ART & DESIGN

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Paper 0989/01
Coursework

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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 and in chronological order.
- 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.
- Painting and related two-dimensional media was the most common area of study, with photography included as a form of recording.
- Where three-dimensional work such as sculpture and textiles was included, good use was made of photography to reflect the work accurately, such as by showing different viewpoints and communicating scale and texture.
- Links to artists were included in most responses, although their relevance to the candidates' development of work differed.
- Candidates must clearly identify via labelling which work is their own and which is the work of others.
- Some submissions included a lot of written work that did not always support or improve the communication of the visual work.
- In future, it would be helpful if candidates word-process rather than hand-write any included annotation in order to improve legibility.
- Candidates should not include hyperlinks, QR codes, zip files or interactive elements in their submitted work.

General comments

Higher levels

The strongest responses offered mature interpretations of the chosen theme. Submissions were personal and themes were explored through thoughtful recording, using a variety of primary and secondary sources.

The use of media was fluent throughout submissions at this level. A range of materials and processes were explored in order to communicate ideas effectively. Materials were controlled with skill and various methods were applied with sensitivity and expression. In general, candidates working at this level were able to work across different media, materials and processes and demonstrated a strong understanding of the relationship between media use and the concepts being explored.

Candidates demonstrated clear intentions and were able to develop their ideas through a range of reference material, which informed their responses through well-selected and appropriate reference imagery. Strong personal connections were made to the work of other artists, which enabled candidates to engage with their ideas in depth. Supporting annotation demonstrated relevant critical understanding and self-reflection as the work progressed. The final outcome evolved through mature experimentation and thoughtful decision making.

In general, there was a good balance between the use of traditional mark-making processes and digital applications. Candidates used various software programmes as a tool to express ideas and enhance the development of their visual work. Presentation was clear and chronological and demonstrated the creative journey leading to the resolved final outcome.

Middle levels

At the middle range of submissions, candidates worked from both primary and secondary sources to develop their ideas. However, the relevance to the selected work differed across the submissions. Some submissions relied more on secondary sources. Other submissions collated primary research but did not demonstrate the detailed and thoughtful observation or investigation that was seen in the strongest responses.

Some evidence was seen of research into artists and cultures to help the candidate explore and develop their own ideas about media use, content, meaning and composition. However, a greater understanding of the artist work would have helped them to make more informed and insightful connections.

A good range of materials and techniques had been explored, but manipulative skills were less confident and refined at this level. Many candidates were able to reproduce artist copies successfully but lacked the confidence or skill to apply their learning to their own original imagery. Greater exploration and experimentation would have been helpful for some candidates.

Lower levels

Submissions at this level contained less recording and often relied on secondary sources. Where observational drawings from primary sources were included, they demonstrated little evidence of understanding of the visual elements.

The images and media studies seen in the portfolio often did not inform or relate to the final outcome. The artist research sometimes did not relate to, or inform the development of, the candidates' own work.

The selection and exploration of media varied in the work seen at this level. Some submissions demonstrated an ability to make good copies of artist work, but lacked exploration of different techniques and refinement of media use within the candidates' own work. At other times there was a willingness to experiment with materials and processes, but the work lacked the ability to build on these explorations and refine skills for the final outcome.

More focused recording from primary sources at the initial stage of the project would have helped most candidates at this level. Self-analysis and reflection on work could have been used to inform the exploration of media and the manipulation of images to develop ideas into an informed final outcome that reflected the progress in the supporting studies.

ART & DESIGN

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Paper 0989/02
Externally Set Assignment

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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.
* In future, it would be helpful if the coversheet indicated which question the candidate has selected.
* Work was presented in logical, chronological order in the strongest submissions. Some work was presented out of order or in different orientations.
* 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.
* Painting and related two-dimensional media was the most common area of study, with photography included as a form of recording.
* Clear intentions and a coherent theme enabled sustained and focused ideas to be investigated and developed with purpose. Thoughtful editing, layout or sequencing of the work helped to show the direction of the creative journey.
* It is important that where digital manipulation, software or programmes have been used, candidates indicate this and state specifically what they have used.
* Links to artists were included in most responses, although their relevance to the candidates' development of work differed.
* 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.
* Candidates should not include hyperlinks, QR codes, zip files or interactive elements in their submitted work.

General comments

Most submissions were well presented and demonstrated good engagement with the chosen question. Much of the work was photographed effectively.

Close-up photographic detail demonstrated surface texture, marks, colour and form, but images were sometimes repetitive. The quality of the digital imagery was sometimes poor. When enlarging the images, some of the work lacked clarity, particularly the hand-written annotation. It was helpful when images were referenced and credited appropriately to indicate where different sources were used.

Painting and related media remained the most commonly explored media. However, there were also strong and creative submissions showing photography, digital media, textiles and three-dimensional approaches. Appropriate contextual referencing was included in most responses, which helped to inform idea development and indicate personal engagement.

In many submissions, effective annotation provided insight into thought processes to support practical development. In other submissions, greater focus was placed on written explanation rather than on the visual development of the artwork. This tended to dominate and usually did not help to inform ideas.

Responses to each of the examination questions were seen across all levels and facilitated a range of approaches from observational to interpretive. Design and abstract concepts were also seen.

The most popular questions were, '**Start of the day**', '**Left behind**' and '**Cluttered**'. 'Start of the day' and 'Cluttered' provided an opportunity to gather accessible items from around the home. There was evidence of creative thinking and less obvious subject matter was explored. Chaotic scenes from domestic spaces such as overflowing wardrobes and desktops were explored, as was the cluttered mind. Work focusing on sunrises, the anticipation of dawn, the hustle and bustle of a morning commute or the intimate rituals of personal preparation offered an insight into candidates' lives and provided strong personal engagement. Responses were often narrative and observational.

'Left behind' lent itself to more conceptual submissions, evoking emotionally sensitive responses that resonated with life stages, with the topics of death and separation being the most common. The loss of childhood featured in a number of responses and provided a platform for candidates to express their experiences at key stages in their lives.

Responses to '**Textures in nature**' were seen across all levels. Submissions explored close-up studies of bark, intricate patterns in leaves, weathered rock formations or the fluid movement of water. In the weakest responses, the textural observations did not always translate effectively into studies. In the strongest responses, excellent examples of rough tree bark were explored and juxtaposed with the smoothness of items such as shells.

Responses to '**A mop, a bucket and a broom**' sometimes transformed the subject matter beyond its utilitarian function into symbolic representations of cleanliness, labour and domesticity. The theme sometimes led to creative and abstract responses, turning everyday items into conceptual ideas. The strongest observational responses made use of the many differing qualities that these items could inspire to create effective and interesting final outcomes. These showcased the candidates' understanding of the visual elements. The weakest responses made obvious and straightforward copies, highlighting a lack of visual awareness.

Most submissions were coherent, with a connected final outcome. However, idea progression in some submissions was unclear, especially in cases where the starting point was vague.

Higher levels

The strongest responses were logical and coherent, with a clear direction of study. The responses offered a mature interpretation of the chosen theme, expressing independence of thought.

There was often a strong personal connection to the topic, which usually began with relevant first-hand observations, primarily using drawing, painting and photography. The work was focused and well organised, effectively communicating the creative process.

Research processes were thorough and included studies from life and the candidates' own photography. Thoughtful and in-depth visual recording often explored elements such as viewpoint, light source and perspective. There was excellent exploration of ideas and thorough experimentation with media, using first-hand research as a basis for development.

Media application at this level was skilful, sensitive and consistent, demonstrating confidence to fully explore and refine with purpose. Candidates explored materials to express ideas and intentions, using the qualities within the chosen media to achieve the desired effect. Effective photography demonstrated a clear understanding of the visual elements and technical ability.

The work of other artists were referenced and used to explore possibilities for candidates' own visual language, showing mature connections. All research was meaningful and well integrated. These candidates were able to reflect on ideas throughout the work in order to inform effective decision making.

Careful compositional planning, including the use of thumbnail sketches and experimentation with scale and placement, generally resulted in confident and resolved final outcomes. This brought together the analysis and reflection of refined ideas that was explored in the supporting studies. The final outcomes often demonstrated a balance of contextual understanding, original ideas and the application of skilful rendering. In some cases, the final outcome was an appropriate conclusion to the project, but the candidate performed better in the supporting studies.

Middle levels

At the middle range of submissions, the work demonstrated a broad selection of recording through photography and observational studies. However, the initial studies were not always developed with clarity, focus or direction. Observational skills and engagement with the chosen question were generally competent. However, there was a lack of consistency and depth across the assessment objectives.

There was sometimes hesitation to progress initial ideas. Some candidates were on the cusp of a good idea but then withdrew and returned to the initial concepts or original images. The research at this level contained a greater reliance on Internet websites such as Pinterest and other secondary-sourced images.

A range of appropriate media was explored with competence, and many submissions illustrated an ability to refine technical skills to express intentions. However, the application of media was not always consistent. There was less evidence of creative risk-taking at this level. Some candidates' technical abilities were confident, but their work overall did not always match the level of these skills.

Some candidates struggled to organise their ideas, which resulted in incoherent visual connections or annotation. This led to a lack of depth or continuity.

Contextual influences and artist referencing were usually included, but these did not always inform appropriate connections. These references were less analytical than in the strongest responses, with candidates relying on copying or closely imitating the artist's work without using these influences to inform their own ideas or media use.

Final outcomes were usually closely related to the supporting studies but were often not resolved or did not demonstrate the same level of ability seen in the supporting studies. Stronger critical assessment of the work, during each stage of the creative process, would have benefitted many of these candidates as it would have allowed them to recognise and develop their strengths with confidence.

Lower levels

In submissions at this level the recording was often derived from low-quality secondary sources. A times it was not clear where the candidate had sourced their recording from. There was little recording from primary sources. More focused recording from primary sources at the initial stage of the project, as well as a clear intention, would have helped most candidates at this level.

Contextual referencing was generally not included. In submissions where it was included, it was either not relevant, or it was used in a way that was not useful or appropriate. Some candidates made copies of artists' work but found it difficult to relate this to their own ideas. Opportunities to inform media exploration and development were often missed.

Technical skills were limited and poorly matched to the subject matter. Where photography was used, this was often poorly presented or not developed. Pencil, pastels and paint were the most commonly used materials. When recording, candidates often struggled with tone, structure and the investigation of form. This led to unresolved and unconvincing final outcomes.

Developmental work was frequently thin or disjointed. Some candidates attempted to express personal ideas, but they lacked the technical or conceptual tools to translate these into resolved final outcomes.

Final outcomes tended to be either a copy of an earlier study or completely disconnected from the supporting work. Many outcomes would have benefitted from composition planning and exploration of alternative ideas.

In some submissions there was very little or no understanding of how the creative process should inform the final outcome and it was difficult to understand what the candidate was trying to achieve.

At the very lowest level, the submissions demonstrated a lack of engagement.