YEAR 12 GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION

SCHEME OF LEARNING | 2026–2027 | Pearson Edexcel A-Level (9GC0)

Project 1: Introductory Graphic Communication — Music, Food or Climate Change Poster (Autumn–Spring)
Project 2: Sustained Personal Investigation — student-negotiated theme, developing from spring/summer and continuing in Year 13.

Planning note: dates are indicative and can be adjusted to the two-week timetable. Introductory projects are taught foundations; the assessed Component 1 Personal Investigation must be clearly evidenced and internally agreed. The Year 13 externally set task is not taught as a Year 12 exam project.

CURRICULUM INTENT

The Big Picture – why are pupils learning this?	Students investigate how graphic design communicates meaning to audiences through typography, image, colour, hierarchy and composition. Students interpret a selected brief (Music, Food or Climate Change poster), understand the design process and develop an informed personal visual language. They then formulate an independent direction for sustained investigation.
Design briefs and outcomes	Project 1: choose a music, food or climate change theme and produce researched poster / campaign graphics, with an option to extend into packaging or branding where appropriate. Project 2: sustained thematic investigation with a negotiated intention and progressively refined graphic outcomes.
Pearson Edexcel specification	Graphic Communication A-Level 9GC0. Component 1: Personal Investigation, 60%; supporting studies, practical work and a separately presented personal study of at least 1,000 words of continuous prose. Component 2: Externally Set Task, 40%, ordinarily undertaken in Year 13. AO1–AO4 inform both teaching and assessment.
Building on prior learning	Students progress from GCSE research, annotation, photography, experimentation, design sheets, Photoshop and outcome evaluation to more analytical contextual comparisons, purposeful experimentation, independent decision-making and ambitious personal responses.
Preparation for next stage / CEG	Develops the portfolio, design thinking, reflective writing, visual communication and digital/manual techniques needed for Year 13,

	foundation study and careers in graphic design, branding, editorial, illustration, advertising and creative industries.
Cultural capital	Primary photography and research from museum/gallery visits; engagement with local and global visual culture; research into designers including Jamie Reid, Peter Saville and Paula Scher; Japanese packaging and kawaii influences; retro-futurist and environmental campaign imagery where relevant. Ethical representation and attribution are embedded.
Common misconceptions	A moodboard is not sufficient analysis; copying a designer is not a personal response; digital polish is not a substitute for creative development; decoration does not automatically improve communication; a final outcome alone cannot show the whole AO1–AO4 journey. The written personal study is not simply sketchbook annotation.
Six competencies	Critical thinking: analyse purpose and effectiveness; Collaboration: peer critique and design-team feedback; Communication: articulate ideas visually and verbally; Citizenship: ethical, cultural, environmental and inclusive design; Character: initiative, resilience and self-management; Creativity: inventive exploration and visual risk-taking.

DEVELOPMENT OF KEY GENERIC SKILLS

Literacy, reading and oracy	Subject vocabulary, designer comparisons, justified intentions, critical annotations, verbal critique and informed evaluation. Recommended sources include Ellen Lupton, Theo Inglis and carefully selected design magazines/articles.
Numeracy	Grid systems, alignment, scale, ratios, print dimensions, visual balance, perspective, proportionality and measuring layout.
Computational thinking	Iterative design process: identify audience/problem, prototype, test visual hierarchy, modify and evaluate; Photoshop/Illustrator or available design software and responsible digital asset management.
Key terminology	Visual hierarchy; typography; kerning; leading; contrast; alignment; grid; composition; aesthetic; concept; audience; symbolism; connotation; semiotics; primary source; contextual analysis; refinement; visual identity; iteration; personal investigation.
Home learning	Weekly self-directed sketchbook or digital-portfolio tasks: designer analysis, source photography, experiments, annotation, outcome improvement and progress against personal targets.
Cross-curricular links	English/literacy (analysis, persuasive language); Media (audience and advertising); History (design movements); Geography and

	science (climate change); Food/cultural studies; Photography; Digital technologies.

CURRICULUM IMPACT

Knowledge pupils should retain

Students can identify and justify effective visual communication strategies; explain how cultural/historical context shapes design; use appropriate design terminology; distinguish descriptive from analytical writing; and understand how AO1–AO4 collectively demonstrate a sustained design process.

Skills pupils should demonstrate

Students can undertake and reference independent research, capture primary sources, explore analogue and digital image-making, analyse designers, devise layouts, refine concepts through testing, produce resolved communication outcomes, and evaluate decisions against purpose and audience.

CURRICULUM INCLUSION — SCAFFOLDING FOR ALL GROUPS

Disadvantaged / Pupil Premium	Provide access to materials and software in school, exemplar folders, printing support, scheduled checkpoints and clear home-learning priorities.
SEND	Chunk project milestones, model each step, offer visual checklists and vocabulary banks, use assistive technology and allow varied ways to evidence understanding without reducing ambition.
EAL	Pre-teach Tier 2/3 vocabulary, sentence stems for critical comparison, dual-coded exemplars, verbal rehearsal and paired discussion before written analysis.
Higher Prior Attainment	Extend into competing perspectives, sophisticated typographic systems, more ambitious physical/digital experimentation, ethical debate and independent sustained investigation.
Formative assessment / FHS6	Retrieval and ROCK starters; exemplars; hinge questions; live critique; conferencing; peer assessment; self-review against AO language; documented response to feedback.

PROGRESSION AND ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Autumn 1 — Sep–Oct	Introduction, choice of poster theme, visual literacy, intentions, mindmaps/moodboards, audience and initial designers. Main AO1/AO3.

Autumn 2 — Nov–Dec	Museum/primary images, typography and design styles, designer analysis, practical and digital experiments. AO1/AO2/AO3.
Spring 1 — Jan–Feb	Iterative layouts, creative responses, critique, improvement, proof-of-concept and mock-ups. AO1/AO2/AO3.
Spring 2 — Mar–Apr	Resolved poster or appropriate graphic outcomes; presentation, final review and critical evaluation. AO2/AO4 with AO1/AO3 evidence.
Summer 1 — May–Jun	Negotiate sustained Personal Investigation theme, intentions/questions, contextual research and primary recording. AO1/AO3.
Summer 2 — Jun–Jul	Expand research, experiment in distinctive directions, initiate visual identity and designs; review next steps for Year 13. AO1–AO4 in development.

Assessment objectives: AO1 develop ideas through sustained, focused investigations informed by contextual and other sources; AO2 explore and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, reviewing and refining ideas; AO3 record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions; AO4 present a personal and meaningful response showing critical understanding.

LESSON / STAGE-BY-STAGE SCHEME OF LEARNING

Stage 1 | Introduction to A-Level and choosing a design brief (Sep)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How do graphic designers communicate to specific audiences?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Interpret Music, Food or Climate Change brief; identify purpose, audience, formats and success criteria; compare contemporary poster examples.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	FHS6 retrieval of GCSE processes; think-pair-share; initial diagnostic analysis; written intentions.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Brief, target audience, intent, communication
Edexcel AO links	AO1, AO3

Stage 2 | Personal intentions, mind map and moodboard (Sep)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How do we establish a personal direction rather than collect images?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Create title/intention, mind map, annotated moodboard and initial examples of influential imagery.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Exemplar comparison; peer discussion; target-setting and short teacher conference.

Subject-specific vocabulary	Concept, visual influence, primary/secondary source
Edexcel AO links	AO1, AO3

Stage 3 | Context, audience and visual literacy (Oct)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How does the same image communicate differently to different viewers?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Analyse context, symbolic meaning, colour psychology, audience and visual hierarchy in selected briefs.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Image reading exercises; 60-second presentations; visual-literacy critique.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Semiotics, connotation, hierarchy, demographic
Edexcel AO links	AO1, AO3

Stage 4 | Design style and designer research (Oct–Nov)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How can designer research actively change our ideas?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Investigate relevant designers (e.g. Reid/Saville/Scher for music; Japanese packaging and designers for food; retro propaganda or campaign designers for climate). Produce critical analysis and own responses.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Annotated double-page studies; comparison task; questioning with AO1 exemplars.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Contextual, aesthetic, movement, appropriation
Edexcel AO links	AO1, AO2

Stage 5 | Museum visit, photography and visual response (Nov)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How can primary visual recording provide original starting points?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Select, edit and annotate own museum or location photographs; produce drawings, collages and compositional studies that link back to intentions.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Contact sheet review, paired analysis and visual-response mini critique.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Primary recording, framing, crop, texture
Edexcel AO links	AO3, AO2

Stage 6 | Typography, colour, hierarchy and layout (Nov–Dec)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How can typography and composition alter a message?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Study letterforms, grid systems, scale and hierarchy; make variations using print, collage, hand lettering and design software.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Demonstration, micro-design challenges, critique and before/after comparison.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Kerning, leading, grid, contrast, alignment
Edexcel AO links	AO2, AO3

Stage 7 | Experimentation with processes and media (Dec–Jan)

Learning outcome / Big Question	What new visual solutions emerge from combining practical and digital processes?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Experiment with mono printing, mark making, collage, image transfer, photography, mixed media and digital layering as appropriate to students' themes; annotate selections and changes.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Technique workshops; evidence of multiple iterations; reflective annotations.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Iteration, process, texture, refinement
Edexcel AO links	AO2, AO3

Stage 8 | Concept generation and design sheets (Jan–Feb)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How do we turn influences into distinct design concepts?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Develop several poster compositions or relevant packaging/branding extensions; plan image/text relationships; critique appropriateness to audience and message.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Design-pitch presentations; teacher conferencing; peer 'two strengths, one improvement'.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Thumbnail, prototype, concept, narrative
Edexcel AO links	AO1, AO2, AO3

Stage 9 | Refine visual direction and test communication (Feb–Mar)

Learning outcome / Big Question	What evidence shows one solution works better than another?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Test legibility, emphasis, layout, material and audience response; select and explain refinements using feedback and source links.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Comparative layout tests; critique and annotated action plan.

Subject-specific vocabulary	Legibility, usability, balance, refinement
Edexcel AO links	AO2, AO3

Stage 10 | Realise and present resolved graphic outcome (Mar–Apr)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How does our final outcome fulfil our intentions?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Produce considered music/food/climate poster or relevant resolved outcome, with final presentation and evidence of development.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	AO4 review; outcome against brief; individual progress discussion.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Resolution, finish, presentation, visual identity
Edexcel AO links	AO4, AO2

Stage 11 | Evaluation and transition (Apr)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How has our investigation shaped our visual language?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Write concise, analytical evaluation using evidence and identify further themes/questions suitable for sustained work.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Reflective assessment; individual target setting; proposal ideas.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Evaluation, critical reflection, synthesis
Edexcel AO links	AO1–AO4

Stage 12 | Negotiate Personal Investigation theme (May)

Learning outcome / Big Question	What question or issue can sustain an independent investigation?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Propose original theme and enquiry, audiences and relevant graphic formats; clarify scope, intention and personal context.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Proposal pitch; teacher negotiation and feasibility check.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Sustained enquiry, intention, rationale
Edexcel AO links	AO1, AO3

Stage 13 | Extend contextual research and primary sources (May–Jun)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How can varied sources deepen a personal investigation?

Core learning and subject-specific skills	Compare designers and movements, gather primary photography or objects, analyse relevant practice and begin a bibliography/research log; introduce the written personal study.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Research seminar; question prompts; source analysis and bibliography check.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Contextual comparison, reference, interpretation
Edexcel AO links	AO1, AO3

Stage 14 | Develop experimental directions for Year 13 (Jun–Jul)

Learning outcome / Big Question	How can selected processes become a distinctive personal style?
Core learning and subject-specific skills	Test alternative media and visual approaches, develop initial studies/mock-ups, review evidence against AO1–AO4 and prepare an achievable summer/Year 13 action plan.
Suggested FHS6 / formative assessment	Portfolio audit; peer critique; proposal refinement; end-of-year review.
Subject-specific vocabulary	Personal visual language, iteration, conceptual development
Edexcel AO links	AO1–AO4

EVIDENCE AND REVIEW CHECKLIST

Introductory project evidence: intention, mind maps/moodboards, contextual/designer analyses, primary recording, technical trials, iterative compositions, refining decisions, resolved outcome and evaluation. Summer investigation evidence: negotiated proposal, further contextual research, primary source recording, initial experiments, analysis of next steps and summer work plan.

Safeguard: the introductory project does not automatically substitute for the assessed Personal Investigation. Confirm any intended Component 1 evidence against centre assessment and authentication procedures. The separate minimum 1,000-word personal study is developed as part of Component 1 and assessed at the end of the course.

SOURCE / SPECIFICATION REFERENCE

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE Art and Design — Graphic Communication (9GC0), specification:
https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Art%20and%20Design/2015/specification-and-sample-assessment-materials/gce-a-level-art-and-design-specification-issue-4.pdf