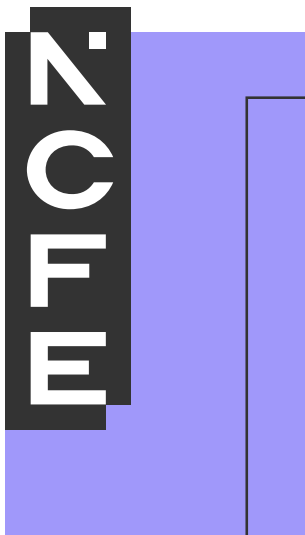




Chief Examiner and Chief Moderator Report

**NCFE Level 1/2 Technical Award in Graphic
Design
QN: 603/7011/7**

Series: Summer 2025

EA paper number: P002851/P002852

NEA paper number: P002853

EA assessment date: 05 June 2025

NEA assessment date: 30 April 2025

Introduction

This report contains information in relation to the examined assessment (EA) from the chief examiner and non-exam assessment (NEA) from the chief moderator, with an emphasis on the standard of learner work within this assessment series.

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

Key points:

- grade boundary information
- administering the examined assessment (EA) and non-exam assessment (NEA)
- evidence creation
- standard of learner work
- responses to the assessments

The qualification is linear, meaning both assessments must be taken in the same assessment series and cannot be combined across different assessment series. Learners are allowed one attempt at each assessment, and there are no resit opportunities.

Grade boundary information

This qualification consists of two assessments: the examined assessment (EA) and the non-exam assessment (NEA).

After both assessments are completed and marked or moderated, the marks are combined to give a final mark for each learner. Where the raw marks do not reflect the required weighting of the assessment, a scaling factor is applied. For further information on grading information and scaling factors, please see the Qualification Specification.

Qualification scaled mark boundaries in this series are:

	Overall	Notional boundaries*	
		EA	NEA
Scaling factor		1	1
Max	200	80	120
Level 2 Distinction*	174	69	105
Level 2 Distinction	149	59	90
Level 2 Merit	122	49	73
Level 2 Pass	96	39	57
Level 1 Distinction	77	31	45
Level 1 Merit	58	24	34
Level 1 Pass	40	17	23

*The grade boundaries given for each assessment are known as 'notional grade boundaries', as they are for illustrative purposes only. Grade boundaries are the lowest mark with which a grade is achieved.

Administering the examined assessment (EA) and non-exam assessment (NEA)

The EA is invigilated and must be conducted in line with our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#) document. The NEA is moderated and must be conducted in line with our [Regulations for the Conduct of NEA – Non-Exam Assessment](#) document.

Learners must be given the resources to carry out the tasks and these are highlighted within the [Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery](#) (QSID) document.

Evidence creation

Examined assessment (EA)

Learners should use the space provided to answer questions. Where answers are typed or additional pages included, the learner's name, centre number, centre name and task number must be clearly visible. The additional paper must then be securely attached to the workbook.

Where assessments are completed online, centres must ensure they are familiar with the Surpass platform and have completed all testing and preparation before the assessment, to ensure learners are unaffected by technological issues.

Non-exam assessment (NEA)

Learners should approach all tasks in the NEA with reference to time requirements and control conditions. Learners should produce evidence to meet each task independently and with no feedback or guidance from tutors during the assessment.

Learner evidence requirements are stated per task and give required outcomes which can often be evidenced in a variety of ways to best meet the needs of the learner, unless otherwise stated.

Learner evidence submissions in this session often included a range of word-processed documents, PowerPoint presentations and digitised portfolios in line with expectations. Most learners had included a range of visual evidence as appropriate to the subject area, including sketches, photographs and digitally generated images.

Centres are reminded that template documents, word frames and other supporting documents should not be supplied to the learner for the purposes of generating evidence against this assessment. Use of such materials to generate assessment evidence could potentially be considered malpractice.

Standard of learner work

Examined assessment (EA)

This was the second paper taken by learners for the NCFE Level 1/2 Technical Award in Graphic Design. The paper consisted of 25 questions, including 9 multiple-choice questions and 10 questions divided into parts a and b. This structural change from the previous year encouraged more learners to attempt responses, resulting in increased engagement and a higher average number of marks achieved per question.

Learner performance was particularly strong on the multiple-choice and short-answer questions, especially where visual prompts or familiar formats were used. These formats appeared to support accessibility and confidence across the cohort.

Many learners demonstrated a positive understanding of assessment objective (AO) 1 (recall and knowledge) elements. However, there was a noticeable decline in performance when it came to application (AO2) and evaluation (AO3). This was particularly evident in the three-mark and nine-mark questions, where learners often struggled to fully develop their ideas or meet the assessment criteria. These questions clearly differentiated between level 1 and level 2 learners.

There were also instances where learners misinterpreted the question requirements or provided vague responses. In many cases, responses lacked the appropriate use of technical terminology, which limited access to higher marks.

Non-exam assessment (NEA)

This was the second NEA for the qualification. The assessment consisted of seven tasks to be completed by learners over 17.5 hours between October 2024 and April 2025. The assessment was assessed and internally quality assured by centres with samples of submitted learner evidence externally moderated by NCFE.

A total of 120 marks was available across the assessment. Each task was allocated a range of marks placed against stated AOs linked to task focus. In this assessment AOs 1 to 5 were assessed via levels of response mark grids aligned to each task, with weightings per task varied to reflect the nature of the qualification outcomes.

Learner outcomes were achieved across the available range of awarded marks and grades in this assessment. This suggested that learners had engaged with the assessment and that the assessment process had differentiated usefully between learner submissions.

The structure of the assessment allowed learners to accrue marks in areas they were more confident, to some extent, counterbalanced areas of lesser success based on the AO composition of each task.

The majority of learners had attempted all tasks within the assessment, producing appropriate evidence in most cases to accrue marks against AOs. A minority of learners registered for the assessment had not submitted any evidence or had not gained any marks for evidence

produced. Some learners had not attempted all tasks within the assessment, which led to a reduction in the available marks.

Learner evidence was generally appropriately presented in line with expectations given at task level. However, as per the previous session, it was noted that some learners did not identify evidence explicitly against tasks, which, in some cases, led to a potentially detrimental lack of structure in responses. The chief moderator notes that evidence should be referenced to task responses to aid learners in ensuring coverage of tasks and in clarity of assessment.

Credible outcomes were produced by many learners, which indicated application of graphic design skills and understanding of key areas of the qualification content. Learner submissions generally reflected the demands of the brief and demonstrated creativity, imagination and application of technique across a range of outcomes.

Learners who achieved well tended to be able to demonstrate understanding of the brief requirements and refine their ideas via application of knowledge, skills and evaluation across the given tasks to produce a final graphic design solution.

Summative feedback provided by assessors to learners was generally positively written and provided a summary of the learners' outcome. In many examples, individualised and personalised feedback was provided to contextualise the assessment outcome to the learner. Assessor feedback did not always include marks and commentary at AO level within tasks, which, in some cases, made application of assessment less transparent (for the purposes of both accuracy of feedback to learners and external moderation).

Upload of learner evidence and associated documentation for external moderation was generally well handled by centres, although it was noted that some uploads did not initially include all submitted learner evidence and, in some cases, did not include assessment documents. Evidence and documentation missed from upload has the potential to delay moderation of assessment and the chief moderator therefore advises that uploads should be carefully checked with reference to requirements (including the 'learner evidence upload checklist') to minimise any issues of this nature.

Responses to the assessments

Examined assessment (EA)

Question 1

Multiple-choice question, positive performance; learners clearly understood the content assessed.

Question 2

Multiple-choice question, positive performance; learners clearly understood the content assessed.

Question 3

Multiple-choice question, positive performance; learners clearly understood the content assessed.

Question 4

Many learners gave generic answers rather than identifying the precise visual characteristics (such as line thickness, colour intensity, or spacing). This suggests learners may not fully grasp the language of formal analysis.

Question 5

Learners found it difficult to identify contrasting principles such as light / dark or thick / thin.

Question 6 (a)

Most learners demonstrated a good understanding of the definition, showing that the core concept was generally well grasped.

Question 6 (b)

Learners were less confident applying the concept in the context of homepage design. Responses often lacked specificity or relevance. Stronger answers referenced how layout enhances user experience.

Question 7 (a)

Most learners demonstrated a good understanding of the design concept and its purpose. There was evidence of clear knowledge, and responses typically reflected an understanding of the question's intent.

Question 7 (b)

Learners continued to perform well, building effectively on the knowledge shown in 7 (a). Many were able to apply their understanding to a practical example.

Question 8 (a)

Some confusion was evident between packaging design and graphic elements such as text, image, and colour. This limited their ability to accurately identify and describe visual components.

Question 8 (b)

Many responses lacked evaluation or failed to fully connect features such as text or colour to the product's branding goals. AO3 performance was strongest where learners clearly articulated how the design decisions would impact consumer response or brand identity.

Question 9

This was the lowest-performing multiple-choice question, potentially reflecting content more accessible to level 2 learners.

Question 10

Multiple-choice question, positive performance; learners clearly understood the content assessed.

Question 11

Multiple-choice question, positive performance; learners clearly understood the content assessed.

Question 12

Learners successfully identified some risks (for example, legal issues or public image) but often overlooked financial implications or licensing concerns. Responses showed an awareness of ethical and reputational considerations but limited holistic thinking.

Question 13 (a)

Misinterpretation was common, with learners often discussing demographic categories rather than research methods. This suggests confusion between audience profiling and data collection techniques.

Question 13 (b)

Learners demonstrated clearer understanding, correctly referencing how demographic knowledge informs design decisions.

Question 14 (a)

Answers often described general design skills, overlooking digital-specific tools or processes.

Question 14 (b)

While many learners connected their answers to clarity or appropriateness for a magazine format, fewer considered cost or resource efficiency. Application was stronger in level 2 learners.

Question 15 (a)

Many learners correctly identified missing poster information such as time, date, and location. Stronger responses extended this by analysing visual improvements, including colour use and white space.

Question 15 (b)

Many learners referred to redesigning the poster rather than discussing reflective practice or planning for future work. This indicates a limited understanding of the question's intent.

Question 16

Multiple-choice question, positive performance; learners clearly understood the content assessed.

Question 17

Multiple-choice question, positive performance; learners clearly understood the content assessed.

Question 18

Multiple-choice question, very high success rate; learners showed clear understanding of the content assessed.

Question 19 (a)

Most learners identified colour as a key aesthetic element, but few expanded their response to include other aspects such as shape or texture.

Question 19 (b)

Learners struggled to apply design elements to represent different musical genres for the album cover design. More successful responses made thoughtful links between visual features and the emotional tone or identity of a music style.

Question 20 (a)

Learners had a basic understanding of how mind maps are used, but responses often repeated the question. Few linked their response to the design brief (soft drink campaign), indicating difficulty in applying responses to context.

Question 20 (b)

Lower-level responses focused on the importance of initial sketches rather than the refinement process. Stronger responses discussed the development of ideas more effectively.

Question 21 (a)

Responses varied. Learners who did well cited relevant platforms such as social media and business cards, although many only partially answered the question.

Question 21 (b)

Responses showed a solid understanding of curriculum vitae (CV) relevance; stronger responses included specific attributes.

Question 22

Stronger responses focused on building trust and rapport in professional settings. However, many learners gave brief or underdeveloped answers, particularly at level 1.

Question 23 (a)

Many learners focused too narrowly on the charity event theme without analysing all elements of the promotional material. Some referenced logos or typography but often failed to link this to the question's specific requirements.

Question 23 (b)

Learners struggled to identify what makes resource use 'effective'. Many gave simplistic cost-saving ideas without expanding on how this would be achieved or justified, showing difficulties in connecting ideas.

Question 24

There was a wide range of responses. While some learners showed strong understanding of effective typography — relating fonts and styles to message or brand — many repeated basic points and lacked depth of analysis.

Question 25

Most learners could describe skills gained through studying graphic design, but only a few connected these to progression into a specific role like an illustrator. Responses often lacked analysis and remained generalised, resulting in lower band performance.

Non-exam assessment (NEA)**Task 1**

In this first NEA task learners were asked to carry out research to inform initial design ideas in response to the brief and to generate preliminary ideas. Evidence to meet the task could be generated in physical or digital form with scope for a variety of potential evidential formats suggested.

The majority of learners engaged with this task to generate research which led to the generation of initial ideas.

The range of research undertaken varied across responses and in some cases included both primary and secondary research activities, which expanded upon the 2 hours of research time allocated prior to commencement of the NEA tasks.

Learners who achieved well in this task tended to be able to use selected elements of research to inform their initial ideas. Research often clearly informed responses by detailed exploration of other designers' work which was related to the needs of the brief, with reference to components of graphic design.

The scope of initial ideas varied considerably, but most often learners had started to create concrete visual starting points (often in the form of hand-drawn designs, sketches or digital work) which referenced the brief requirements and allowed for demonstration of application against AO2. This was often justified in learner commentary against the requirements of the brief to access AO3.

Some learners who achieved highly were able to assimilate all demands of the brief into their initial ideas and provide commentary to explicitly focus on a chosen option (from the three options given in the brief) for their outcome.

Learners who achieved less well in this task tended to have utilised research in a less focused way. In some cases, analysis of existing work was undertaken but this did not always link to development of the learner's own ideas. References to graphic design components, in some cases, restated the nature of components without contextual consideration, which often did not inform creation of ideas. In some submissions a variety of sources were used to gather visual starting points, but these were not used to create the learners' own starting points, which tended to impact on both AO2 and AO3 outcomes.

In a minority of submissions learners conceptualised initial ideas but did not apply these in terms of components to create initial designs, which tended to inhibit outcomes in AO2. Some learner evidence in response to this task indicated creation of ideas but justification was not provided which tended to limit credit against AO3.

Creation of cohesive initial ideas in this task generally allowed learners to move purposefully onto task 2.

Task 2

In task 2 learners were asked to develop their initial idea created in response to task 1, and evidence the developmental process. As in task 1 evidence could be generated in digital or physical form with a range of evidence types suggested. The majority of learners provided portfolio responses (often in the form of a digital presentation, word-processed document or digitised hard copy) which included written commentary and visual outcomes.

Some sequential and logical development of ideas from task 1 was evident in the majority of submissions. A small minority of learners had not presented evidence against this task.

In a minority of learner submissions, responses to this task were not well delineated from task 1 (or, in some cases, task 5) evidence. The chief moderator notes that, as tasks are allocated a specific timeframe, work should be clearly defined to allow accurate assessment and aid focus for learners. With this in mind, it is suggested that task responses be clearly signposted by learners within their submissions.

Learners who achieved well in this task tended to have applied experimentation and testing via the use of tools, materials and techniques to refine ideas and work towards cohesive graphic design outcomes. Learners working consistently at this level tended to have provided supporting commentary in regards to the application of graphic design components, tools, materials and techniques to access AO1 at creditable levels.

Learners working in a focused manner were often able to develop ideas to refine responses against the requirements of the brief, through considered experimentation to meet AO2 and demonstrate varied and imaginative development work to meet AO4. Learners were able to begin to discount some initial ideas and move forward to consider focused graphic design solutions.

Learners who achieved less well in this task tended to have shown limited consideration of tools, materials and techniques in engagement with experimentation and testing. The initial

ideas, in some cases, were not refined during this task. Testing of graphic design elements was often less well evidenced, and in some cases did not substantially advance upon the initial ideas, which tended to impact on AO2 and AO4 outcomes.

In some cases, learners discarded their initial ideas from task 1, but did not provide reasoning on why this decision was made. In some submissions this tended to limit the scope of developmental work undertaken in task 2, as learners created further initial ideas. Very limited, or entirely absent, commentary tended to impact on AO1 creditability. In some cases, learners restated identified components and principles but did not relate them to their work.

Where learners had engaged with development work in this task the outcomes often provided a useful basis for review in task 3.

Task 3

Task 3 provided learners with an opportunity to review work undertaken in task 2 with reference to the client brief. The majority of learners submitted evidence of this review in word-processed form. A minority of learners had not presented evidence against this task.

The task required learners to consider their developed ideas in the context of client requirements, communication of ideas, appropriateness to the target audience, selection of tools, materials and techniques, alongside consideration of potential problems and solutions.

Learners who achieved well in this task often considered all the areas listed in detail and drew reasoned judgements from this.

By undertaking a structured reflective approach, learners were often able to consider future steps, which tended to inform later tasks in the NEA. Problems and solutions identified as part of the commentary often assisted in meaningful decision making, which tended to feed forwards into task 4 and task 5.

Learners who achieved less well in this task tended to have produced a more limited review which did not address all areas.

In some learner submissions, evidence to meet this task was not always clearly differentiated from task 2 development work, despite the different focus given by the requirements above, which led to review work that was more limited in scope.

Review evidence, which was less comprehensive and coherent to the task, tended to reflect a less analytical approach, and this impacted on AO3 and AO5 outcomes. Identification of potential problems was not always evidenced. A minority of learners had taken an 'even better if' and 'what went well' (EBI and WWW) approach, which often resulted in some creditable commentary but did not always align with the breadth of task requirements, and tended to be less supportive of solutions.

Considered review and reflection in response to this task tended to provide learners with considerations to feed into task 4.

Task 4

In this task learners were asked to create a detailed production plan for their graphic design solution. The majority of learners presented the plan digitally as a written plan, often accompanied with other visualisations.

A minority of learners did not submit evidence in response to this task.

There was considerable variation in the level of detail included in learners' evidence of planning. Evidence was presented in a variety of ways, including mind maps, workplans and Gantt charts. Learner commentary, in some cases, was supportive in rationalising planning and setting a workflow in place.

Learners who achieved well in this task tended to have considered production in relation to further steps, building on development work and review in previous tasks. Responses at this level tended to consider time and resource requirements, framing these as solutions identified during the task 3 review.

Commentary, which expanded in detail on timebound steps, tended to discuss a range of planning elements and relate these to the brief to access AO2. Coherent and representative planning, with detailed consideration in place, was reflected in AO4 outcomes.

Learners who achieved less well in this task tended to relate planning more narrowly to how the graphic design elements would continue to be developed, with less focus on how this may be achieved in terms of application of resources.

In some cases, planning did not reflect on time constraints or consider a more detailed approach beyond progressing to further developmental work or experimentation, which tended to limit refinement and detail awardable against AO4.

As per the previous session, in a minority of submissions this task was phrased in a way which appeared to suggest a retrospective approach to planning. The chief moderator notes that tasks in the NEA must be undertaken sequentially.

Learners who had developed detailed production plans tended to be able to move into task 5 with focus.

Task 5

Task 5 asked that learners make use of the allocated 5 hours and 30 minutes to create their final graphic design solution in response to the brief from the development, review and planning work undertaken up to this point in the assessment. The task required that ongoing review be undertaken in regards to technical skills, processes, tools and techniques utilised.

The majority of learners presented submissions against this task using visual evidence (for example, digitised images and screenshots) alongside written commentary. A small minority of learners did not submit evidence in response to this task.

Learners who achieved well in this task tended to demonstrate creation of a suitable outcome supported by ongoing commentary. A wide range of solutions were developed by learners, which accrued marks against AO4 and AO5. Submissions were observed across the graphic design solutions offered by the brief, with A4 flyers, A3 posters and A4 adverts being more common choices than a website homepage.

Considered choices in relation to the solution, in terms of tools, materials and techniques, were evident in submissions. A variety of creditable techniques and tool usage was apparent, with some learners developing convincing solutions using a mixture of mediums, often incorporating digital source material or use of software to refine the output.

Final graphic design solutions presented by learners working at this level were often imaginative and engaging in the communication of ideas and application of principles. Outcomes which were most effective tended to show consideration of line, tone, colour, typography, alongside hierarchy, alignment and contrast, to create a visually effective outcome which incorporated all required elements of the brief.

Solutions were effectively and consistently referenced by ongoing analysis and evaluation, which in turn informed development to its conclusion. It was pleasing to see imaginative and individualistic use of imagery in some work at this level, alongside the inclusion of functional but well-conceived detail (such as the incorporation of QR codes).

The levels of response grids allowed for balanced assessment against principles, components, tools, materials and techniques, which allowed learners to accrue marks against AO4, and this was often suitably differentiated by assessors to reflect a range of outcomes.

Learners who achieved less well tended to provide solutions which balanced application of graphic design components less successfully, often with less refined outcomes. In some cases, development was less notable, and process commentary was less detailed in terms of analysis, evaluation and judgements against AO5.

In some cases, learner graphic design solutions did not respond to all elements of the brief, and in a minority of submissions it was not immediately clear what the intention of the solution was at this stage (for example, if the intended outcome was an A3 poster, an A4 flyer or an A4 colour advert).

As per observation in the previous session, in a minority of cases it appeared that time management may have become an issue in relation to this task, with some learners not fully completing the graphic design outcome.

Successful and coherent graphic design solutions tended to allow learners to move forward to task 6 with an outcome appropriate for presentation.

Task 6

In this penultimate task learners were asked to present their final graphic design solution in an appropriate format. The majority of learners had attempted to present the final solution, but in a minority of cases this was not differentiated from the outcome of task 5 in submissions.

A minority of learners had not presented evidence against this task.

Learners who achieved well in this task had often presented outcomes in context, with some imaginative and engaging deployment in evidence, which often provided useful credit against AO4.

In these cases, learners had often made use of editing skills to reflect positioning of the outcome purposefully (for example, by editing poster designs into a framed display on a street). Some learners had made efforts to pitch the presentation to the identified client, and often this consideration of purpose added value to the outcome.

A very small minority of learners had provided video evidence demonstrating presentation, which was an engaging and imaginative approach.

Learners working at this level provided useful justification of their choices, most often via written commentary which allowed for creditable outcomes with reference to AO2.

Learners who achieved less well in this task had often made efforts to present their final graphic design solution purposefully, but had provided very limited commentary to justify their approach. In some cases, the final image was replicated from task 5 without consideration of formatting. Justifications were often substantially limited or not addressed by the supplied evidence from learners choosing to take this approach.

Task 7

The final task in this assessment required learners to produce a summative evaluation of their graphic design solution in relation to meeting the needs of the client, communication of ideas, appropriateness for the target audience, identification of successes and identification of improvements.

The majority of learners had presented evidence against this task in the form of a word-processed document. A minority of learners had not provided evidence against this task.

Learners who achieved well tended to have produced a considered evaluation of their work and linked this back to the demands of the brief, via discussion of each of the areas specified in the task. At this level a range of specific and creative suggestions for improvements were provided alongside a logically structured evaluation to accrue marks against AO5.

Learners who achieved less well tended to have submitted evaluations which presented descriptive commentary, did not consider all areas of the evaluation or, in a minority of cases, repeated commentary from elsewhere in their evidence. Learners working at this level

sometimes moved to a 'what went well' and 'even better if' (WWW / EBI) approach, which, in some cases, limited the scope of commentary.

Identification of successes and suggestions for improvement tended to be less specific, with a broader approach often referring to the learner's wider skills. In some cases, this made examples somewhat less relevant and cohesive.

As per the previous session, in some instances, learners who had not achieved well against AOs which awarded an evaluative approach tended to accrue marks less successfully in this task.