

Principal examiner reports for teachers

Principal examiner reports for teachers summarise what candidates did well and what candidates needed to improve for this examination series only.

This report is to be used in conjunction with the question paper and mark scheme.

For guidance on teaching and learning we provide resources for many of our syllabuses.

Resource	Where to find it
Grade descriptions – Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Syllabus and specimen materials
Schemes of work – Schemes of work are designed to support you in your teaching and lesson planning.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Lesson planning – Guidance on how to plan a lesson.	Lesson planning
Resource plus – There may be additional resources such as teaching packs containing lesson plans, resources and worksheets and videos for aspects of your syllabus.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Teaching tools	Teaching Tools
Exemplar candidate responses	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Learner guide – A guide for students to help them understand what the course involves.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Community forums – Do you have a question or something to share? Our online forums are great way to keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community.	Community forum on the school support hub
Access to scripts for this series.	Access to scripts service
Results analysis is available for some syllabuses.	Results analysis
Test maker is available for some subjects.	Test maker

Other services from Cambridge International Education

- [Digital mocks service](#)
- [Insight assessments](#)
- [Professional development](#)
 - [Focus on assessment](#)
 - [Online marking workshops](#)

ART & DESIGN

Paper 0400/01 Coursework

Key messages

What candidates did well

- Many responses demonstrated thorough and purposeful research which explored a coherent theme.
- Submissions that worked from direct observations including from their local environment, often provided good opportunities for a personal and meaningful response.
- A range of topics were explored. Themes included relationships, emotions, conflict, environmental issues, landscape and portraiture.

What candidates needed to improve

- Some work needed to use reflective practises to refine or build on the many different media techniques used throughout the submission.
- Some work needed more care over the selection and editing process, with consideration of how images are placed, to reinforce links.
- In some submissions there was too much writing, and the visual work did not reflect the ideas or intentions written about. Candidates should focus on building their visual language to communicate intentions.

Comments on specific tasks/activities

AO1: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions, reflecting critically on work and progress

What candidates did well

- Some responses included visual research that reflected independent thinking. Recordings were made with skilful application of appropriate media.
- These submissions used a range of source materials, including from direct observation, to investigate the chosen theme in depth.
- The process of recording continued throughout the portfolio to inform the development of the final outcome.

What candidates needed to improve

- Candidates need understanding about how to establish a clear line of enquiry. Some submissions needed to demonstrate the connections between images they were recording, and how they linked to their theme.
- Some submissions needed more observational recording in order to develop original ideas.
- Some submissions needed to have more continuity, direction and depth, to have coherence in the portfolios.

AO2: Explore and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, reviewing and refining ideas as work develops

What candidates did well

- Candidates demonstrated purposeful use of media. They selected materials, tools and processes thoughtfully, exploring their qualities through controlled and sensitive application.
- Viewpoints and perspectives were investigated with intention, which communicated surface qualities and form. The use of close-up studies often informed this process.
- Many candidates demonstrated the exploration of media and processes with intention, showing an understanding of how media could be manipulated to develop and refine their ideas.



- Candidates worked fluently across a range of media, techniques and processes.

What candidates needed to improve

- Some submissions needed to demonstrate self-analysis and decision making in terms of media use, for the media experiments to inform the development of the candidate's own work.
- Some submissions needed more evidence of practising specific skills such as blending, layering, mark making digital editing or mixed media processes. These candidates needed to build on their technical skills.
- Portfolios were sometimes presented as a sequence of unrelated experiments or isolated pieces rather than as a coherent, sustained investigation.

AO3: Develop ideas through investigations informed by contextual and other sources, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding

What candidates did well

- Candidates demonstrated thoughtful review and selection, using their studies and media exploration to evaluate what was most effective and how each approach supported their intentions.
- Portfolios showed the candidate's development in recording insights, responding to findings and making informed creative decisions as their work progressed.
- Contextual study was purposeful, and candidates applied analysis of the visual elements and conceptual awareness to support their ideas and inform the final outcome.

What candidates needed to improve

- Some submissions needed an initial recording or a thorough visual research.
- Some work relied heavily on second source images to inform the final outcome.
- Instead of settling on their first idea, candidates should experiment with multiple versions, layouts, compositions and media approaches to deepen their creative investigation.
- Candidates should visually communicate how their ideas grow and change rather than presenting disconnected pages or sudden jumps in thinking. Each stage should build on the last.
- Some submissions needed to relate the artist influences that were included to their own ideas.

AO4: Present a personal and coherent response that realises intentions and, where appropriate, makes connections between visual and other elements

What candidates did well

- Submissions demonstrated a clear sense of visual direction, with work presented in a coherent and purposeful sequence.
- Candidates showed effective visual progression ensuring that ideas, developments and refinements linked logically and consistently toward the final outcome.
- The portfolio communicated a visual journey, with each stage building clearly on the last to support a well-resolved conclusion.

What candidates needed to improve

- The progression from initial research to final outcome needed clarification with reflection on their own work or a refinement of their ideas.
- Candidates should demonstrate how early ideas, experiments and research directly inform the final piece rather than presenting a final outcome that is disconnected from earlier work.
- Candidates need to visually demonstrate intentional decision-making by clearly showing what they chose to develop, what they dismissed and the reasons behind those choices. This helps establish a purposeful and coherent creative journey.

ART & DESIGN

Paper 0400/02 Externally Set Assignment
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Key messages

What candidates did well

- The most common area of study was painting and two-dimensional media. This included many examples of digital media.
- Original responses to the chosen theme indicated personal connections and clear intentions. These examples led to thorough investigations and development of ideas with a coherent journey towards a meaningful conclusion.

What candidates needed to improve

- Personal connection through direct observation to develop visual language.
- Contextual referencing should relate to the chosen theme or the candidate's intentions. Greater relevance would help to guide further development.

Comments on specific tasks/activities

AO1: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses

What candidates did well

- Responses gathered visual information from a wide variety of sources including first hand observation, often in the form of their own photography or sketches from life.
- Referencing the work of others by showing how it influenced their own original ideas. For example, an element understood from artist research was implemented in the use of materials and techniques used subsequently by the candidate, rather than copying the artist's work.
- Recording explored a wide variety of visual elements such as colour, tone, form and texture.

What candidates needed to improve

- Some candidates relied too heavily upon secondary sourced imagery that did not always relate to the theme. Use of relevant primary sources would be beneficial.
- The use of simple line drawings was often the preferred or only method of recording; a wider variety of appropriate materials was needed.
- Contextual references were either not included or had little connection to the chosen theme.

AO2: Explore and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes

What candidates did well

- Clear understanding of the visual elements was demonstrated with excellent technical skills.
- Purposeful selection of materials that related to both contextual referencing and the candidate's own self-awareness of ability helped to explore ideas skilfully.
- A willingness to experiment and explore with a range of media and techniques resulted in unique and lively projects.
- The use of AI as an additional tool and identified as such, helped to develop original ideas and create visual stimulus from which to develop further.

What candidates needed to improve

- A heavy reliance on copying from photographs or secondary sourced imagery often resulted in flat, ill-informed imagery. Working from direct observation would help this.
- Basic selection and control of materials was evident in some scripts where refinement of skill was limited.
- Connections between research and exploration was not clearly communicated.

AO3: Develop ideas through investigation, demonstrating critical understanding

What candidates did well

- Candidates indicated clear progression from initial ideas to more refined concepts; early investigations developed with consideration and purpose.
- Contextual studies formed an integral part of investigation, being used to inspire and influence original ideas.
- Reflection and self-evaluation were directed to explore and plan for alternative possibilities.

What candidates needed to improve

- Some responses were limited by technical skill and were unable to communicate original and personal ideas effectively.
- AI was used in some examples without explicit annotation.
- Repetition of earlier imagery was sometimes used and did not therefore, reflect a progressive journey.

AO4: Present a personal and coherent response that realises intentions and demonstrates an understanding of visual language

What candidates did well

- Final outcomes that demonstrated a culmination of a coherent journey through investigation, exploration, development and evaluation provided a cohesive conclusion.
- Consideration to composition had been explored and practised to identify showing informed decision making.
- Intentions were realised in full response to the chosen theme.

What candidates needed to improve

- Some final outcomes were either a copy of an earlier study or completely disconnected from the supporting work.
- Responses needed to show greater consideration of composition and visual impact.
- Intentions were not realised due to limited analysis, reflection and awareness.