

AS

Art and Design

7246/C & 7246/X - Photography
Report on the Examination

7240
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Photography

Inventive approaches were seen in responses to the specification. Digital photography and editing software were used in most schools and colleges, although traditional darkroom skills were seen in an increasing number of submissions, sometimes at a very basic level.

Digital sketchbooks using presentation software, were used to increasingly good effect and with great fluency. The most successful examples using digital sketchbooks often included finished hardcopy which demonstrated students' understanding of production techniques. Some work included installation and video presentations.

Many students chose to present their work as hardcopy in sketchbooks occasionally accompanied by digital presentations. Some students failed to clearly differentiate between their own work and work by others, or neglected to identify research sources. Poor organisation of digital files resulted in difficulties at moderation. References to contextual material sometimes included relevant examples from other disciplines, such as graphic communication and fine art. These often enhanced the work and contributed to the understanding of the student.

The revised specification has possibly led to subtle changes in the content and the direction of investigations by students, in all components. The majority of teachers are aware of the need to demonstrate greater understanding of selection, technique and planning. Some students included documentation of what they aimed to achieve in a particular shoot, planning the content, and then evaluating the results. This influenced the direction of their investigations and provided additional evidence for assessment.

Some schools and colleges have adopted a project format which includes a planning sheet for the student to work with. In most cases this provided a framework for individual thinking and creative decisions but occasionally it led to predictable, formulaic responses. Some schools asked students to produce Pinterest boards of ideas which resulted in disparate responses with little sense of direction.

The most successful digital and traditional work included annotations which provided evidence of students' thinking. Annotations included why a particular image was chosen from a contact sheet, how work was informed by contextual references and the technical considerations of each shoot. Usually the intent of the investigation was clear from the outset. Many students chose to work with manual settings on their cameras and documented the settings used on their contact sheets. Where students produced studio work, shooting and lighting diagrams were often included. Similar properties were seen in traditional darkroom work.

Digital photography was very widely used, although not exclusively. Darkroom work usually benefitted students' understanding of photography.

Most successful students documented their thinking in meaningful and purposeful annotation. In less successful work, students presented collections of images with little understanding of techniques and a lack of discrimination or real engagement with the topic. Irrelevant image manipulation was a feature of these submissions. Sometimes, extremely interesting images were produced without background material, such as contextual influences or evidence of thinking and planning. In less successful work there was a tendency to mistake unjustified image manipulation for the development of ideas which led to over-marking. Successful students demonstrated their understanding of relevant photographic techniques and camera skills when making informed personal responses.

Portfolio (7246/C)

The Portfolio is used by many schools and colleges as an introduction to photography and to the requirements of the Externally Set Assignment. Some submissions included a number of small projects designed to introduce students to techniques and camera skills. These frequently provided a starting point that was developed into an extended personal project. In some schools and colleges students responded to a broad theme such as sports, texture, nature etc, and skills were introduced as work progressed.

Most teachers recognised the importance of contextual reference and many portfolios included evidence of studies of work by relevant photographers and artists. Students included detailed experiments with camera techniques and digital effects. Schools and colleges usually provided a theme, or a choice of themes for this component, and many students took the opportunity to present, edit and organise their work carefully. In some cases, extensive contextual research was included but did little to inform the work. The most successful submissions included research which was clearly understood by the student and had a definite influence on their work. Successful students made clear what was their own and what was the work of others, which is a requirement of the specification. Camera settings were documented and their effectiveness considered.

Where image manipulation techniques were used, successful students included detailed explanations of the process as well as consideration of the outcome. A lack of clear intentions, poor organisation and limited investigations which demonstrated little understanding of contextual references or photographic skills were seen in less successful work.

Many students chose to include written evaluations of their work, their reaction to research findings, and their progress in the investigation. These provided genuine insights into their work, thinking and understanding and offered additional evidence to support the marks awarded. Sometimes, however, annotations were little more than a superfluous commentary which added little to the investigation.

Externally Set Assignment (7246/X)

Teachers considered the question paper was broad enough for students of all abilities to respond successfully to the starting points. The introduction of contextual references continues to be welcomed.

Everyday activities

Some very thoughtful and fluent work was seen, including responses in which students explored the nature of contemporary society and gave some interesting and thought provoking opinions. Sometimes researching the chosen topic dominated the investigation to the detriment of the practical work. Some students seemed to consider this question to be the most easily accessible and as a result it included many domestic scenes and common themes such as smoking and drinking.

The digital Image

This was a most popular starting point with a range of understanding evident in responses. References were not always fully understood. The more successful and confident work was more thoughtful, demonstrating understanding of contextual references and exploring various techniques purposefully, some approaching abstraction. Graphic, as well as fine art, approaches to this

starting point were particularly evident in responses. Some students explored comic books. Others explored the nature of reality, inspired by contextual references included in the question. Weaker responses treated this starting point as a technical exercise rather than a creative investigation.

Self-identity

Given the current preoccupation with self-identity this question was unsurprisingly popular, though responses in general failed to develop the topic further than a collection of selfies. The more successful examples considered location and personal possessions, family and aspirations. The majority of less successful submissions were collections of unrelated and poorly informed images.

Available light

Responses to this starting point, more than any other, tended to display a lack of understanding of photographic techniques. Street scenes at night, many influenced by film noir were popular. Portraiture also figured large in submissions. Studio lighting techniques were used in a number of submissions which tended to misinterpret the starting point. Less successful work tended to be rather disparate with little attempt by students to develop ideas beyond their initial thoughts and resulted in a series of disjointed images. Above all, this starting point tended to highlight those courses taught by photography specialists.

Documenting contemporary life

This proved to be a very popular question, a range of topics being explored by students with varying degrees of success and involvement. Very thoughtful and fluent work was seen, including topics which explored the nature of contemporary society and expressed some interesting and thought-provoking opinions. Some responses took the form of examining issues, stereotypes, teenage problems and voicing an opinion on a particular topic. This starting point tended to appeal to the more opinionated student. In some examples, researching the topic dominated the investigation to the detriment of the practical work.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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