have helped them to engage more meaningfully with their chosen question. Many candidates would also have benefitted from planning their work more carefully. Choosing relevant contextual references would have helped to inform the development of ideas.

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<p>Paper 9479/03 Personal Investigation</p>

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Key messages

- This was the first June series in which centres submitted their work via Submit for Assessment. The work was generally well presented and in chronological order.
- Although there was generally good sign-posting of primary and secondary sources, candidates must clearly identify via labelling which work is their own and which is the work of others, as well as identifying other reference material used.
- In future, it would be helpful if candidates word-process rather than hand-write their written analysis and annotation throughout their response in order to improve legibility. Alternatively, candidates can include a word-processed copy of the written analysis as part of the submission.
- Some work was submitted as separate files. This made it difficult to see the progression of ideas because it was not always clear in what order the work was meant to be viewed. Centres should ensure in future that each candidate submits one .pdf file containing all their Component 3 work.
- Candidates should not include hyperlinks, QR codes, zip files or interactive elements in their submitted work.

General comments

There were some highly individual themes explored, which resulted in equally individual outcomes. There was a range of approaches seen, including textiles and fashion, printmaking, painting and drawing, architectural design, model making, ceramics and installation work.

In general, candidates were highly engaged with their chosen themes. Many had visited galleries, attended workshops and interviewed contemporary artists and practitioners either face-to-face or via email and social media platforms.

Many submissions contained a range of primary and secondary sources and reference materials in order to clearly document their influences and the development of ideas.

Many submissions were well presented and clear to follow, and the practical work was photographed well.

Some submissions contained low-resolution images, which were difficult to view.

Most submissions featured a combination of word-processed text and hand-written sections of annotation. Some of the hand-written elements were difficult to read. Some submissions contained writing in coloured pen, or in white pen on black paper; these elements were also difficult to read.

Most submissions contained an appropriate quantity of work. Some submissions included a separate file for the written element, which was submitted alongside the fully integrated version. This made it easier to assess the quality of the written communication.

Clear identification of primary and secondary sources made it easier to understand the creative journey and the input of the candidate.

Many submissions showed careful consideration of the placement of imagery and text. In some cases, the screen pages were over-filled, and in other cases the images were placed on decorated backgrounds or pages. These submissions were less easy to follow.

Higher levels

The strongest responses were confident, ambitious and individual. These submissions offered mature work that was conceptually rich, which was supported by purposeful, independent research.

There was strong use of primary sources, such as drawing from life and photography, as well as critical engagement with contextual references that directly informed the practical work. There was purposeful use of first-hand experience such as gallery visits, workshops and interviews.

Technical skills were well developed across a range of media. Exploration contributed to further refinement and investigation of use of media and was highly relevant to the development of ideas.

There was in-depth analysis of the work of others. This informed the development of a personal response as the work progressed, resulting in highly individual and well-considered outcomes. Written analysis of the work of others and the contextual links that were made were sophisticated, original and highly articulate.

Presentation was consistently clear and visually engaging. Sketchbooks and carefully planned screen pages communicated the creative journey effectively. These were supported by thoughtful annotation that reflected on progress and decision making.

Middle levels

At the middle range of submissions, the work was competent and demonstrated clear engagement in the creative process. Ideas were generally structured well and were explored through various materials. However, outcomes often lacked the refinement or creative risk-taking that was seen in the strongest responses.

Work that was influenced by personal interests or first-hand observation tended to be stronger and more resolved. There was evidence of secondary research, but this was often explored descriptively rather than analytically. A more critical connection to contextual sources would have helped to enhance depth and originality of ideas.

There was evidence of a developing personal voice, but this was not always sustained. Where candidates worked more independently, outcomes were more distinctive. Responses showed good evidence of research into the work of others, but this was not always fully integrated into the overall submission. Visual analysis was good, but it was not always linked to the intentions or theme of the investigation.

Most responses at this level demonstrated consistency across the assessment objectives. Some submissions struggled with Assessment Objectives 3 and 4 because they simply combined two or more artists' styles together rather than developing outcomes that were more personal and individual.

More in-depth analysis and critical reflection on their own work as it progressed would have helped many candidates. The lack of critical reflection meant that the work lacked personal direction. Submissions were more superficial in their approach to the theme and in their development.

Presentation was mostly clear, with some consistent critical thinking and experimentation. Many candidates could have progressed further.

Lower levels

In submissions at this level there was an engagement with visual ideas and an interest in exploring materials. Some candidates started with personal or imaginative themes, but the outcomes were often limited in their development and resolution.

Many candidates had interviewed artists, but their understanding of the work and their line of questioning tended to be superficial and irrelevant to their chosen theme. This research therefore had little impact on the visual development. There was some evidence of the use of primary source materials. Some submissions referred to visits to galleries.

There was a reliance on found imagery from social media or online sources. This restricted originality and depth and limited the possibility for personal visual responses. More emphasis on direct observation would have supported the development of visual understanding and could have led to outcomes that were better informed.

Exploration with media was often limited due to lack of control. In some submissions there was satisfactory transcription of works by other artists, but this was not maintained in the candidates' exploration of their own imagery.

Contextual research and analysis were often superficial, with limited or unclear relevance to the practical work. Clearer referencing and analytical engagement with sources would have helped candidates to improve their development of ideas. Annotation tended to be descriptive, with limited reflection or critical insight despite many candidates showing enthusiasm and creative intent.

Presentation was varied and was often incoherent. The creative journey sometimes lacked direction, with ideas and concepts not fully investigated or resolved. Submissions at this level were often very short; not enough research or experimentation was carried out to enable the project to be developed fully.