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

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Paper 9479/01
Coursework

Key messages

What candidates did well

- Many submissions were presented in a logical manner and effectively edited. This communicated the coherent flow of ideas.
- A diverse range of themes were explored. The most meaningful were those where candidates selected topics that were relevant to their interests.
- The local environment presented a rich source of subject matter for investigation and media exploration.
- Submissions containing clear intentions and a coherent theme, enabled sustained and focused ideas to be investigated and developed in depth, and with purpose.
- Submissions presenting a portfolio of supporting work with a connected final outcome, clearly demonstrated the creative process.
- Work that was photographed or scanned to a good level of quality and resolution ensured visibility of detail.

What candidates needed to improve

- Some submissions would have benefited from clear candidate intentions and thoughtful editing. This would have enabled candidates to sustain their focus towards a resolved response.
- There were many opportunities for first-hand recording. Some candidates chose to rely on secondary sourced material as a starting point for investigation. This prevented a personal response.
- Photographic issues such as lighting and inconsistent focus affected the clear viewing of work.
- Some work contained too much written annotation which did not always add to idea development or inform the direction of study.
- Candidates are reminded to cite their sources to enable identification of the origins of subject matter, particularly in reference to their own photography.
- Work that was presented out of order, in different orientations, or in many separate files, prevented clear assessment.

Comments on specific tasks/activities

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

What candidates did well

- Submissions that focused on topics which enabled candidates to engage with first-hand sources within their surroundings, provided opportunities for personal and meaningful responses.
- Candidates selected engaging starting points, referencing friends, family, local traditions and contextual exploration, as a starting point for ideas. Observational study was accomplished, with sources thoroughly explored from different angles, viewpoints and focus.
- Purposeful research reflected independent thinking. Intentions were clear and resulted to in-depth observation from relevant sources, showing different methods of recording.
- There was a genuine engagement with contextual sources. Referencing the work of others influenced meaningful individual ideas, rather than just mimicking styles.
- Ideas were reflected upon during different stages of the work. Candidates looked for new subject matter to inform their ideas or expand on original development.
- The work contained a good balance of primary, secondary and contextual sources which was consistently relevant and chosen with intention.

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What candidates needed to improve

- Some work was limited in scope where the initial research tended to be limited in range, purpose and detailed study. Clarifying intentions during the initial stages of the work, could have enabled the research to contain purpose and depth.
- Other portfolios were incoherent or disconnected, preventing visual continuity, direction and depth. There was a developing ability to reflect on ideas to discern which recording was relevant for the exploration of their theme, or how to build on their observations.
- Contextual sources were often included and some were disconnected to the candidates' ideas.
- Some candidates relied heavily on secondary sourced references for recording, preventing a personal response to the theme. This included imagery from Pinterest and other 'found images', as a starting point for the work, rather than the candidates' own purposefully chosen first-hand sources.
- Other candidates sometimes chose to work with subject matter that was inaccessible for first-hand recording. This stifled a personal response, coherent study and the development of original ideas.

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

What candidates did well

- The exploration of fine art materials was the most popular. There were also examples of graphic communication, photography, clay modelling, photomontage, textiles and fashion.
- Most candidates effectively explored recording and idea development through a range of media, demonstrating a sense of enquiry in exploring and expanding their skills.
- There was a clear willingness to take creative risks to try out alternative effects and ideas which was evident in the original application of materials. For example, photography integrated with collage and painting, or textiles and stitching fluently crossing over with fine art or photography.
- Examples of digital media were used to record and develop, to explore new ways of expressing ideas. Acknowledging where digital programmes had been used and including evidence of the digital process, identified original works from those that had been subsequently manipulated.
- Media exploration informed by contextual study was often purposeful. There were clear connections between the works of others and how these references purposefully impacted on media choices.
- Candidates were able to recognise their strengths through self-reflection and exploration. This enabled effective decision-making and refinement through individual ideas, as the work progressed.

What candidates needed to improve

- There was some sense of enquiry while selecting materials. Some candidates sometimes relied on working with familiar materials and techniques, rather than exploring new media or taking creative risks. Opportunities for creative experimentation were not fully explored.
- In other work, materials exploration was narrow. This prevented candidates from developing a practical understanding of how to express ideas through the qualities within their media. Less experimentation led to outcomes that evolved without practice or refinement.
- Appropriate materials and techniques were often selected. Inconsistencies of refinement were sometimes demonstrated. This prevented some candidates from communicating their ideas with skill.

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

What candidates did well

- The development of ideas was personal. Well-considered and in-depth initial recording provided the basis for the exploration of individual concepts. Ideas demonstrated viewpoints and angles as the developed images moved forward.
- A range of artists, designers, cultural references and local artists were selected for exploration. Contextual connections informed the candidates' critical understanding and informed decision-making.
- Relevant visits to galleries, workshops, or places to investigate cultural practices stimulated ideas to inform a personal direction of exploration. A meaningful final response enhanced the visual journey.
- The works of other artists were intelligently explored. Rather than copying the works of their chosen artists, candidates adapted these influences to suit their own ideas. Techniques were explored as further images developed from the existing observational recording.

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What candidates needed to improve

- Some candidates included detailed first-hand observational recording and investigation. Some candidates did not fully develop an idea from these into a coherent outcome.
- Other candidates were either unable to recognise the potential in their topic and missed the available development opportunities. Some explored promising ideas which were then abandoned in favour of more conventional ideas and approaches.
- There was sometimes an over-reliance on copying the work of a chosen artist, at the expense of the candidates' own individual recording. There was a developing ability to analyse their selected artists' concepts, or prompt ideas for further independent research.
- Others translated their subject matter through the style or technique of the artist, rather than establishing an in-depth connection or concept for exploration. Recognising the relevance of contextual research could have enabled more effective critical decisions, to support ideas.
- Often, insufficient depth of meaningful recording prevented idea development. Insufficient possibilities meant that candidates only concentrated on one initial idea, resulting in a submission that did not build.

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

What candidates did well

- The supporting studies clearly led to and informed the final outcome, where ideas informed by the research were refined and resolved as the work progressed. Submissions were coherent and demonstrated a clear sense of visual direction and progression.
- Ideas progressed through connections to the works of others. Critical analysis of the work informed idea development and greater ambition in the realisation of intentions.
- The understanding of visual language was clear which added to the communication of intentions.
- Candidates were able to establish and maintain a clear line of enquiry throughout their coursework portfolio.

What candidates needed to improve

- The creative journey in some submissions was relatively short, with candidates that did not always sustain their direction of study. Evidence of engagement and reflection was not fully realised.
- Greater engagement in the themes would have benefited the work of some candidates, for a purposeful and in-depth research. This could have enabled them to build on the development of coherent ideas into a more informed, resolved, and imaginative final outcome.
- Some portfolios shown ideas that could have been explored further in the final outcome.
- For some, there was few evidence of critical thinking and candidates could improve in reviewing and refining their work. The decision-making and the direction of study could have been improved to led to a clearer final outcome.
- Some candidates could improve by demonstrating a consistent understanding of visual language, such as tone, colour and form, in order to refine ideas and build on strengths.

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Paper 9479/02
Externally Set Assignment

Key messages

What candidates did well
- In comprehensive responses, candidates emphasised primary research and first-hand observations as the foundation for visual investigations.
- Candidates were fully engaged with their chosen stimulus and used their research into relevant artists to inform their own ideas.
- Candidates presented lively, inventive visual journeys that made full use of the broad interpretive potential of the starting points.

What candidates needed to improve
- In limited responses, candidates needed to demonstrate a greater engagement with their chosen stimulus.
- Candidates needed to extend their initial visual research to include more in-depth first-hand observations.
- Candidates needed to explore different ideas before selecting the most appropriate to develop into a final outcome.

Comments on specific assessment objectives.

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

What candidates did well
- In comprehensive responses, the candidates recorded from a range of sources with an emphasis on in-depth first-hand observations.
- Observational study was proficient and explored a wide range of visual elements.
- The response was well organised and effectively communicated the creative process.

What candidates needed to improve
- In limited responses, candidates needed to select and investigate sources relevant to their intentions and a connection to their chosen stimulus.
- Candidates needed to produce more investigations and observations from primary sources.
- Candidates needed to demonstrate clearer intentions in their initial studies and through their choices.

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

What candidates did well
- In comprehensive responses, candidates consistently explored a range of appropriate media thoughtfully and in-depth.
- Candidates were willing to take creative risks to explore different effects with media and techniques.
- High levels of skill and control of media were seen with very effective understanding of the inherent properties of media and a clear understanding of the visual elements demonstrated.

What candidates needed to improve
- In limited responses, candidates needed to explore a wider range of relevant processes, materials and techniques.
- Candidates needed to demonstrate more consistent control and technical skill in their use of media.

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- Candidates needed to demonstrate a clearer connection between their initial research and exploration.

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

What candidates did well
- In comprehensive responses, candidates explored a range of ideas before selecting the most effective way of expressing their intentions.
- Candidates demonstrated mature connections between their work and the work of artists, and their development was informed from this research.
- Candidates explored alternative compositions and layouts thoroughly and refinement was evident.

What candidates needed to improve
- In limited responses, candidates needed to be informed by their research into relevant artists and other contextual sources. For example, by showing an understanding of the intentions behind their artist's work.
- Candidates needed to demonstrate more purposeful development towards their final idea.
- Candidates needed to demonstrate that they have considered alternative ideas, layouts and compositions at this development stage.

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

What candidates did well
- In comprehensive responses, candidates' final outcome was a cohesive conclusion to their initial studies and explorations.
- Candidates' intentions were clear and explored thoroughly and consistently throughout the response.
- Candidates consistently demonstrated a balance of contextual understanding, original ideas and the application of technical skill.

What candidates needed to improve
- In limited responses, candidates needed to demonstrate a clearer connection between their supporting studies and their final outcome.
- Candidates needed to communicate their intentions more clearly throughout their response.
- Candidates needed to show effective critical decision-making through reflection and evaluation.

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Paper 9479/03
Personal Investigation

Key messages

What candidates did well

- Most candidates produced a body of inter-connected personal work supported by research and exploration.
- The written element was continuous prose effectively combining research, reflection and analysis.
- Most candidates referred to both primary and secondary references to support the development of their ideas. The secondary references were relevant and well selected.
- Many candidates were able to make first-hand visits to galleries, museums and artist's studios.
- Most candidates made relevant observations and asked questions that would provide insight into the work of their chosen artist. The information gathered helped them to make deeper connections with ideas.
- Work was well presented, and the creative journey was clear and easy to follow.

What candidates needed to improve

- Most candidates produced creative and personal work in response to their research and exploration. Some submissions contained no personal or creative work, only copies of images by their chosen artists.
- Some submissions had presented the investigation in a clear and coherent manner. Others presented very busy pages, often with imagery and text overlapping. These submissions could be improved by presenting ideas in a clearer sequence.
- Some submissions used analysis and reflection to support the development of ideas. Some were purely descriptive of the work of others and the processes carried out. These could be improved by including personal analysis or interpretation.
- Most candidates identified primary and secondary sources. Some submissions contained imagery that was not labelled making it unclear whether it was the candidate's own work or that of a selected artist.

Comments on specific tasks/activities

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

What candidates did well

- The intention was clear, apparent and effective.
- Research reflected independent thinking.
- Candidates recorded from a wide range of primary and secondary sources.
- There was clear and consistent evidence of the candidate effectively recording from their source material.
- Observations and references were purposeful to the progression of ideas and work.
- Candidates selected relevant materials to record observations in relation to line, form, mood, texture, colour.
- Candidates examined their subject in-depth and from different perspectives.
- The written element of the investigation followed the development of ideas; the discourse was articulate and written in continuous prose.
- The writing effectively brought together research, analysis and critical reflection.
- Candidates demonstrated an excellent command of art terminology.
- Candidates used critical analysis of their own work and others to develop and refine ideas.
- There was a clear connection between what the candidate wrote and the work that they produced in response to their observations.

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- **What candidates needed to improve**
- Carry out more in-depth observational studies with a clearer purpose.
- Use a range of methods to record with. This would provide more depth and understanding to observations and ideas.
- Select more relevant artists' works to refer to. Carry out more in-depth level of enquiry into the work of others.
- Develop and demonstrate a clear connection between the work of others and progression of ideas.

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

What candidates did well
- The work demonstrated a sense of enquiry in exploring and expanding knowledge and skills.
- There was evidence of excellent technical skill in the explorations, and a clear understanding of the visual elements.
- Candidates selected and applied a range of media, both **Questions 2(d)** and **3(d)**.
- Ideas were communicated through visual and other forms throughout their explorations.
- There was a clear connection between reference material and experimentation.
- The use of materials was connected to the underlying concepts being explored.
- Candidates showed a clear willingness to take creative risks, combining materials and processes to convey their ideas.
- The use of media and techniques communicated ideas effectively.
- Candidates demonstrated a highly accomplished and sophisticated ability to review and refine ideas as work developed.

What candidates needed to improve
- Depth of technical skill with a range of media, explore the various qualities of different media thoroughly.
- Refine use of materials and processes through experimentation.
- Establish a connection between reference material, research, analysis and the exploration of media.
- Combine materials and processes to explore ideas more in-depth.

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

What candidates did well
- Mature referencing of personal, contextual and other sources was used to support the development of ideas.
- There was clear and consistent evidence of development in both practical work and written discourse.
- Written, visual and practical materials were well integrated to show the progression of ideas and work.
- Clear connections were made between reference material and progression of ideas.
- Candidates identified key influences and their purpose in the development of the body of work.
- Candidates carried out clear, intelligent reflection.
- Candidates refined ideas as work progressed.
- Highly effective use of analysis and critical understanding was used to produce a range of resolved outcomes.

What candidates needed to improve
- Analysis of the work of others and own achievement to challenge pre-conceptions and stimulate new ways of working.
- More focused critical reflection would support purposeful development.
- More purposeful and in-depth exploration of alternative approaches to communicate 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
- The overall response was a cohesive illustration of the investigation.
- The creative journey was presented in a coherent manner.
- The intentions were clear throughout the response, even when ideas and aims changed direction.
- Submissions demonstrated effective use of research, recording, explorations and development of ideas to realise intentions.

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- Candidates developed an effective personal visual language through their research and exploration.
- The response showed that the candidates' analysed, reflected and evaluated ideas and made relevant critical decisions.

What candidates needed to improve

- Clearer communication of intentions and ideas supported through more effective critical decision-making.
- Reflection and evaluation of achievement to recognise strengths or most promising ideas to develop within the investigation.
- More focused engagement with the work of others to inform ideas and clarify intentions.
- Candidates could improve by ensuring their presentation of work is clear to make creative journey easier to follow.

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