



A Level

Art and Design

ART/U (7201C/X – 7206C/X)

Report on the examination

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General

An important feature of this specification are face-to-face Teacher Standardisation meetings which provide art teachers with the unique opportunity to see live work in all six titles from a variety of centres. Viewing work first-hand, practising marking to the AQA standard and familiarisation with the assessment criteria, contribute to the accuracy of marking in the majority of centres. An additional benefit is the opportunity to meet other art teachers. The half-day meetings are generously located around the UK and are free to attend. Exemplar material including complete sets of marked work can be found on the subject pages of AQA Centre Services.

Moderators received positive feedback for the extensive support materials, training, and events available to teachers. Live title-specific on-line training events have been enthusiastically received. The NEA Coursework Adviser assigned to each centre is a helpful and accessible resource for teachers to receive prompt and accurate responses to their queries. The only accurate sources of information about the specification are AQA and the NEA Advisers.

Teachers commented on the clarity and flexibility of the specification, its accessibility for students of all abilities and its adaptability for the variety of teacher specialisms and resources in different art departments.

The majority of centres provide an introductory course before students begin Component 1 Personal Investigation. Well-designed tasks and assignments provide an important opportunity for students to develop their understanding and skills and to explore ideas, materials, processes, and techniques, without the pressure of assessment. It is also an opportunity to establish good working practice. The majority of students begin the Personal Investigation in either the Spring or the Summer Term of Year 12. Some centres start the component at Spring half term. Others use the Summer holiday to resource their work and begin the investigation in September of Year 13.

In a minority of centres, students continue to include work that is not related to the Personal Investigation. Teachers are reminded that A-level Component 1 is not a coursework portfolio but a single body of work in response to a starting point. Any additional work must directly relate to the investigation and will be assessed at A-level standard. Where sketchbooks included earlier work, the majority of teachers ensured that the start of the Personal Investigation was identified clearly.

In Component 2 Externally Set Assignment, separate question papers for each Title comprise eight open-ended questions which provide starting points for students to respond in all the areas of study. The papers are consistently well-received by teachers and students and the variety of questions provide scope for students to produce personal responses based around their own interests and preferences. When preparing the assignment, it is important that students plan what they can realistically produce in the 15 hour period of supervised time. It

is important that students are given access to all questions on the paper. Evidence suggests that in a small minority of centres, students are directed to a particular question.

The majority of students presented the Personal Investigation required written material in the form of an illustrated essay. Where the essay was integrated into sketchbooks or in other formats, a hard copy was provided. Confident and assured examples provided a rationale for the practical work, explained students' choices and decisions, and included evidence of analytical and critical understanding when responding to contextual sources. In analyses and comparisons, students considered ideas and different approaches relevant to their own work and demonstrated their understanding of specialist language.

In exceptional examples, discussion was informed by background reading and included considered and perceptive analysis, observation, and comparison. Successful students demonstrated high levels of understanding in handling critical vocabulary and specialist terms. However, many students limited their writing to vague comments about being inspired by particular contextual sources. It was clear that in some centres even the most able students lacked the understanding and skills necessary to analyse works of art and were provided with little or no guidance. A small minority of students did not make connections between the written material and the practical work.

Moderators report that some students titled their essay with a pertinent question which provided a focus for the work. Many students did not include a title. Titles do not have to be elaborate, and examples could begin, *a study of, an Investigation into, a comparison of, the influences of*. When producing the required written material, students should be reminded that the work can provide additional evidence of all four Assessment Objectives. Detailed guidance can be found in *Interpreting the Assessment Objectives in Component 1 written material*, which is included in Teacher Standardisation delegate booklets and on the subject pages of AQA Centre Services.

Students should be reminded that annotation is a brief note of explanation alongside an image. Unnecessarily lengthy commentaries, copying directly from the Internet and perfunctory comments about likes and dislikes contributed little to the practical work. There were many examples of excessive and often illegible annotation when more evidence of the practical work would have been appropriate.

Moderators report that teachers expressed their concerns about the late Easter, the encroachment of examinations in other subjects, and the internal appeals procedure, which created difficulties in scheduling the 15 hour period of supervised time. Also, there were concerns about a general malaise and lack of motivation amongst students which affected the volume of work produced for Component 2. However, the majority of centres allocate two terms or more to the Personal Investigation and the shorter lead-in period for the Externally Set Assignment can result in a more compact body of work. The component is allocated 40% of the total mark to correspond with this.

AO1

Students responded to a wealth of ideas and sources which included objects and specimens, insects, taxidermy, natural forms, environments, and the human figure. Investigations using distorting mirrors and microscopy included in-depth studies which led to interesting and creative outcomes. Starting points were often based on personal experiences or relationships. Several students based their investigations on grandparents which produced resonant character studies and ideas based on old photographs, memories, the passage of time, and ageing. Inspired by a student's grandmother, a successful brand identity for an Alzheimer's support organisation included graphics for a multi-media awareness campaign which featured poignant photography in designs for advertising and educational material.

Personal identity had a powerful focus in some examples where students explored their family history and cultural heritage. One student created a successful design for knitwear developed from the investigation of Ukrainian folk art. A moving investigation documented a student's family's journey from Afghanistan leading to a series of paintings which made a passionate statement about women's rights.

Examples of accomplished portraiture included a number of penetrating self-portraits. An example informed by the in-depth investigation of carefully selected works by Rembrandt, Caravaggio and Lucien Freud, led to a series of studies exploring chiaroscuro, impasto, implied colour, and unexpected viewpoints. In both fine art and photography, students explored issues surrounding self-image and mental well-being which, on occasion, resulted in work that was searching and charged with emotion.

Some students responded to challenging global issues which included conflict, humanitarian crises, migration, and climate change. A number of students explored the physical and psychological effects of urbanisation whilst others expressed the vitality, dynamism, and frenetic atmosphere of the city. A student investigated work by Olivia Brabbs and Tyrone Williams and explored the disassociation between people and the urban environment caused by highly controlled densely-packed spaces and overcrowding. Photography students produced ideas based on the sustained investigation of rush-hour crowds in train and bus stations which led to dynamic, atmospheric, and well-composed images.

The majority of students produced investigations based on good quality source material. Fieldwork was imperative to the success of work based on the natural and built environments and it was encouraging to see the lengths some students went to when identifying and travelling to appropriate locations. Many students made good use of source material found close to home, on a walk, a cycle ride, at a nearby coffee shop or a market, or in a local museum.

Where students understood the purpose of investigating appropriate contextual sources, there was evidence of the careful and considered selection of material that was relevant to their intentions. Analysing examples and understanding and learning from them, enabled students to develop their own personal language in an informed and confident manner. Contextual material can inspire ideas, but they can also help students to consider different approaches to an idea and help to develop their awareness and understanding of visual elements. It is important that students refer to good examples of work produced by

established artists, photographers, and designers. Moderators report a high incidence of students selecting works of doubtful merit from the Internet which have little to contribute to students' learning.

Many students began their work by investigating contextual sources but with only a glimmer of an initial idea. For some students, this worked in providing inspiration for an idea or in suggesting possible approaches and different interpretations. For others, it didn't work, and students found themselves investigating sources that were eventually unrelated to their ideas when they emerged. In a number of centres, students were compelled to make elaborate copies from several sources to evidence an *artist response*, then to *make connections* by combining elements of them into a finished outcome, without evidence of the student choosing and investigating their own source material. Moderators report that in some centres, extensive notes and numerous copies of contextual material restricted the time for students to produce sufficient evidence of the investigation and development of ideas.

Successful students developed their ideas in a manner that was logical and easy to follow as one image led to another. The most accomplished work revealed genuine insight and understanding as development progressed in the practical work. Less successful work often lacked focus, intentions were not always clear, and the development of ideas was fragmented.

AO2

The majority of students selected and purposefully explored materials, techniques, and processes appropriate to their intentions. In successful examples there was evidence of thoughtful engagement with the properties, characteristics, and limitations of materials. There was a clear connection between the chosen techniques and the refining of students' ideas. Examples of exploring mixed media were evident in all titles.

Students embraced a wide range of processes and techniques using digital and electronic media, particularly in graphics, photography, and three-dimensional design. One student created prompts in Chatbot to generate AI images of coral wrapped in plastic. There was evidence of AI tools being explored and used to generate images and students carefully recorded their prompts. Students also used AI tools to manipulate and transform their own images, to create visuals of their work in different contexts, and to explore composition. In some examples the images were then worked on by uploading to Photoshop or using traditional materials.

In art, craft and design, students explored materials and techniques allied to more than one area of study. It was rewarding to see examples in which students purposefully explored and developed their skills in more than one area, combining materials and approaches in a creative and cohesive manner. The majority of students were selective in their choice of materials and purposeful in their exploration of processes and techniques appropriate to their areas of study. In successful courses, the different areas of study were clearly integrated into working practice and the development of appropriate skills.

In fine art, students produced in-depth exploration of drawing and painting techniques informed by contextual sources. In some examples where students used photography to explore and record source material, the camera's framing edge was used to explore and

refine composition. In the majority of examples, composition leading to the finished outcome was explored and refined in thumbnail sketches, composition studies and working drawings. There was an increase in examples of successful printmaking which included fine examples of drypoint, photo-etching, screenprints and monoprints, in which there was evidence of high levels of drawing skill. The few very successful lino prints contrasted with the limited drawing and technical skills evident in the majority of lino and gelli prints seen in textiles and in art, craft, and design.

In graphics, evidence of the careful selection and exploring of processes and techniques was seen in skilful examples of hand-drawn and digital illustration, printmaking, animation, and character development. QR codes provided links to animated logo designs and motion graphics viewed on secure sites. Successful students demonstrated their ability to refine their ideas in design roughs, scamps, and in sequences of layouts which showed the manipulation of design elements leading to the finished outcome. Less successful examples provided limited or no evidence of how the various elements of a design had been brought together and how the layout was refined or improved.

Textiles students used electronic media to explore and refine pattern and colour combinations, and to produce fashion drawings exploring alternative solutions and refining their chosen idea. There were some notable examples of fabric printing for fashion and domestic textiles using a variety of materials and techniques which included screen, digital and lino-block printing. Interesting examples of knitting were seen. Dissolvable fabrics, freehand and machine stitch, embroidery, felting, and appliqué were explored widely. Many examples included paper, wire, plastics, foils and found materials. In one example, wire, stitch, scorching, and distressed muslin were explored and used to express the shapes, forms and textures found in the cycle of growth and decay in nature. Reverse appliqué and the soft form of wadded muslin contrasted with the rigidity of machine-wrapped cords to represent plant stems and the deterioration of organic matter over time.

In three-dimensional design, students explored a wide variety of materials which included card, wire, metal, wood, clay, and plastics. Laser-cutting was prominent alongside examples of 3D printing, vacuum forming, welding, brazing and steam bending. Successful examples of ceramics included test pieces exploring glazes and maquettes which revealed the development and refining of ideas for abstract forms and both functional and decorative designs. Confident skills were evident in the handling of materials and in a variety of software programs which enabled successful students to resolve problems and refine their ideas. Working drawings and diagrams, maquettes and models often provided a clear insight into students' ability to review and refine their chosen idea.

Successful photography students were adept at selecting and exploring camera and post-production techniques that were appropriate to their intentions. Students explored aperture, shutter speed, depth of field and motion blur, in a meaningful manner and with purpose. The effects of ambient lighting in different locations, weather conditions and at different times of day, were explored in successfully refined images which demonstrated vision. The manipulation of studio lighting often revealed purpose, imagination, and skill. Pin-hole cameras were used to create images, sometimes scanned, and manipulated using Photoshop. There were engaging examples of film/video, on occasion accompanied by sound effects, in which there was ample evidence of selection, planning, and editing raw footage and the

importance of reviewing ideas was understood. A minority of students clearly demonstrated their camera and image-making skills, but the work provided limited evidence of developing, reviewing and refining ideas.

In less successful examples, students provided limited or no evidence of reviewing and refining ideas and limited understanding and skills when handling and managing materials and techniques.

In the Personal Investigation written material it is important that students review and refine their work by editing and revising the text and, when necessary, supplementing it with further investigation.

AO3

The majority of students successfully recorded the investigation, development and refining of ideas, in a manner that was easy to follow. Students recorded ideas, observations and insights using materials, techniques and methods that were appropriate to their intentions and the area of study. The evidence of reflection on work and progress was clear to see in meaningful connections between images, in the way that one study led to another and how students' decisions moved the work forward.

It is always clear that students' observational skills and their ability to successfully record what they see is founded on the strength of teaching and learning in well-designed courses. A key element in successful work was the ability to observe and record in depth.

In fine art, in both the two- and three-dimensional work seen, covered the full range of drawing skills, materials and techniques including closely observed analytical studies in pencil, biro, fineliner, pen and ink, crayon and coloured pencil. Adventurous and exciting, free-flowing expressive drawings, often on a large scale, were produced in charcoal, conté crayon, brush and ink, graphite sticks, and oil bars. Food dyes, coffee, and combinations of media were handled with sensitivity and confidence. In installations, successful students demonstrated thoughtful and considered reflection on their own work and that produced by others, alongside evidence of recording their ideas and insights. Examples of sculpture, construction and ceramics included sketches, drawings, maquettes, and test-pieces which recorded the development and refining of ideas and provided insight into students' thinking.

In graphic communication, some fine examples of recording were seen in both hand-drawn and digital illustration for publishing and packaging design. Lively, articulate drawings were seen in character development for animation, publicity campaigns and brand identity. Some students included hand-drawn studies of typography which heightened their awareness and understanding of the character of different styles of type and their appropriateness for different purposes and contexts. A number of students who possessed photography skills used their own photographs in designs for advertising and publicity material and in the design and layout for brochures, guidebooks, and corporate reports.

Carefully organised work in sketchbooks and using PowerPoint and Google Slides, successfully documented the investigation and development of ideas in a manner which made students

intentions and decisions clear and easy to follow. As expected in graphic communication, high standards of presentation and communication skills were seen in the majority of work. However, in some centres students continued to present files, on occasion perplexingly in the numerical order of the AOs, which included numerous images and little evidence of selection. Successful students provided evidence of their understanding of typography and the connections between image, type, and space. In some centres, students demonstrated limited understanding of the appropriateness of type styles for different contexts and purposes, and no understanding of graphic conventions with regard to margins.

In textiles design, there were examples of finely observed and sensitively handled studies of natural forms and environmental sources using pencil, pen, and ink, fineliner and watercolour. The most successful examples revealed students' understanding of shape, form, and structure. In woven textiles, students inspired by the subtleties of colour and tone found in nature, sourced their ideas in articulate drawings and in watercolour and gouache colour studies from prawns, mackerel, rock forms, pebbles, and seaweed. Fluent studies of nets and lobster pots, driftwood, and the rust and peeling paint on fishing boats were seen. One student produced a series of studies and images recording the movement of waves. Some fluent and controlled examples of fashion drawing used the hand-drawn and digital techniques seen in examples of professional work. On occasion they included fragments of pattern produced digitally or from scanning and printing elements of students' drawings and colour studies. Photography was used successfully as a sketchbook tool and well-integrated into investigations.

In three-dimensional design, successful students demonstrated high levels of skill when recording ideas and observations using computer software, but traditional drawing skills were often limited. Precision was evident in some examples of fit-for-purpose carefully produced diagrams and line drawings on a suitable scale using pencil, stylus pens or fineliner pens. Some students produced fluent studies which recorded initial and developing ideas, using pencil, pen, line and wash, and coloured pencils. It was clear where students had learned about recording techniques and presentation from exciting and accomplished examples of professional designers' and architects' drawings which are easily available on the Internet. It is not necessary to record the process of making or manufacturing.

Photography students recorded ideas and observations through the camera and in sketches and diagrams which recorded the planning of photoshoots and studio lighting. One student used Google Street View to identify possible locations. Successful students provided evidence of highly attuned and discriminating recording skills when taking well composed shots on location and in the studio. The majority of students provided clear evidence of their understanding of the technical aspects of photography and at least in some of their work, meticulously recorded camera settings. Good quality contact images of a suitable size, complete with mark-ups, were pivotal in recording the results of shoots and in providing evidence of selection for further development. On occasion, contacts were too small to be helpful for Moderators to achieve a clear insight into photoshoots and students' thinking.

In film/video, students carefully recorded their planning for shoots, including successfully produced storyboards, and the skilful editing of footage. The manipulation of images and darkroom work were documented in successful examples. Where annotation was concise, meaningful, and focused, it provided insight into students' intentions and their thinking and

additional evidence of students' ability to reflect on their own work and that produced by other photographers.

In both the practical work and written material, the majority of students diligently acknowledged contextual sources in captions which recorded artist, title, date. Few students documented the medium, the dimensions of the work, and its location. In the Personal Investigation required written material, and annotation where included, it is important that students demonstrate their ability to use appropriate specialist language when responding to work by other artists and providing a rationale for their own work. The inclusion of a bibliography or list of sources, including books, articles academic papers and recordings, is a specification requirement. It is clear that in some centres, students are not provided with guidance on how to acknowledge their sources. Recording the authorship of sources which are not the student's own, is important. The *Internet* or *Wikipedia* is not sufficient.

AO4

Moderators report that it was a privilege to see the evidence of creative endeavour and the high levels of students' engagement with art and design. Exciting, engaging, accomplished and at times challenging work, concluded investigations in a successful finished outcome or a series of related outcomes. It was no less rewarding for moderators to see hard-won investigations and finished outcomes by students with less natural flair and ability which provided evidence of genuine achievement and some success.

Successful students realised their intentions in finished outcomes which progressed seamlessly and coherently from the preliminary work. Accomplished and highly attuned skills were managed with understanding and insight in the highest achieving examples which concluded in depth investigations. Some students provided evidence of confident skills but when source material offered little scope for development, ideas progressed very little from the initial impulse. Other students with either some or limited skills when managing and handling materials and recording observations, concluded their investigations in a meaningful personal outcome. In some examples, the outcome appeared suddenly with little evidence of refining technique, composition, layout, or the proposed finished form of three-dimensional work.

In both components, students produced responses that were personal, informed, and thoughtful. Some students demonstrated an acute awareness and understanding of their environment, global issues, and issues which surround health and well-being which impact young people today. Students expressed their concerns about identity, relationships, the family, and ageing grandparents, which led to sensitively managed ideas, images and finished work. A number of students responded to their ethnic backgrounds to produce work inspired by events and societal issues in their country of origin and included a diversity of cultural sources.

Examples of lively, invigorating, and powerful work embodied a genuine sense of adventure and discovery. Inquisitiveness and intuition were evident in decisions and in seizing possibilities as they emerged. Examples of quiet, inward looking, and reflective work were often penetrating and closely observed. Some students were clearly captivated by their source material and fascinated by the possibilities of materials and processes which, on

occasion, prompted changes in direction and enabled them to articulate their ideas in unexpected ways.

Students who chose an appropriate scale were likely to produce a more successful finished outcome. Some students underestimated the challenges when their experience was limited to the pages of a small sketchbook. In component 2 particularly, it is important that students consider what they can realistically produce in the time and what is within their capabilities.

Evidence in all six titles revealed students' awareness of the importance of communicating their ideas visually in the practical work. Where appropriate, students in graphics, textiles, and three-dimensional design, demonstrated their awareness and understanding of designing for a purpose, to perform a particular function or for a particular brand, client, audience, location or setting. Design context and purpose were important considerations.

In fine art, the majority of students realised intentions in drawing and painting and produced a rich diversity of outcomes. Moderators enthusiastically report an increase in printmaking this year, which included successful and interesting examples of etching, relief printing and screen printing. There were some intriguing examples of thoughtful and well-considered installations in which students demonstrated a clear understanding of appropriate contextual sources. Informed by the drawings of Giuseppe Penone, a student produced an avenue of large scale charcoal drawings accompanied by sound effects with the intention of creating the sensation of walking through a wood. In response to the starting point *Collections*, a student inspired by the work of Janet Fish and Angela Faustino, produced an outcome developed from allowing fruit to decay in petri dishes. The few examples of sculpture included work in clay, plaster, plastics, metal, and wood. Very rarely, ambitious large scale abstract sculptures in both wood and metal were presented with good effect in an outdoor setting.

Successful examples of graphic communication included clear evidence of learning from the investigation of contextual sources which informed students' understanding of graphic conventions and design elements. Visits to a farm and to a chocolate factory were key to the success of a cheese branding outcome and a visual identity and packaging design for a brand of chocolates. Outcomes in branding, advertising, packaging design, way-finding signage, and design for print, were supported by mock-ups, visuals, and photography, which demonstrated students' contextual awareness and understanding. Interesting examples included motion graphics, animation, environmental graphics, and vehicle liveries. A number of uplifting illustrations for book covers and the printed page were seen. The majority of successful students produced finished work in which typography was appropriate to purpose and connections between type, image, and space, were carefully managed into cohesive finished designs.

In textiles design, students realised their intentions in designs for fashion and accessories, wall hangings, printed and woven textiles and fabric designs. Relief-printing, screen printing and digital printing were seen in fashion outcomes and in designs for wallpaper and furnishing fabrics. In one example based on a series of fluent plant studies, a student produced a bold minimal screen printed curtain and cushion cover accompanied by a convincing visual of them in a modern domestic setting. Students produced textiles illustration in machine and hand-stitch. Highly accomplished well-crafted examples of knitting and woven textiles were seen in a few centres. A student responding to the theme *Growth*

taught herself how to preserve insects which she interpreted using organza, mica powder and beads. High quality photographs and, on occasion video, of students modelling finished garments and accessories in the studio and on location, provided additional insight into the work by showing different perspectives and the effects of movement.

In three-dimensional design, successful outcomes in ceramics, jewellery, furniture, product, and architectural design provided evidence of students' understanding of the connection between form, function, and aesthetics. Examples of ceramics included well-crafted outcomes in the form of vases, tea and coffee pots, hangings, and imaginative vessels. Successful jewellery outcomes provided evidence of confident craft skills and a sympathetic understanding of materials and surfaces, using wire, metal, Perspex and found materials to create necklaces, brooches, and pennants. One student used copper annealing to create a mosaic of variously manipulated copper plates.

Designs for shelters, bridges, stadia, shopping malls and eco-friendly dwellings, were realised in skilful digital drawings and in models that were of a high standard in concept and manufacture. Biomimicry was used to create design solutions in lighting design and architectural design. An imaginative design for a shelter was based on drawings of shells, bone structures and geodesic domes. Inspired by the theme *Snow*, a student produced a site-specific sculpture using plastics and heat processes. Photography was used to elevate the outcomes, exploiting the interaction of light through plastic.

Furniture designs were often realised in well-executed finished models accompanied by visuals showing the outcomes in an appropriate setting. It is not realistic, practicable or cost-effective for students to produce a large model, when a smaller finished model will clearly show the concept and manufacture in sufficient detail. Disappointing finished outcomes provided little evidence of understanding and learning from appropriate examples of good design.

In photography, students realised their intentions in a single image, a series of related images, or in a short sequence of film/video. A number of interesting examples included projections, assemblages, constructions, installations, and multi-media immersive environments. Successful students amply demonstrated high levels of photography skills and understanding of the medium when managing the camera, in image-making, and in post-production. Highly personal work was seen in response to a wide range of ideas, issues and locations which led to meaningful, well-crafted outcomes. Exceptional awareness and observational skill were seen in highly attuned atmospheric image-making in both still photography and the moving image.

In some centres it was rewarding to see an emphasis on composition and viewpoint. There were a number of notable investigations and outcomes in which students produced dramatic and powerful images by tilting the camera and looking, down, across and upwards. Images of architecture, stairways, fire escapes and the skeletal structures of bridges often revealed students' understanding of formal elements and composition.

The carefully considered selection of an image, a set of related images, or a sequence of images as the finished outcome, was successful in the most discerning examples. However, some students appeared to be unable to stand back from their work and make choices.

Constructions and mixed-media embellishments were often less successful than students' photography. Some students appeared to lose their momentum which led them to tweak images with superficial digital embellishments which did little to enhance their images. Clumsily degraded images and stitching with neither skill nor integrity, generally revealed the misinterpretation of contextual examples and frequently disguised limited photography skills.

Administration, marking and moderation

Teacher comments on Candidate Record Forms were often helpful, particularly when they referred to the AOs and used the language of the assessment criteria. A small number of CRFs were not signed by the teacher(s) or students and some did not match the correct component. There were some arithmetical errors and on occasion transcriptional errors between CRFs and the marks recorded on e-sub. Errors identified at moderation can result in a revised sample which is inconvenient and can be stressful for teachers.

Arrangements for the moderation visit were appreciated by moderators. In the majority of centres, teachers responded quickly to moderators' requests for available dates and where there were difficulties, they were easily and speedily resolved. Some centres were slow to respond which created severe problems for moderators, causing delays in making appointments for other centres. Car parking was sometimes difficult, but the majority of teachers were considerate in reserving a space for their moderator. Where there was no parking on site, teachers kindly recommended parking nearby.

The majority of samples were displayed as an exhibition or carefully laid out on tables. Organisation was often exemplary. In some centres, digital samples were available on different computers. Where all of the samples were on one computer, access and navigation were generally simple and easy to follow.

The majority of teachers arranged the clearly labelled sample in a single rank order across the two components which greatly assisted the moderation procedure and was appreciated by moderators. Where the sample was not presented in rank order, teachers were adept at providing maps that were clear and easy to follow. Labelling was usually very clear but there were exceptions. When both components produced by a student were displayed together, it was not always easy to identify which work belonged to which component. It was most helpful when sets of work were separated by coloured cord, ribbon, string, or strips of paper.

In the majority of centres, work produced in the 15 hour period of supervised time was identified by a coloured dot or a label. It is a specification requirement that was overlooked or ignored in a small minority of centres.

Moderators commented on the positive and professional approach of teachers to the moderation process and the warm reception they received in the majority of centres. A guided tour around the work was always helpful and a good opportunity for teachers to explain their course. Most centres provided a quiet, well-lit, private space for the moderator to work in. Teachers are reminded that moderation is a confidential process, and the moderator must not be asked to work in public thoroughfares.

Familiarity with the specification and understanding of the assessment criteria resulted in marking by the overwhelming majority of teachers that was either accurate or broadly in line with the AQA standard exemplified at Teacher Standardisation. Discrepancies occurred when teachers credited their most able students with high marks when a lower mark was appropriate. Some teachers found it difficult to equate evidence of ability and achievement in the work of their own students with the standard shown at meetings. In some centres, samples credited with marks in the 21-24 exceptional band matched criteria in the appropriate mark band but were unreasonably lenient.

Moderators report that in some centres, high marks were credited to AO1 when evidence lacked the depth of investigation, development and understanding consistent with a higher level of achievement. Unduly high marks were often credited in AO2 for evidence of the number of different materials and techniques explored. It is important that marking is an assessment of students' understanding and skills when selecting, exploring, managing, and handling appropriate materials and techniques. When marking AO3 it was evident that some teachers credited unreasonably high marks which did not correspond with the evidence of observation and recording skills seen in students' work. Lenient marking by some teachers was based on students' copies of contextual sources when evidence of recording observations from their own sources was significantly less successful and matched criteria at a lower level of achievement.

The majority of teachers successfully established a single, reliable rank order and consistently applied the same standard across the two components. It is important where more than one teacher is involved in assessment, that internal standardisation is effective. In a small minority of centres, marking was inconsistent.

It is clear from the evidence that some centres mark to the previous year's grade boundaries and to students predicted grades. Pressures from students and parents, and within centres, can lead teachers to inflate marks or to knowingly add marks to the limit of tolerance which directly contributes to grade creepage and the consequent changes to grade thresholds. Changes are sometimes necessary to ensure that year-on-year, standards are maintained and in line with other awarding bodies.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.