

# ART & DESIGN

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**Paper 9479/01**  
**Coursework**

**From the March 2025 series, we will no longer accept hard copy submission. If you send us hard copy work, we will return it to you un-marked. For details on how to submit work, please refer to the *Guidance on the Administration and Online Submission of Art & Design for 2025*.**

## Key messages

- Successful work contained clear intentions, encouraging focused ideas to develop around a theme. Achievement was communicated through carefully organised and edited work.
- Teachers are reminded to consider the suitability of the candidates' approach to certain topics and themes. There was an increase in inappropriate content and the use of inappropriate materials such as the inclusion of broken glass, tattoo needles and prescription medicine, safeguarding and or compliance concerns were raised with centres in all cases.
- Some submissions contained unnecessary and extensive written notes, often at the expense of the candidates' own practical work. Annotation should be concise and relevant to idea development.
- Candidates are strongly advised to distinguish between their own work and that of others', by clear labelling and citing references.
- AI was increasingly evident, and in most cases correctly signposted. A full transparency of programmes and tools used should always be disclosed.

## General comments

Careful and considered selection of the most relevant work for the supporting studies is part of the assessment criteria (AO4 Present) and there were many submissions where the work was presented inappropriately, with oversized work, attachments, flaps and overlapping work. Next year all work will be submitted online, and greater care and consideration of the submission approach must be understood. Presenting the work coherently, illustrating a logical progression of ideas is essential. Many candidates would have benefited from revisiting their intentions and appropriately reflecting on their work.

Most candidates selected thoughtful themes, relevant to their interests, enabling development of a personal idea. Many investigations drew upon the locality, overseas travel, treasured possessions, friends, family and the local community. The most successful observations derived from first-hand study which candidates could re-visit time and again, enabling depth of investigation. Most topics enabled candidates to engage with first hand observation and appropriate contextual references, to drive ideas forward.

Ideas were often expressed through fine art, where candidates engaged and explored combinations that conveyed ideas, mood or surface quality. There was also evidence of photographic submissions, as a stand-alone medium, as well as a tool for recording and development. Well-considered photography enhanced the work. Design work, digital processes, textiles and sculpture, were also apparent. Visits to galleries, local exhibitions and artist interviews informed ideas and stimulated creative and personal responses. Some candidates over-relied on contextual study at the expense of selecting their own sources for recording, to create original practical work.

Safeguarding issues were frequent. Most demonstrated a misjudgement of what was considered appropriate subject matter. Teachers are responsible for ensuring the suitability of topics and themes that candidates study you should also consider the suitability of the materials candidates use when creating their work. If you are in any doubt regarding the suitability of a topic or theme, then you should contact Cambridge for advice.

## **Higher levels**

At this level, work demonstrated strong personal connections to the theme or topic, with maturity of approach and selection of sources. Intentions were clear and reflective. Submissions were organised and coherent,

initiated by relevant recording, investigated with commitment. Personal ideas were equally matched with technical ability and critical understanding. This stimulated thought processes and indicated responsiveness to new and evolving ideas. All work was visually engaging, demonstrating depth that reflected a genuine interest. The entire creative journey was mature and cohesive.

Vital first-hand recording had evolved from considered sources. Observations were extensive and continuous, with links to contextual referencing that informed the subsequent development of ideas. Starting points initiated a thoughtful selection of objects, people, and local places. Candidates interacted with their subject matter through still-life arrangements, posing their models, experimenting with lighting or setting the scene in the local environment. Candidates frequently included photographs, enabling ideas to develop, illustrating arrangements of objects, interactions of people, or composing scenes using different lighting and viewpoints, to reflect a narrative.

Adept materials rendering was in evidence throughout the work, purposefully selected to reflect the qualities within the chosen subject matter and convey intentions. The discovery of newly found techniques and processes were often driven by contextual connections. Many candidates demonstrated fluency in the rendering of media, but others were less willing to take creative risks, preferring to use familiar techniques. Digital applications focused on developing existing and original imagery, rather than simply using filters to create different versions of the same image.

Most candidates were able to build-on previous ideas enabling development of further observations. Relevant annotation supported intentions and indicated influences and origins of imagery. The work was coherently presented to show the creative process from starting point to a carefully planned final outcome, with evidence of a sound understanding of visual language.

### **Middle levels**

Submissions at this level demonstrated experimental use of media but were less able to show a clear direction of ideas to fully realise an intention. Other portfolios did not contain the same consistency of skill or sensitivity in media selection, as seen at the higher level. Some were personal and involved, but other work contained less engagement and depth of enquiry, to support a fully sustained and resolved body of work. Sometimes the chosen topic was over ambitious, preventing the candidate from exploring the potential with in-depth understanding. Additional support through contextual referencing, could have stimulated more informed responses.

Many candidates recorded from direct observation, but a high level of secondary sources were also referenced. Those who worked from relevant primary source material were able to develop personal ideas and a considered response to their topic. There was frequent inclusion of carefully studied observations in drawing, painting, or other media that remained undeveloped. Candidates appeared unsure of how to develop ideas from these studies, or any ideas arising were abandoned prematurely. At other times, innovative ideas evolved without sufficient initial studies, to enable the refinement of an idea in any depth.

Development was often the weakest area in some submissions, where insufficient first-hand observation prevented candidates from generating personal ideas. This was also apparent in some examples of design-based work where strong design work and skilful outcomes lacked the substance of recording, to provide context to ideas. As a result, the origins of ideas were unclear, other than from the work of other fashion designers. The presentation of the supporting studies and final outcome were sometimes incoherent and sometimes the work appeared to be incomplete, with ideas that were difficult to follow. Presenting a clear starting point with effective planning could ensure relevant connections were made between the initial recording and later development. Many candidates could have benefited from challenging ideas through critical and contextual reflection, to enable meaningful development.

### **Lower levels**

At this level, responses to the assessment objectives were inconsistent, with heavy reliance on secondary sourced imagery and a lack of first-hand recording. This limited the development of original ideas and curiosity of investigation. Many opportunities arose for first-hand recording, but some candidates chose to rely on secondary sourced material instead which prevented a personal response. Submissions were often incoherent, without direction or personal connection. Referencing limited sources, resulted in a sparse and disconnected portfolio, containing images that were unrelated to an idea. Many candidates copied from the internet, *Pinterest* or *Google* images as their starting points, or entirely worked from the imagination, with no references to sources.

Development was limited and either consisted of repeated images in different media, or ideas that were narrow. Sometimes there was a glimmer of an idea, but not fulfilled to create unexpected images or interesting outcomes. While artist research can inform the development of personal ideas and media use, candidates at this level were often unable to identify relevant or useful works for reference.

Material exploration was often limited to one or two mediums, with little evidence of refinement to expand existing knowledge or technical skill. Many candidates at this level were unwilling, or unable, to take creative risks. Further exploration would have encouraged greater creativity and successful ways to express ideas. Instead, they preferred to work with familiar and 'safe' media such as pencil or pen.

The presentation of work was inconsistent, either with imagery not displayed to its best advantage, or a disconnection between one element and another. Some candidates did not separate the final outcome from the supporting studies, making identification and assessment difficult. Most submissions were unresolved with final outcomes tending to take the form of a reproduction of an earlier study.

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

- Overall, there was a noted improvement in submissions showing evidence of work that covered all the assessment objectives, with supporting studies that had clearly informed the final outcome.
- Teachers are reminded to consider the suitability of the candidates' approach to certain topics and themes. There was an increase in inappropriate content and the use of inappropriate materials such as the inclusion of broken glass, tattoo needles and prescription medicine, safeguarding and or compliance concerns were raised with centres in all cases.
- There was increased evidence of AI generated work which was, in most cases, annotated and accredited correctly.
- Although there was greater evidence of recording from direct observation, at the lower achieving level candidates remained over reliant on secondary source material.

## **General comments**

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

## **Higher levels**

At this level, submissions demonstrated clear intentions enabling candidates to confidently select a range of appropriate sources for research. Recording was extensive and informed by the selection of thoughtful first-hand observation. This led to individual and original development. Most of the work was focused and with clear purpose, informing the progression of ideas. Successful submissions were clearly organised to communicate intentions, showing a high level of personal engagement.

The exploration of media was accomplished and creatively handled. Materials were carefully chosen to reflect the subject matter. In addition to the candidates' sophisticated rendering of paint, pencil, pastel and ink; media manipulation was sometimes experimental, and effects were achieved through experimental mark-making, collaged surfaces and the layering of paint and pastel.

Reference made to the works of established artists and a range of cultures often informed the direction of study. Strong explorative imagery was supported by analytical annotation, demonstrating excellent critical thinking. Intelligent decision-making produced relevant and inventive development. Initial images and ideas from the recording stage, along with artist referencing, were manipulated to explore and progress the direction of the work. This led to a fully resolved and successful final outcome.

## **Middle levels**

Some of the submissions at this level demonstrated the ability to record and select appropriate sources for research to investigate the candidate's chosen question. Often, this recording provided a good basis for development and media exploration. Other work was less coherent and the candidates' ability to focus on a clear in-depth direction was less obvious. Work seen as this level tended to be disconnected, confusing and unresolved.

Sometimes submissions at this level contained evidence of interesting explorations with three-dimensional media which were helpful at progressing ideas, but at times candidates abandoned these ideas prematurely and settled for an earlier, and less successful study for their final piece. More evaluation and reflection as work progressed would have helped candidates to recognise their strengths and build on them.

Where responses had used digital media, clearer appropriate annotation identifying which images are the candidates' own work, is needed. It is also important to demonstrate the process and initial recording of observation in design-based work. At times, fashion designs lacked evidence of this and although media use was often well explored, it was not clear how the candidate had developed their ideas to produce the final outcome in the timed test.

References to artists and other cultures were evident in most submissions, but the ability to use this visual information to inform personal development, was less strong. At this level few candidates were able to move their work forward through development of an image from the analysis of the works of others to express their idea effectively.

### **Lower levels**

Most submissions at this level demonstrated a lack of first-hand observation. Sometimes found images were included in the form of a mood board, however the images were from secondary sources rather than first-hand observational studies. It is helpful to include annotations identifying which are the candidates' own photography where appropriate. At this level, initial visual studies investigating the chosen question, tended to be unrelated the outcome produced in the timed test. Fragmented recording often prevented ideas from naturally building into a developed body of work or a coherent journey through the creative process.

Candidates would have benefited from investigating the works of other artists to encourage focus and develop intentions with purpose. This could also have informed media exploration as well as a personal approach to idea development. Experimentation with media was mostly with paint, pastels, and pencil and was not always well considered. The use of media was often limited, and candidates would have benefited from further practice of chosen media to develop technical skills. More reflection on the work as it progressed would have allowed candidates to identify the most successful ideas and media use and build on them to inform a more resolved outcome in the timed test. More planning for the composition would have been useful in this process.

There were several photography submissions at this level. However, candidates had rarely made any relevant study of other artists or photographers in this field. To inform their own progression of idea, skill and expression they should be encouraged to explore the work of others as this would have helped them to explore elements such as lighting, viewpoint, focus, mood, or composition.

Design-based scripts at this level tended to include a large amount of secondary sourced material with little, if any, initial studies related to the chosen question. Development within these submissions was often incoherent leading to a final piece which was often unresolved.

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<p><b>Paper 9479/03</b> <b>Personal Investigation</b></p>
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## Key messages

- Many submissions worked towards one final piece rather than generating a body of interconnected works in response to their contextual and visual exploration.
- The use of additional flaps should be avoided. More focused editing of the work would help to show the creative process more clearly.
- Teachers should consider the suitability of the candidates' approach to certain topics and themes. There was an increase in inappropriate content and the use of inappropriate materials; safeguarding and or compliance concerns were raised with centres in all cases.
- Candidates must clearly identify their own photography and first-hand recording.
- Some of the work seen was too similar to Component 1: Coursework due to a lack of analysis of the work of others, contextual references and written analysis.

## General comments

Generally, the guidelines regarding word count and number of pages were followed with most submissions in the Fine Art area of study. There were some design-based submissions including architecture, graphics, 3D and fashion. Most candidates had made interesting choices for their themes and were committed to their projects, engaging well with their topics.

A very broad range of media was experimented with many candidates using their own photography as reference material. Responses explored and developed different painting and drawing techniques, print making, textiles and many 3D experiments with different materials.

Some of the written content focused more on biographical and descriptive use of language and less on critical analysis. This impacted both AO1 and AO3 in terms of understanding and being able to develop ideas beyond the initial response. There were many examples of gallery and museum visits included within the personal investigations that were pertinent to the theme and subsequent development of candidates' work.

In some cases, it was difficult to understand what the theme was and where were the primary starting points. Any handwritten annotation must be clear and legible, this will be particularly important when the work is submitted via Submit for Assessment in 2025.

## **Higher levels**

Candidates at this level demonstrated a clear intention throughout their investigation, from beginning to end. Investigation from first-hand studies and experience was extensive, continuous and evidently informed the development of personal responses. Candidates worked from both primary and secondary sources, showing originality and critical engagement to form a coherent and relevant body of work. The candidates' photography and observational studies were carefully composed with consideration to lighting and viewpoints. Candidates referenced first-hand visits to studios, galleries, exhibitions, interviews with artists and workshops.

Submissions in this category were characterised by a thoroughness regarding fulfilling all the Assessment Objectives. Artist's works that influenced the candidates' responses were selected for their relevance to the theme, media use or technique. The analysis of the work of others showed appropriate use of language and informed the progression of the investigation.

Candidates were not afraid to experiment and try out new techniques and ideas with media. These were clearly informed by their artist studies. Candidates moved between different media fluidly, with skill and confidence, exploring connections between materials and concept.

Candidates developed their ideas thoroughly, understanding the need to progress and move forward from initial artist studies and observations. Submissions at this level included clear reviews of work and ideas as they progressed. Appropriate contextual referencing informed the practical development.

The submissions were effectively concluded through a combination of written evaluation and a body of personal and creative work. Candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the aims of the investigation and an awareness of the wider context of their practical work.

### **Middle levels**

Submissions at this level featured clear intentions and ideas but the overall investigation lacked depth. Although candidates selected relevant artists to research, they chose to simply copy artists' work and technique rather than use their understanding of the work and approach to inform their own responses. Where the work of others had informed the development of the candidates' responses this lacked effective exploration and the candidates' ideas ended too abruptly.

In many cases candidates worked towards a single final outcome that had clearly been informed by the Artists referred to, but this was not carried into a body of work that progressed through ongoing research, analysis and exploration.

The use of media demonstrated skill and sensitivity, but it was not necessarily informed by their research into the work of others. There was no connection made between the ideas and concepts being explored in relation to the materials and processes being used.

The written content contained little reflection on the work of the candidate as the investigation progressed. There was less evidence of critical thinking; this would have supported a more in-depth sustained study and a more engaged personal response.

Many submissions did not contain an effective conclusion or a summary of achievement. A discussion of how the work related to the aims of the investigation would have been highly beneficial.

### **Low levels**

Submissions at this level demonstrated a lack of understanding of the Assessment Objectives and the overall aims of the component.

The artists referred to were not always relevant to the chosen theme. The candidates relied on the biographies of the artist rather than focusing on their technique or the context of the work to support their ideas. Their work demonstrated limited research skills; there was some evidence of primary sources used but most candidates relied on secondary material, often copying both imagery and text directly from the internet.

Some submissions at this level included visits and conversations with artists; and some within this range attended workshops. Candidates learnt new skills and documented them photographically with some descriptive written information to explain what they were doing. Although they produced finished pieces using the learned technique, they did not include any of their own developed ideas or further experimentation.

The handling of media showed limited skill in recording from direct observation and making copies of the work of others. The personal creative responses demonstrated only a basic understanding of visual language. Candidates would benefit from experimenting with the techniques or ideas of their selected artist within their own work. Effective analysis and understanding of reference material would help to generate more innovative ideas and lead to stronger connections being made.

The written analysis was limited and frequently below the required word count. Candidates would have benefitted from prior planning, researching relevant artists and using this analysis to inform their own work.

The investigations at this level lacked coherence, direction and personal engagement. The visual and written elements of the personal investigation was sparse and, in some cases, did not relate to an idea or theme.