



Department  
for Education

# **Art and design**

**GCSE subject content**

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# The content for art and design GCSEs

## Introduction

1. The GCSE subject content sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject. Together with the assessment objectives it provides the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications, so ensuring progression from key stage 3 national curriculum requirements and the possibilities for development into A level.

## Subject aims and learning outcomes

2. GCSE specifications in art and design must encourage students to:

- actively engage in the creative process of art, craft and design in order to develop as effective and independent learners, and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds
- develop creative, imaginative and intuitive capabilities when exploring and making images, artefacts and products
- become confident in taking risks and learn from experience when exploring and experimenting with ideas, processes, media, materials and techniques
- develop critical understanding through investigative, analytical, experimental, practical, technical and expressive skills
- develop and refine ideas and proposals, personal outcomes or solutions with increasing independence
- acquire and develop technical skills through working with a broad range of media, materials, techniques, processes and technologies with purpose and intent
- develop knowledge and understanding of art, craft and design in historical and contemporary contexts, societies and cultures
- develop an awareness of the different roles and individual work practices evident in the production of art, craft and design in the creative and cultural industries
- develop an awareness of the purposes, intentions and functions of art, craft and design in a variety of contexts and as appropriate to students' own work
- demonstrate safe working practices in art, craft and design

## Subject content

3. GCSE specifications in art and design must require students to learn through practical experience and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sources that inform their creative intentions. Intentions should be realised through purposeful engagement with visual language<sup>1</sup>, visual concepts, media, materials and the application of appropriate techniques and working methods.
4. GCSE specifications in art and design must require students to develop and apply relevant subject-specific skills in order to use visual language to communicate personal ideas, meanings and responses.
5. GCSE specifications in art and design must require students, over time, to reflect critically upon their creative journey, and its effectiveness in relation to the realisation of personal intentions.
6. Students can work entirely in digital media or entirely in non-digital media, or in a mixture of both, provided the aims and assessment objectives are met.

## Knowledge and understanding

7. GCSE specifications in art and design must require students to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding listed below through practical application of skills to realise personal intentions relevant to their chosen title(s) and related area(s) of study.
8. GCSE specifications in art and design must require students to know and understand how sources inspire the development of ideas. For example, drawing on:
  - the work and approaches of artists, craftspeople or designers from contemporary and/or historical contexts, periods, societies and cultures
  - contemporary and/or historical environments, situations or issues
  - other relevant sources researched by the student in the chosen qualification title and area(s) of study
  - the ways in which meanings, ideas and intentions can be communicated through visual and tactile language, using formal elements, including:
    - colour
    - line
    - form

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<sup>1</sup> Visual language in this document is defined as including formal elements, media, materials, tools, processes and technology as well as various methods of communication other than visual such as tactile and sensory

- tone
- texture
- the characteristics, properties and effects of using different media, materials, techniques and processes, and the ways in which they can be used in relation to students' own creative intentions and chosen area(s) of study
- the different purposes, intentions and functions of art, craft and design in a variety of contexts and as appropriate to students' own work

## Skills

9. All students engaging with GCSE art and design specifications must demonstrate the ability to:

- develop their ideas through investigations informed by selecting and critically analysing sources
- apply an understanding of relevant practices in the creative and cultural industries to their work
- refine their ideas as work progresses through experimenting with media, materials, techniques and processes
- record their ideas, observations, insights and independent judgements, visually and through written annotation, using appropriate specialist vocabulary, as work progresses
- use visual language critically as appropriate to their own creative intentions and chosen area(s) of study through effective and safe use of:
  - media
  - materials
  - techniques
  - processes
  - technologies
- use drawing skills for different needs and purposes, appropriate to the context<sup>2</sup>
- realise personal intentions through the sustained application of the creative process

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<sup>2</sup> All Students must use drawing to support the development process within each chosen area of study. Students are not required to demonstrate technical mastery of drawing skills unless this is relevant to their area of study.

## Qualification titles

10. GCSE specifications in art and design must require students to develop and apply the knowledge, understanding and skills (set out in sections 8 and 9 above) in ways relevant to the recognised progression routes for the subject. To ensure transparency for end users, separate GCSE art and design qualification titles must be used which correspond to these routes.

11. The approved list of GCSE art and design qualification titles are:

- art and design (art, craft and design)
- art and design (fine art)
- art and design (graphic communication)
- art and design (textile design)
- art and design (three-dimensional design)
- art and design (photography)
- art and design (critical and contextual studies)

12. Awarding organisations offering GCSEs in art and design must provide students a choice of at least three titles. This must include the qualification title 'Art, craft and design', which is the broad course of study, and to ensure students have access to this, awarding organisations must offer at least two other qualification titles from the above list.

13. Each title will be recognised as a distinct art and design GCSE qualification, and must use the titling conventions specified above on all relevant documentation.

## Titles and areas of study

14. The GCSE specifications for art and design developed by the awarding bodies must ensure that the knowledge, skills and understanding detailed in sections 8 and 9 (above) are clearly focused to be relevant to each title and the areas of study within each title.

15. For each title, the list of areas of study must be included in specifications. Awarding organisations may include further areas of study as long as they are of comparable breadth and depth to those listed and are clearly relevant to the title.

16. Work for assessment produced by students may include aspects of more than one of the areas of study within each title.

## **Art, craft and design**

17. This title is designed to promote learning across a variety of experiences and through various processes, tools, techniques, materials and resources to generate different kinds of evidence of working and outcomes. The emphasis is on an increased breadth of approach commensurate in demand with the other titles. This title offers flexibility in content and approach and the opportunity to explore and create work associated with areas of study from at least two titles listed below.

18. Students must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary artists, craftspeople and designers and the different purposes, intentions and functions of art, craft and design as appropriate to their own work.

19. Specifications must require students to demonstrate the ability to realise creative intentions relevant to areas of study drawn from at least two of the following titles:

- Fine art
- Graphic communication
- Textile design
- Three-dimensional design
- Photography
- Critical and contextual studies

20. For art, craft and design, specifications must require students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 through areas of study relevant to their chosen titles.

## **Fine art**

21. This title is defined here as that aspect of art, craft and design where work is developed primarily for aesthetic, intellectual or purely conceptual purposes rather than purposes that have a necessarily practical function.

22. Students must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary fine artists and the different purposes, intentions and functions of fine art as appropriate to their own work.

23. Students must demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to the chosen area study such as: painting (various media); drawing (various media); printing (e.g. screen printing; etching; aquatint; lithography; block printing); stencils; carving; modelling; constructing; mosaic; mobiles; environmental art; graffiti; kinetic media; light based media; digital media; mixed media.

24. Specifications offering this title must require students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 through areas of study relevant to their chosen title. Areas of study include:

- Drawing
- Installation
- Lens-/Light-based media
- Mixed media
- Land art
- Printing
- Painting
- Sculpture

25. Work is not limited to one area of study.

### **Graphic communication**

26. This title is defined here as the process of creating primarily visual material to convey information, ideas and emotions through the use of graphic elements such as colour, icons, images, typography and photographs.

27. Students must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary graphic designers and the different purposes, intentions and functions of graphic communication as appropriate to their own work.

28. Students must demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to the chosen area study such as: computer aided design; web design, apps and games; letterforms; typography; drawing; book illustration; print; photography and package design.

29. Specifications offering this title must require students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 through areas of study relevant to their chosen title. Areas of study include:

- Advertising
- Communication Graphics
- Design for Print
- Illustration
- Interactive Design (including web, app and game)
- Multi-media
- Package Design



- Signage
- Typography

30. Work is not limited to one area of study.

### **Textile design**

31. This title is defined here as the creation of designs and products for woven, knitted, stitched or printed fabrics and involves an understanding of fibres, yarns and fabrics.

32. Students must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary textile designers and makers, as well as the different purposes, intentions and functions of textile design as appropriate to their own work.

33. Students must demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to the chosen area study such as: weaving, surface printing (block, screen or digital), pattern making, pattern cutting, embroidery (machine or hand), knitting, batik, appliqué and collage.

34. Specifications offering this title must require students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 through areas of study relevant to their chosen title. Areas of study include:

- Constructed textiles
- Digital Textiles
- Dyed fabrics
- Printed fabrics
- Fashion design
- Installed Textiles
- Soft furnishings
- Stitched and/or embellished textiles

35. Work is not limited to one area of study.

### **Three-dimensional design**

36. This title is defined here as the design, prototyping and modelling or making of primarily functional and aesthetic consumer products, objects, and environments.

37. Students must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary three-dimensional designers and makers, as

well as the different purposes, intentions and functions of three-dimensional design as appropriate to their own work.

38. Students must demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to the chosen area study such as: computer-aided design, model-making; prototyping; constructing; assembling. An understanding of the relationship between form and function is essential.

39. Specifications offering this title must require students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 through areas of study relevant to their chosen title. Areas of study include:

- Architectural design
- Interior design
- Product design
- Exhibition design
- Environmental/landscape design
- Sculpture
- Design for theatre, film and television
- Jewellery and body adornment
- Ceramics

40. Work is not limited to one area of study.

## **Photography**

41. This title is defined here as the practice of creating durable static or moving images by recording light with light-sensitive materials such as photographic film or digitally by means of an image sensor.

42. Students must explore practical and relevant critical and contextual sources such as the work of historical and contemporary photographers and the different purposes, intentions and functions of photography as appropriate to their own work.

43. Students must demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to the chosen area study such as: photograms; pin hole cameras; film (chemical) processes; digital processes; time-lapse photography; stop-frame animation; installation; film; video; animation; photomontage; digital manipulation of images.

44. Specifications offering this title must require students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 through areas of study relevant to their chosen title. Areas of study include:

- Documentary photography
- Photo-journalism
- Studio photography
- Location photography
- Experimental imagery
- Installation
- Moving image: film, video and animation.

45. Work is not limited to one area of study.

### **Critical and contextual studies**

46. This title is defined here as the critical analysis, interpretation and reflective appraisal from a contemporary perspective of the work of artists, craftspeople and designers.

47. Students must demonstrate the ability to analyse critically, and interpret the work of artists, craftspeople and designers taking into account the context (e.g. historical, cultural, social, economic, political) of their production in order to understand meanings, purposes, relationships and influences. Students must choose appropriate methods and media to communicate their responses and to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their chosen area of study.

48. Students must demonstrate the ability to work creatively with processes and techniques appropriate to the chosen area study.

49. Specifications offering this title must require students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 through areas of study relevant to their chosen title. Areas of study include:

- Artists, craftspeople and designers
- Genres
- Movements
- Themes, concepts and ideas in art, craft and design
- Contemporary art, craft and design
- Popular culture
- The human form
- Still life
- Designed objects
- Landscape
- Natural forms

50. Work is not limited to one area of study.



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