

**NCFE Level 1 Technical Award in Graphic Design (603/0844/8)**  
**NCFE Level 2 Technical Award in Graphic Design (603/0845/X)**

**Assessment Date/Window**

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:

- Grade Boundary Information
- administering the external assessment
- standard of learner work
- Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment
- referencing of external assessment tasks
- evidence creation
- interpretation of the tasks and associated assessment criteria
- planning in the external assessment.

It is important to note that learners should not sit the external assessment until they have taken part in the relevant teaching of the full qualification content.

**Grade Boundary Information**

Each learner's external assessment paper is marked by an Examiner and awarded a raw mark. During the awarding process, a combination of statistical analysis and professional judgement is used to establish the raw marks that represent the minimum required standard to achieve each grade. These raw marks are outlined in the table below.

<b>NYA</b>	<b>Level 1 Pass</b>	<b>Level 1 Merit</b>	<b>Level 1 Distinction</b>	<b>Level 2 Pass</b>	<b>Level 2 Merit</b>	<b>Level 2 Distinction</b>
0-11	12-16	17-22	23-28	29-43	44-58	59-80

Grade boundaries represent the minimum raw mark required to achieve a certain grade. For example, if the grade boundary for the Pass grade is 25, a minimum raw mark of 25 is required to achieve a Pass.

<b>Maximum UMS Score*</b>	<b>Level 1 Pass</b>	<b>Level 1 Merit</b>	<b>Level 1 Distinction</b>	<b>Level 2 Pass</b>	<b>Level 2 Merit</b>	<b>Level 2 Distinction</b>
200	40	60	80	120	140	160

*\* In order to ensure that levels of achievement remain comparable for the same assessment across different assessment windows, all raw marks are converted to a points score based on a uniform mark scale (UMS). For more information about UMS*

*and how it is used to determine overall qualification grades, please refer to the qualification specification.*

---

### **Administering the external assessment**

The external assessment is invigilated and must be conducted in line with our Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment. Learners may require additional pre-release material in order to complete the tasks within the paper. These must be provided to learners in line with our Regulations.

Learners must be given the resources to carry out the tasks and these are highlighted within the Qualification Specific Instructions Document (QSID).

### **Standard of learner work**

The standard of work produced by learners for this window was good and consistent with expectations for both level 1 and level 2. This was the first externally marked external assessment since the nation was in lockdown.

In comparison to previous years external assessments, the sufficiency and exploration of all the four tasks was lower, with learners not providing evidence of deeper exploration of initial ideas and experimentation. For task 1 and 2, the overall standard of work produced is lower than in previous external assessment windows, with the effects of missing some face-to-face teaching and learning being apparent. Despite this the outcomes were very pleasing. This has been considered when agreeing grade boundaries.

The understanding of the tasks was good with little misinterpretation of the tasks given. Where there was misinterpretation, this was usually due to the learner not including all the required elements of the brief, in particular learners did not consider the size given of 20cm x 25cm therefore could not achieve the higher grades that ask the learner to consider all of the elements of the brief. Learners also may have missed the authors name, not included imagery of the dogs. Where this occurred, higher marks could not be awarded.

Where learners have achieved higher marks, they have responded to the brief in full and shown how all of the aims of the brief have been considered and met, showing understanding of the requirements of the brief with a very good level of skill, be this using traditional or digital techniques.

### **Referencing of external assessment tasks**

The presentation of evidence for this window was varied. Where learners had clearly labelled each task and presented it in order of task, examiners were able to apply the mark scheme clearly and accurately against each task. In a large proportion of cases learners had not labelled the evidence, in these instances examiners take time to consider which task the evidence meets, which can be time consuming and may not meet the learners' intentions.

In the cases where the evidence is not labelled, examiners are encouraged to mark positively and use their best professional judgement on what task the evidence meets. Where learners had not responded to a task, marks could not be awarded. For task 4, if the learner had not provided any evidence examiners were encouraged to mark holistically and refer to task 3 for any evidence that would meet task 4 requirements.

This was discussed at length during external standardisation for the external assessment. It is imperative that the learner clearly labels their work with the task that it corresponds to, for the examiner to be able to make a clear and accurate judgment against the mark scheme.

### Evidence creation

Learners should respond to each task. Where answers are typed or additional pages included, the learners name, centre number, centre name and task number must be clearly visible.

---

The external assessment is based on the internal units 1, 2 and 3, therefore learners must have completed these units before completing the external assessment for the learner to have a fair chance at completing the external assessment to the best of their ability.

The originality of the evidence created for this external assessment window was good with very little evidence presented that was not the learners own work such as taking images from the internet. This was written into the external assessment brief to discourage this and promote originality. There was a small amount of evidence presented using Google images, where this occurred learners were not awarded marks for originality.

A large proportion of learners used a blend of traditional and digital techniques, some used just traditional, some just digital, all techniques are valid and were marked equally. Effective use of hand drawn initial ideas then taken into a digital software package to be developed further worked exceptionally well. It was great to see such a wide range of digital software packages being used by learners to develop their creative responses and work to their strengths.

In some instances, learners used traditional hand drawn or designed ideas only. Where the learner was limited to one medium such as coloured pencil the outcomes were limited to the effectiveness of the application of the medium and the learner's drawing ability. Centres are reminded that the learner should be encouraged to explore a range of media in order to work to their strengths and style. In comparison to previous windows the use of traditional techniques such as stencil, collage, or other hand drawn or made techniques was limited.

The brief gave learners the opportunity to explore the use of typography as an interesting and appealing focus rather than the focus being on the drawing ability of being able to draw dogs. The age range also gave the opportunity for the imagery to be simplified, possibly cartoon like, and the typography being the main focus. The vast majority of learners focused more on the imagery of the dogs rather than the typography therefore missing opportunity to fully explore graphic communication.

Where centres presented the learner work as a full PDF or PowerPoint of all tasks, or individual PDF's or PowerPoint of each task, examiners were able to navigate through the evidence with ease. It is important that the examiner is able to clearly understand the task that the provided evidence corresponds to in order to allow fair and accurate application of the mark scheme. To facilitate this, a well-presented portfolio of evidence that is clearly labelled and in the correct PDF or PowerPoint as requested by the external assessment paper is appreciated. In a small number of instances, learners provided Photoshop PSD files, this is not an acceptable file format as it relies on the examiner having access to Photoshop.

For a range of learners there was too much of a heavy reliance on written justifications for their design ideas, experiments, and creative response to the brief. In a number of instances, the written work outweighed the creative response which is not in the spirit of the qualification, or graphic design. Learners would have achieved higher marks had they focused on the creative response rather than writing their way through the qualification. Whilst the external assessment requests annotations and justifications of ideas and choices, this should not outweigh the creative responses. The brief and the mark scheme do not request lengthy written justifications.

## **Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment**

### **Malpractice**

There were no instances of malpractice in this assessment window. The Chief Examiner would like to take this opportunity to advise learners that instances of malpractice (for example, copying of work from another learner) will affect the outcome on the assessment.

### **Maladministration**

No instances of maladministration were reported in this assessment window. The Chief Examiner would like to highlight the importance of adhering to the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment document in this respect.

## Responses of the tasks within the sections of the external assessment paper

### Task 1:

---

*Ren Rivera wants your initial ideas to show that you have considered all of the requirements of the brief. Ren would like to see how you have interpreted the brief. You must provide some initial graphic design ideas for the book cover design.*

*Your response to the brief must include:*

- *your initial graphic design ideas*
- *annotations of how your ideas will meet the requirements of the design brief for the book cover design.*

---

The vast majority of learners responded well to this task with little misinterpretation of the tasks.

This evidence, in comparison to the previous windows was not as fully explored, with limited initial ideas in the vast majority of cases.

Where learners achieved higher marks, the initial ideas presented were innovative, met all the requirements of the brief with all aspects of the brief being considered, including the dimensions of the book cover. Learners presented scamps, sketches, colour palette ideas, typography ideas, explored imagery and composition that was then developed further in task 2.

Where learners gained higher marks, the tasks flowed into one another. Research informed ideas and learners spent time on creative responses rather than a written response.

Where learners did not gain marks for work submitted, this was due to the learner re-writing and presenting the brief with no analysis or ideas coming from this. Many learners presented research that did not inform any initial ideas. Evidence that was product analysis only could not be awarded.

Centres are reminded that this is not research or product analysis task, and research is to inform ideas only. Research in isolation cannot be awarded marks. In some instances, learners spent considerable time presenting research that could not be awarded.

## Task 2:

---

*Use your initial ideas for the book cover and develop them further.*

*You must:*

- 
- *experiment with the graphic design components to develop your ideas further*
  - *annotate your experiments, stating how your ideas use the graphic design components*
  - *show all your experiments, including your rejected ideas*

Learners achieved higher grades by clearly experimenting with all 6 graphic design components and completing all tasks. The response to this task was not as thorough in comparison to previous external assessment windows.

Some learners misinterpreted the task and provided an explanation of the 6 graphic components rather than experimentation with the components.

In comparison to previous external assessments, there was limited evidence of refinement and development of ideas through experimentation. Many learners did not provide sufficient evidence of refinement and development to be awarded higher grade bands. Where learners provided evidence of refinement and development labelled as task 3, examiners were encouraged to mark this against task 2.

Learners gained higher marks by using all of the aspects given in the brief, including the dimensions of the book cover. It was really encouraging to see that the vast majority of learners, including lower marked and lower level 1 learners, understood and applied the graphic design components.

Where learners gained higher marks, they showed creativity and innovation, in particular with the use of original typography that was created using hand drawn or digital techniques. Learners also gained higher marks by showing evidence of development and refinement.

Evidence was on the whole, well presented for this task, with learners clearly labelling the components and the corresponding experimentation.

## Task 3:

*You must produce your final work for the book cover ready to be presented to Ren Rivera.*

*You must:*

- 
- *use imagery and typography*
  - *use the graphic design components*
  - *use the ideas developed in Task 2*
  - *meet the requirements of the brief*
-

There was little misinterpretation to this task, with learners producing some very well considered designs, with some interesting and original imagery and typography.

In some instances, learners used images direct from the internet, where this occurred learners could not be awarded for imagery due to it not being original as directed in the brief. Learners who used stock imagery but manipulated it to meet the brief and be original were awarded appropriately.

A good level of skill was shown for this task, and where some learners had not gained higher marks on the previous tasks were able to gain higher marks due to the level of skill and application of the design components.

---

There was some evidence of misinterpretation of the task, with some learners changing the characters of the story, or missing the requirements of the brief, changing the book title or not including images of the dogs.

Learners showed the skills they had used, it was good to see screen shots of the digital making process, although this was not as robust as in previous external assessment windows.

Learners achieved higher marks by meeting all the requirements of the brief, showing they understood the requirements of the brief, in particular making the book cover appeal to the target age range, and designing some unique and visually appealing typography.

This task proved to be the strongest out of the 4 tasks for this assessment window, which was encouraging to see after learners will have missed some face-to-face learning whilst the nation was in lockdown.

Task 4:

*You must provide a conclusion to present to Ren Rivera about your graphic design and how the book cover meets the design brief.*

*Your conclusion must include:*

- *the choices you made during the design process*
- *the challenges you have faced*
- *the processes you used to solve the challenges of the brief*
- *the technical skills used to complete the design and meet the brief*

The responses to this task showed some inconsistency for this external assessment window. Learners were awarded higher marks by using a bullet point list as provided in the task of the external assessment, to provide their responses, therefore meeting all the requirements of the brief for this task.

There was a considerable proportion of learner who did not refer to the bullet points and provided 'what went well' and 'even better if' evaluations. The external

assessment task does not require learners to respond in this manner, in particular learners are not required to evaluate what improvements could be made.

In some instances, the final conclusion was presented holistically rather than the bullet point list, which is acceptable, where this occurred examiners use their own professional judgement to find the evidence that corresponds to the task.

In many cases, the evidence provided for task 4, were step by step narratives of the processes rather than concluding on the choices made, the use of the graphic components, the skills used, the challenges faced and how the design meets the requirements of the brief.

Where learners achieved higher grades the evaluations gave focused conclusions about the appropriate use of the graphic design components, and good descriptions of the processes used to resolve the challenges faced by the brief in the final design that were clearly linked to the work produced.

---