

NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Creative Studies: Graphic Design (600/6907/7)

Assessment window: 5 September – 25 November 2016

This report contains information in relation to the external assessment from the Chief Examiner, with an emphasis on the standard of learner work within this assessment window.

The aim is to highlight where learners generally perform well as well as any areas where further development may be required.

Key points:

- administering the external assessment
- standard of learner work
- referencing of external assessment tasks
- evidence creation
- interpretation of the tasks and associated assessment criteria
- planning in the external assessment.

It's important to note that learners shouldn't sit the external assessment until they've taken part in the relevant teaching of the unit to ensure they are well prepared for the external assessment.

Administering the external assessment

The external assessment (both preparatory and timed period) must be independent from the teaching of the unit. Work completed during the teaching of the unit cannot be used in the external assessment. Any stimulus materials used by the centre during the teaching of the unit cannot be used in the external assessment. Learners must complete all of the tasks independently.

The completion of the preparation tasks must be supervised by the Teacher and can be sat in the normal classroom environment. The tasks within the preparation period do not need to be invigilated. However, the preparation tasks must be treated independently from the teaching of the unit and learners must complete all tasks independently. This means the preparation tasks must not be Teacher led.

The completion of the timed tasks must be invigilated and sat in accordance with the [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment - V Certs](#). It's important that the external assessment is sat in accordance with the specified conditions.

Standard of learner work

Some examples of delightful, exciting and creative work were seen in individual AC's. The Examiners noted some improvement over time. However, reflecting on the broad scope of work submitted, the following points are noted:

- The quality of the visual language work was not found to be consistently reliable. Some learners had neglected visual language activity in favour of research. The work at Pass grade was distinguished by a clear and straightforward focus on colour, line, texture, tone and letterforms to communicate ideas.
- The sufficiency of evidence for individual tasks raised concern, for example in task 2 where planning tended to be neglected.
- The work awarded at least a Pass grade for task 3 should contain evidence of sufficient experimentation on which to base reliable selections.
- The standard of some work for task 4 was seen to be good with sufficient and reliable links made to the brief.

Referencing of external assessment tasks

The clear majority of learners' evidence was reliably referenced. The requirement for the referencing of individual tasks is stated in the paper. Instructions in the external assessment paper states that tasks should be clearly labelled and distinguished from each other. Failure to follow this requirement may have significant implications for the awarding of learner grades if Examiners are not easily able to identify which evidence relates to each task.

Some learner evidence was not seen to consistently apply reliable referencing. For example, some work was not seen to be referenced to tasks and some work appeared to be referenced to more than one task. This has the potential for confusion. A continued concern of the risk of disadvantage to learners was noted by Examiners. Tasks which are not clearly referenced may not be able to be rewarded and a grade of NYA will be recorded. This will result in an overall grade of NYA for the external assessment despite the referencing of some items of work or the quality of other items of work.

Evidence creation

The qualification aims to develop a broad and comprehensive understanding of graphic design, and develop a significant knowledge core which spans the vocational sector. This paper was concerned with the design and deployment of a graphic for t-shirts, baseball caps and key rings. Many centres provided a commendable focus on the translation of the theme festival into a single graphic motif.

The brief provided a structure and context for the design of a graphic based on the theme festival. The Examiners noted that learners often took to the paper with a sense of enthusiasm and with a familiarity with contemporary music imagery. Learner evidence which did not remain focused on the brief however, was seen to risk not achieving a grade in some or all of the assessment criteria. Learners are advised to avoid time spent on activities which are not required by the paper. For example, where learners appeared to have spent considerable amounts of time on product research, this may have limited the time available for the activity required by each task. Also, the external assessment did not require an evaluation at Pass grade, however detailed. When doing so, learners were sometimes seen to neglect other work such as a plan in task 2.

Interpretation of the tasks and associated assessment criteria

The examiners noted a welcome graphic design focus of the work marked in this window. Centres are differentiating a graphic design approach from a design technology approach to the qualification. However this was not seen to be consistently applied. The qualification is concerned with visual design rather than technology and/or production design. Learners who undertook some research and gathering information for task 1 found their grading frustrated if this was not accompanied by communication of their own ideas through visual language. Grading in task 2 was frustrated where good quality records of activity were not accompanied by a satisfactory plan. This task was awarded an NYA grade in such cases. An evaluation is not seen to be a satisfactory substitute for a plan. Some of the evidence presented for task 3 and 4 did not show sufficient levels of work with a selection of materials, and the development of ideas to a satisfactory standard. The Examiners noted that most submissions did not include unnecessary health and safety material or risk assessments. This is a welcome improvement following previous examination windows.

Task 1 – A.C 1.1

The focus of this task was for the learner to use visual language techniques to communicate a variety of alternative ideas in response to the brief. These ideas were expected to be communicated through visual language. In some cases, final ideas were discussed. This is not appropriate for this stage as a variety of alternative ideas were required. Some learner evidence for this task was in the form of research. This research was not always seen to relate to the brief. In some cases the visual language work was not seen to be at the standard required for the qualification.

Many references to product design research were included. These references were typically labelled as “research” and “analysing”. Learners are encouraged to avoid a potential misinterpretation with such titles. The task was not primarily concerned with analysing products such as caps, key rings or t-shirts. In this task, learners were required to communicate their own ideas about the brief using visual language (ie colour, shape, tone, texture and line). Research and analysis may provide a useful stimulus. However, without the learner communicating their own ideas in visual terms, such work attracted a grade of NYA.

Some learner work contained logo research; this was not required by the task. However, in some cases, the research identified good practice in other designers’ work. Unfortunately, learners were not seen to consistently make use of this research when they communicated their own ideas.

Some learners focused on typography. Recognising the value and potential of typography is to be encouraged in graphic design practice. Working with letterforms and word layout can be an effective way to communicate ideas. However, this was typically labelled as experimentation, where little or no experimentation was evident. Where this work analysed existing fonts without applying typographic visual language to communicate ideas, grading was often frustrated and resulted in NYA. Some examples of good typography work were seen however. This work typically showed the graphic potential of words and letters through variations in colour, scale and position.

This task also often contained notes on a particular music genre to be associated with the brief; this was not required by the task. Learners who spent time on this may have risked neglecting work on the primary focus of the task, communicating their own ideas.

Task 2 – A.C 1.2

Sometimes evaluations were included with this task. This approach may help to plan future activity. However, evaluations were often seen to neglect the recording of progress so far. In such cases, grading was often frustrated and a grade of NYA was recorded. Learner evidence for this task too often considered the proposed location of the festival. This was not required by the task and sometimes proved to be an unnecessary distraction. Where the learner had identified that the festival may take place in a rural location, city or a sports stadium, these ideas were rarely translated into the evidence seen for task 3 or 4. Considering the location of festival may well prove to be a useful starting point and a creative stimulus, however this was not the focus of task 2. This task required learners to reflect on what they had done so far in both practical and creative terms. Learners were also required to write a plan for the reminder for the external assessment. As a creative idea, the location of the festival would be better considered in task 1. Most learners made note of creative opportunities and difficulties they anticipated. However, learners will be best advised to concentrate on the themes presented by the brief when considering creative opportunities. Many learners were seen to focus on their own interests or themes presented by internet research. While considering potential difficulties, many learners were not seen to have identified challenges that were presented by the brief. Instead, learners were often seen to describe the challenges and potential restrictions found in their own centre. This work was not seen to be a satisfactory response to the task as such restrictions could be generic and not specific to the current brief. Many learners' evidence for this task focused on t-shirts, baseball caps and key rings, as products. This research was not seen to be necessary for this task, as the task is concerned with recording and planning. Centres and learners are reminded that the qualification is in graphic design rather than product design. The focus of the external assessment was the graphic for a festival.

Task 3 – A.C 1.3

The focus of task 3 was to experiment with graphic design materials, techniques and equipment and select those most appropriate to meet the design brief. The design brief required a graphic in response to the theme festival. The challenge of the brief was to show how the graphic would appear on a t-shirt, a baseball cap and a key ring. However, the design of these products was not the focus of the external assessment. In this task many examples of product design were seen. This is not appropriate or required for this task. In this task learners were required to undertake experimentations with graphic materials, techniques or equipment in order to make informed selections. The Examiners noted a potential for learners to have spent a disproportionate amount of time, researching products where they were not required to do so. This may have limited the amount of time spent on experimentation with materials, techniques and processes. Sometimes learners were seen to continue to develop ideas in this task. Whilst this is not discouraged at all, grades will be only be awarded where graphic materials have clearly been selected **following** their use.

Task 4 – A.C 1.4

Some satisfactory and well-presented graphic design work was seen in this task. Those learners who achieved a Pass grade produced graphic design work, which was clear and simple, demonstrating informed choices over colour typography and imagery. Some vibrant and contemporary work was seen. Some more traditional approaches to typography and line layout were also seen. However, where interesting work was presented with little or no indication of the development of ideas or graphic imagery, grading was often limited and a grade of NYA was recorded. Other work, which was not seen to benefit from satisfactory development of ideas also suffered in grading due to the quality of the finished work or the quality of the ideas presented. Search work was not seen to be at the standard consistent with the level of the qualification. Some examples of evaluations were also seen for this task. The inclusion of an insightful evaluation may provide sufficient evidence to be graded Merit. However, time spent on evaluations could have been better spent on producing developed graphic design solutions and creative activity for a Pass grade. Also, a summary was often provided. This was not required by the task. Some submissions contained actual size or scaled down mock-ups of key rings, t-Shirts, and baseball caps with the festival graphic on display. Although this approach is not at all discouraged, centres are reminded that design skills are rewarded rather than making skills in this task.

Planning in the external assessment

Centres are reminded to give due attention to the assessment windows of the external assessment. It's not advisable for learners to sit the external assessment early in their programme. It's far more appropriate to enter learners once they have taken part in the relevant teaching to ensure they are well prepared. Centres would be in a better position to prepare their learners for the external assessment following the support of an external quality assurance visit for the internally assessed units.

Chief Examiner: Andy Small

Date: January 2017