

IGCSE 0400 Student Quick Guide

Assessment Objectives · Mark Scheme · Portfolio Tips

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Introduction

This guide summarises the key things every Cambridge IGCSE 0400 Art & Design student needs to know about how the course is assessed. It covers the four Assessment Objectives, what examiners look for, and practical portfolio tips from the BravArt Studio teaching method.

■ *This is a supplementary guide. Always refer to the official Cambridge IGCSE 0400 syllabus and your school's specification for the definitive assessment requirements.*

The Four Assessment Objectives

AO1 - Contextual Understanding

Research and analyse the work of other artists, craftspeople, designers or architects. Understand the cultural, historical and social context of art. Show how other artists' work has informed your own.

- Research at least 2-3 artists in depth per project
- Go beyond biography - analyse technique, media, composition, and intent
- Make connections between the artist's context and your own work
- Avoid simply describing what you see - evaluate and interpret

AO2 - Creative Making

Experiment with materials, techniques and processes. Show a genuine process of exploration - not just polished final pieces, but evidence of real experimentation and risk-taking.

- Try at least 3-5 different media or techniques per project
- Document your experiments in your sketchbook (successes AND failures)
- Show development - how one experiment led to the next
- Use mixed media, layering, and unconventional approaches

■ *Examiners want to see a JOURNEY, not just results. A page showing a technique that did not work, with a note on what you learned, is more valuable than a perfect final piece with no process evidence.*

AO3 - Recording Ideas

Draw and record from direct observation. Show that you can look carefully at the world and record what you see with accuracy and sensitivity. This is about PRIMARY sources - real objects, people, environments.

- Always include direct observational drawings in every project
- Draw from real objects wherever possible - not just photographs
- Show different viewpoints, details, and scales of the same subject
- Demonstrate a range of mark-making approaches

AO4 - Presenting Work

Realise your intentions in a final outcome - whether a painting, sculpture, print, textile, or design. This final piece should feel like the natural conclusion of everything in your portfolio. It should be ambitious, well-crafted, and demonstrate your full ability.

- Plan your final piece carefully - composition, scale, media
 - The examiner should be able to trace a clear thread from AO1 research to AO4 final piece
 - Give yourself enough time - rushing the final piece is the most common mistake
 - Present the work cleanly and professionally
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Portfolio Structure Tips

- Your portfolio tells a STORY - beginning (research), middle (experiments), end (final piece)
 - Quality over quantity - a focused, deep portfolio beats a scattered, shallow one
 - Every page should show intent and thinking, not just pretty pictures
 - Annotations matter - write brief notes on what you tried, what you observed, what you decided
 - Mount and present your work consistently - professional presentation signals a professional mindset
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Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Copying artwork from Google Images without analysis or transformation
 - Leaving artist research to the last minute - it should run throughout the project
 - Only working in one medium when the spec encourages experimentation
 - Skipping the sketchbook in favour of loose sheets - the sketchbook IS your portfolio
 - Drawing from memory rather than observation for AO3
 - Not managing time - most students underestimate how long the final piece takes
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Want More Support?

BravArt Studio offers specialist IGCSE 0400 coaching through the Exam Lab programme. We use a proven four-pillar method that covers all four Assessment Objectives in sequence, with personalised feedback at every stage. Students predicted E or U have gone on to achieve A and B grades through this method.

Contact us at hello@bravartstudio.com or visit bravartstudio.com to find out more.