

Art, Craft and Design – GCSE Curriculum Overview (Years 10–11)

Curriculum Intent

GCSE Art, Craft and Design (AQA) builds on Key Stage 3 learning and encourages an adventurous and enquiring approach to creative practice. Students develop technical skill, contextual understanding and personal expression through sustained projects exploring drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media and sculpture. The course fosters resilience, independence and creative problem-solving, enabling students to produce personal outcomes that demonstrate both technical control and conceptual depth.

Structure of the GCSE Course

The qualification is assessed through two components:

- **Component 1: Portfolio (60%)** – A sustained body of work developed from September of Year 10 to January of Year 11, demonstrating investigation, experimentation, refinement and a personal final outcome.
- **Component 2: Externally Set Assignment (40%)** – A project set by AQA in January of Year 11, culminating in a final piece produced under supervised examination conditions.

There is no written examination; however, students complete artist research and annotate their work to demonstrate understanding and development of ideas.

Year 10 – Developing Investigation and Creative Independence

Year 10 introduces students to the expectations and assessment objectives of the GCSE course through two sustained projects.

The first project, *Deconstruct/Reconstruct*, explores a range of stimuli through drawing, illustration, collage, printmaking, painting and mixed media. Students study contemporary artists such as Tom Phillips, Cornelia Parker and Banksy, analysing how ideas are fragmented, layered and reassembled. Contextual research informs increasingly personal responses as students refine their ability to experiment, record and review progress.

The second project, *Natural Forms and Structures*, develops observational drawing from primary sources and extends work into three-dimensional outcomes. Artists including Peter Randall-Page, Pamela Sunday, Dale Chihuly, Andy Goldsworthy, Heather Knight, Kate Malone and Georgia O’Keeffe support contextual learning. Clay construction, card and wire modelling and surface treatments deepen technical competence. Educational visits to galleries and sculpture gardens strengthen visual literacy and contextual understanding.

Throughout Year 10, increasing emphasis is placed on understanding and applying the AQA assessment objectives, developing recording skills, refining techniques and selecting materials independently.

Year 11 – Refinement, Personal Direction and Examination Preparation

In Year 11, students consolidate and extend the projects begun in Year 10, selecting and refining their strongest work to produce resolved final outcomes for the portfolio. Greater independence is expected as students broaden their use of media, refine surface texture and pattern and strengthen conceptual links between research and outcome. Reflective annotation supports evaluation and critical awareness.

The portfolio component is completed by January of Year 11.

Spring Term, Year 11 – Consolidation and Examination Preparation

From January onwards, students begin the Externally Set Assignment (ESA), responding independently to a theme set by AQA. They conduct research, explore materials and develop preparatory work before producing a final outcome during supervised examination sessions. Structured preparation supports planning, refinement and confident execution. By the time of the supervised examination, students demonstrate a clear personal direction, well-developed preparatory studies and secure understanding of how to meet assessment criteria effectively.

Assessment and Progression

Assessment is continuous and based on the four AQA Assessment Objectives: investigation of artists and sources, experimentation with materials and processes, recording of observations and development towards a final outcome. Students receive ongoing feedback to support refinement and independence.

By the end of Year 11, students demonstrate confident technical skill, contextual awareness and independent creative direction. The course supports progression to A Level Art and Design, creative vocational pathways and careers within the creative industries.