# DIGITAL MEDIA & DESIGN

> **Paper 9481/01**
> **Portfolio**

## Key messages

- Higher achieving candidates demonstrated engagement with the artist(s) works chosen for research.
- Candidates are required to consistently attribute and reference the work of others.
- Typically, lower scoring scripts were not sufficiently focused on the theme.

## Introduction

This is the second series of this component. The range of work among higher achieving scripts indicated a well-developed understanding of the expectations of the syllabus. Candidates worked within a range of disciplines including photography, moving image and app design. Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of design principals and graphic design. Other candidates supported their work with a praiseworthy attention to page layout. This was rewarded in AO1 and in AO4. It was clear in many cases, that candidates had clearly understood what was required of them and embraced the task fully. This attracted higher marks across the assessment objectives. These candidates established a convincing journey within their portfolios that led from research, through experimentation, development and critical understanding, to their proposal. Higher achieving candidates were able to both celebrate and justify an engagement with their chosen artist(s) throughout their portfolios. Higher scoring scripts did not simply rely on conventional practice as they explored media and processes.

Candidates in the middle ability range, provided evidence of research, exploration and selection. However, further informed development and refinement of ideas would have attracted higher marks in AO3. In other examples, marking was frustrated in AO4 where the proposal was not seen to realise the candidate's intentions. It is important that candidates ensure their proposal makes appropriate connections with their supporting studies.

Lower scoring scripts typically contained limited evidence which was not sufficiently focused on the chosen theme or on the assessment objectives. Work at this level often included a selection of images from the internet which were not seen to relate to specific artists or to the development of the candidate's work. Candidates should demonstrate that their research contributes to their progress. Candidates are also encouraged to generate work from first hand sources. Where this is neglected, outcomes can be frustrated in AO1. Some candidates provided a helpful bibliography; however, many candidates were not seen to consistently attribute their references or clearly distinguish their work from the work of others.

## Approaches to the themes

The quality of layout, typography and indexing often gave an indication of the quality of the candidate's creative work. Some of the higher scoring scripts showed immaculate attention to detail and design skills that supported the research and development of ideas into a resolved creative submission.

The coursework theme, Travel, generated some work which was both delightful and original. However, a more common approach was seen were a range of destinations presented that candidates had visited. In these cases, candidates typically focused on capital cities, tourist sites or beach resorts. Some candidates researched their own locality and referenced renowned local practitioners. Proposals for this theme included poster campaigns, promotional videos, photography exhibitions, and websites. Some candidates interpreted the theme as Time Travel with a focus on the transient nature of time. Others focused on the impact of traffic on the local environment. The use of editing was often clearly demonstrated, using step by step screenshots and subtly applied to the proposal photographs. Candidates who received lower marks, tended not to show how their ideas were developed, or to include sufficient evidence of the exploration of processes and techniques as they worked towards a proposal. Unfortunately, many candidates omitted any feedback they had received, there should be an element of testing, feedback and review in the development of work.

Among these scripts it was difficult to find other evidence that candidates had tested their ideas or reflected on the constraints of their assignment. In these cases, candidates appeared to move from research directly to a proposal. Higher marks could be attracted by providing evidence of development such as edits, scripts, feedback, or storyboards, for example.

The Boundaries theme generated interesting responses. These included proposals for considering boundaries between people and devices, boundaries and phobias, and the boundaries of space and time. Much of the work was well-researched and candidates were seen to apply what they had learnt from the artists they had looked at. Some delightful and unexpected proposals were received which approached the theme through choreography or geometry, for example. Arabic or Chinese scripts were used to develop ideas about cultural identity and boundaries. Many candidates considered examples of the work of others and this appeared to inspire work in different directions and enabled candidates to refine their own ideas. However, lower scoring scripts were not seen to provide clear evidence of research. Many candidates worked with digital photography. However, among lower ability responses, it was not always clear which photographs were part of the proposal or the supporting evidence.

The Emotions theme generated a variety of responses based on anxiety, human growth and development, and conventions of behaviour. Other scripts explored more abstract ideas such as prejudice, bias or preference. Many candidates produced mock-ups. The more confident candidates explored a range of potential installations, before creating their own original proposal. However, lower scoring scripts included only basic floor plans which did not contain sufficient visual information about the proposed idea. Candidates successfully included the creative use of text, overlays, projections, stencils, and stitching. Some candidates achieved high marks without an over-reliance on technical processes. These candidates employed excellent lighting, careful direction of the participants, combined with the use of gesture and close-up to effectively communicate emotion.

Candidates often related the Wellbeing theme to healthy eating. Typical responses included proposals for a phone app for simple and healthy recipes. The candidates who attracted higher marks presented well considered proposals which clearly developed from their research. Higher scoring candidates were able to effectively review their ideas. They also identified key artists and analysed how their work might provide ideas for their own work. Many of these candidates went on to explore and then put into practice, the techniques they had researched. Candidates who were prepared to try out ideas and then evaluate how these ideas were successful, enjoyed significant benefits to their work.

**Approaches to the assessment objectives**

AO1. Lower scoring scripts were often characterised by superficial evidence of research. Those who achieved in the mid-range, demonstrated relevant research and a clear beginning of a journey towards their proposal. Higher achieving candidates were able to analyse their research in order to develop their own ideas. Some candidates demonstrated a rigorous workflow which included mind-maps, studio work, lighting effects, double prints, back prints, gesso prints, projected images, and transparent prints. While this approach produced some good results, some candidates with original ideas would have benefited from bespoke investigations, making more appropriate use of their time and allowing for more sophisticated outcomes. Some scripts included recorded images from unusual or unexpected vantage points. Some of these results were beautiful and were rewarded appropriately.

AO2. Lower scoring candidates often provided little evidence of exploration with appropriate media. Where candidates demonstrated a limited exploration media, this risked the creative development of the theme. Those achieving higher marks provided evidence of exploration of a range of techniques across a range of media. Some physical exploration of materials was seen. The results were frequently scanned, digitally manipulated and used to develop further ideas. Some higher-scoring candidates developed their themes by effectively integrating analogue and digital processes. These included multi-layering, colourisation, scratching, smudging, printmaking, rusting, ironing, and using maps and portraits. Some stop-frame animations were produced by shooting stills, digitally colouring or drawing on each frame, before animating them at 10 frames per second. Some interesting work was seen where the candidates had adopted the practice of the artist recorded in their research.

AO3. Submissions at the lower ability end did not show evidence of feedback, consideration of a target audience or critical analysis by the candidate. Where the feedback of individuals was sought, marks were potentially frustrated as no indication of the demographic was included, or how the feedback could be used. Where candidates acted on feedback for their proposal, higher marks would have been attracted by a more systematic approach to testing during the design process. In lower scoring responses, candidates often provided little or no evidence of investigations such as the editing of photographs. Higher scoring candidates typically provided a range of screenshots showing the process of investigation with accompanying commentary. This demonstrated a critical understanding of the candidate's creative activity. Other higher scoring scripts included feedback from creative practitioners. Where good use was made of such feedback, scripts were rewarded appropriately.

AO4. Proposals were seen in a variety of forms which included digital collage, mobile app design, websites, image series, animations and videos. Among lower scoring scripts, candidates indicated the use of different digital platforms for displaying their ideas. However, these scripts were not seen to successfully integrate the proposal artwork into digital backgrounds. In responses where this approach was successful candidates considered a variety of viewpoints, lighting conditions, perspective and weather conditions. Higher scoring candidates demonstrated a much clearer link to their research, explorations and investigations. There was often clear evidence of how research ideas had not only impacted on thought processes, but also on the skills required to realise intentions. Lower scoring scripts were not seen to include a clearly identified proposal. Such scripts appeared to contain research and exploration without the development of an idea. A proposal should be an indication of how the ideas can be taken forward into a resolved outcome.

**Technical comments**

- Centres are required not to send work in Zip files.
- Embedded files within a presentation should be clearly referenced.
- Centres should avoid sending two versions of the same material. One PDF version is preferable.
- Centres should avoid sending two versions of a moving image file which contains the same material. A low-resolution version is preferable as moving work is streamed rather than downloaded.

# DIGITAL MEDIA & DESIGN

## Key messages

- Candidates must clearly reference any work that is not their own.
- Candidates are encouraged to consider the method of presentation according to the style and content of the assignment.
- The most successful candidates showed how their final outcome was a result of refined and informed development.

## Introduction

This was the second series for AS/ A Level 9481 Digital Media & Design. The standard of component administration was good. Centres consistently completed the cover sheets and sought permission for people who were included in their film work. Much strong work was seen across each of the assignments from the paper. The most successful candidates showed how the material in their final outcome was a result of refined and informed development, rather than a disconnected idea introduced at a late stage. Other successful candidates provided multiple threads of investigation which were critiqued and refined or eliminated as the work progressed. Many other candidates, however, provided a single strand of ideas. While these ideas were subject to a degree of scrutiny, candidates were often not seen to consider alternatives and relied on the assumed merits of an initial idea. This approach risked frustrating marks in AO2 and AO3. Some candidates submitted significant amounts of exploratory and developmental work, but their final outcome did not appear to be consistent with their investigations.

Candidates researched the work of others from a wide range of sources. This has the potential to demonstrate skill in research and the ability to find relevant sources. Attributing the work of others and the labelling of the candidates' own work must be included, there were occasions were this was not clear. Candidates are encouraged to research, analyse and take inspiration from the work of others. However, candidates are reminded to clearly reference any work that is not their own.

Centres submitted scripts in response to the range of assignments in the paper. While many candidates were seen to have developed individual work towards a personal response, centres will wish to avoid an overly directed or guided approach to this assignment. For example, where centres specify the length of all video work, this may not be appropriate for the pace of individual candidate work. Such an approach may risk frustrating marks in each of the assessment objectives. It is expected at this level that candidates will demonstrate an understanding of design, typography and layout where appropriate. In many cases these elements were embedded in the candidates' work across the mark range. The most successful scripts also displayed a strong sense of visual language and the formal elements of design. Candidates working in the Moving Image area of study are advised to avoid an over-reliance on dialogue in preference to communicating visually.

## Approaches to the assignments

The Student Exchange assignment was frequently presented as an information app or a photo portrait of a school, college or town. Some very good work was seen in response to this assignment. The most successful scripts which developed an information app were well researched. Candidates used commercial companies as a source of current information. As a result, the app design was often contemporary and relevant. Among higher scoring scripts, candidates displayed refined graphic design and visual communication skills. Among lower scoring scripts presenting photo-portraits, candidates often took a narrative approach recording a journey around town or a school trip. This often included attractive material. However, this approach often frustrated marking where it was not supported by appropriate research, preparation or review. Among higher scoring scripts some candidates used their own good quality photographs to form the basis of further work. These scripts made good use of research and modelled their

presentation on contemporary architectural or graphic design publications. This approach demonstrated the candidates' ability to synthesise form and content. Some candidates also researched design schools such as the Bauhaus and applied this understanding of line colour and typography to their work.

The assignment called Coexist generated responses in a variety of formats including showreel, digital photography, graphic design with images, architectural illustration and architectural modelling. Much of the work was of a high standard. Some interesting photography work was seen exploring ideas such as landscape, scenery, reflection and the environment. Many candidates took the opportunity to raise ecological issues and celebrate natural beauty. Other candidates used Permaculture design principles as a starting point to develop ideas about patterns and resilience in nature. Some lower scoring scripts contained some interesting evidence of exploration and development of media and ideas; however, the work was not subjected to sufficient critical review or testing. As a result, the final outcome could become over complicated or lacking in effectiveness. In several centres the candidates had taken a systematic approach to the development and presentation of scripts. This sought to ensure that the candidates were generating work which could be marked in each of the assessment objectives. Among higher scoring scripts a rich vein of research could be followed from photographers exploiting specific techniques to television series opening scenes. Some other good examples of research were seen ranging from publications by exemplary architectural practitioners to original research and first hand experience of buildings coexisting in woodland.

Candidates often took a lively approach to the Food Market assignment. Some candidates used video to present a portrait of the market. However, without sufficient planning, preparation or producing a story board, marking tended to be frustrated in AO2 and AO3. Many scripts included photo portraits of stalls and stall holders with interesting views of produce and other parts of the market. This question gave opportunities for a rich visual research starting point generated plenty of first hand photographs and material for later development, this was rewarded in AO1. Some candidates recorded images of a night market. Candidates were often seen to manage the lighting conditions well and this approach produced some mature photographs which were rich in colour and texture. Candidates were also seen to support their work by researching the work of other appropriate photographers. Some candidates took a campaign approach to the assignment. These proved to be interesting and unusual interpretations of the concepts provided in the assignment. For example, in preparation for poster advertising campaigns candidates often prepared well for a photoshoot. The participants were provided with props and posed in ways which were consistent with the candidate's research. However, some candidates were seen to place more emphasis on the message of their campaign than the visual language used to communicate it.
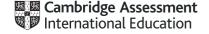
## Approaches to the assessment objectives

AO1. Many candidates researched the work of locally, nationally and internationally renowned photographers, artists and designers. Candidates often reviewed the work of others from countries beyond their own. Many candidates used photography to record ideas. Stock images and sources such as international magazines were also used. Film directors and films were referenced in research by some candidates. Research was frequently annotated recording critical reflections on the work as it progressed. Candidates increased the scope of their first hand observations using unusual camera angles or panoramic shots. Candidates were also rewarded for their research in preparation for a photoshoot.

In the lower ability range work, it seemed that candidates tended to spend less time recording. Typically, such scripts contained evidence of multiple exposures, which were then digitally manipulated before being converted into an animated gif. This is not a necessarily equivalent to recording insights which are relevant to intentions.

AO2. Many candidates demonstrated the use of image manipulation, and typography layout software. Software was also used by some candidates for rendering drawings into animated form, to be used in their showreels. Similar software was seen to be used for applying candidates' sketches and photographs to animated graphics for mobile apps and websites. Some examples of the exploration of physical materials were also seen. This included work with paint, spray paint or ink and rollers. This produced some interesting results. However, candidates are encouraged to continue to recognise the potential of this approach as their work develops.

Lower scoring scripts were more likely to contain the indiscriminate use of fonts and shapes, rather than developing an appropriate visual language for their subject. Some responses at the lower level included very little preparatory work, storyboards or timings. Higher scoring candidates explored, and selected media from a range of creative activities. These included gathering images on location, work with lighting, using candid shots, controlled use of composition, methodical project planning, and deconstructing exemplar artist's work.

AO3. Few candidates were seen to use feedback as a means of developing ideas. Where feedback was included, candidates used it as a platform for annotated reflections on their work. This was rewarded appropriately. Elsewhere candidates tested their ideas by making comparisons between their own work and the photographers, architects, app designers or artists they had researched. Candidates will need to make sure that they have a clear understanding of the elements or principals they are using for comparison. Higher scoring candidates working with photography, addressed the challenges of lighting and shadows imposed by the location. Candidates were also seen to apply interesting constrains to the assignment by visiting their locations at different times of the day and in different weather conditions.

AO4. Candidates will need to manage their time effectively to allow for the production of a personal digital response. Some candidates were not seen to have given sufficient time to resolve the complexities of a concept, or to develop the skills required for their chosen media and associated techniques. Sometimes engaging scripts gave way to weaker outcomes.

Where candidates researched and understood the work of others and absorbed the concepts discovered, their final outcome demonstrated appropriate connections between digital and design elements. There often was a clear relationship between the quality of research and the final outcome. Some scripts included examples of direct inspiration from the work of other artists. The best work of this kind avoided pastiche and provided valuable insight into the creative process. Candidates are reminded that technical proficiency is not a substitute for ideas, aesthetic understanding, and visual language.

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