



Supporting your Child with GCSE Revision: Photography

Photography is about much more than taking a good picture.

Students investigate photographers and ideas, plan and carry out shoots, experiment with photographic processes, record decisions, refine their work and produce personal outcomes. The creative journey is as important as the final image.



HOW THE GCSE IS ASSESSED

60% COMPONENT 1: PORTFOLIO

96 marks. Non-exam assessment, marked by school and moderated by AQA. For 2027, the minimum requirement is one sustained project showing the journey from initial ideas to realised intentions. Further work can still be included and assessed.

40% COMPONENT 2: EXTERNALLY SET ASSIGNMENT

96 marks. Students select a starting point from the AQA paper, complete a preparatory period, then produce their response during 10 hours of supervised time.

THE FOUR ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

AO1 - DEVELOP / INVESTIGATE

Develop ideas through investigations and show critical understanding of sources.

AO2 - REFINE / EXPERIMENT

Explore ideas and experiment with appropriate media, techniques and processes

AO3 - RECORD

Record ideas, observations and insights as the work progresses

AO4 - PRESENT / REALISE

Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and shows understanding of visual language.

Each Assessment Objective contributes 25% of the marks. Strong portfolios therefore need a balance of research, experimentation, recording and resolved outcomes.





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OUR YEAR 11 PORTFOLIO

EXTENDED PROJECT: PORTRAIT

Our sustained project. Students build a personal response to portraiture through photographer research, analysis, planning, repeated shoots, contact sheets, experimentation, editing, annotation, refinement and final outcomes.

Possible ideas: identity, character, relationships, mood, environment, representation, lighting, pose, viewpoint, costume, props, symbolism and manipulation.

Key aim: show a clear creative journey — not just a collection of finished portraits.

MINI PROJECT: COLLECTIONS / TYPOLOGY

Additional portfolio work exploring groups of related subjects photographed systematically. Students consider how repetition, similarity, difference, sequence and presentation create meaning.

Possible subjects: objects, people, places, signs, textures, packaging, possessions or everyday details.

Key aim: develop a consistent visual approach — for example viewpoint, framing, background, scale or lighting — then carefully select and arrange the final typology

WHAT STRONG GCSE PHOTOGRAPHY LOOKS LIKE

- Purposeful research
- Lots of original Photography
- Contact Sheets and Selection
- Experimentation
- Clear annotation
- Thoughtful editing
- Ideas that develop from one stage to the next
- Refinement - Personal, meaningful final outcomes

Photography skills students may use:

Lighting, Viewpoint, Aperture, Depth of Field, Shutter speed/movement,
Composition, Colour, Tone, Texture, Scale, Sequence, Image manipulation and
digital processes



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HOW TO SUPPORT PHOTOGRAPHY AT HOME

1. Make Time for Photography

Encourage regular short shoots rather than one rushed session before a deadline. A walk, a room at home, a family member or a collection of everyday objects can all become useful subject matter.

2. Help with Practical Arrangements

Students may need a willing portrait model, permission to use a location, props, costume, transport or a particular time of day. Helping them organise things is extremely valuable.

3. Ask Questions about Their Ideas

Useful prompts include: What are you trying to communicate? Which image is strongest and why? What did you change after the last shoot? What could you experiment with next?

4. Encourage Them to Keep the Process

Contact sheets, test images, screenshots, experiments and unsuccessful photographs can evidence development. An image does not need to be “perfect” to be useful in a GCSE portfolio.

5. Encourage Purposeful Research

When looking at a photographer, ask what the student notices about lighting, composition, colour, viewpoint, subject, mood and meaning — and how that research could influence their own work.

6. Support Good Digital Habits

Encourage clear file names, organised folders and backups. Students should keep original photographs as well as edited versions so their development can be seen.





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QUICK HOME CHECK-IN

- I know which project / task my child is working on
- They have taken new photography recently and are not relying on old images
- Their photographs are saved, organised and backed up
- They are showing decisions and development, not only polished final images
- They have completed any research / annotation set by their teacher
- They have organised any model, location or props needed for their next shoot
- They can tell me their next step

SMARTPHONES + EDITING

A smartphone is absolutely fine.

Students do not need specialist camera equipment to make successful GCSE Photography work. What matters most is purposeful image-making, experimentation, development and thoughtful presentation.

Editing Tools

Students can use accessible apps such as Canva, Snapseed and Lightroom to crop, adjust light and colour, experiment with presentation, manipulate images and develop their ideas. Editing should support the intention of the project rather than simply add effects.

EASY WAYS TO HELP WITH A SMARTPHONE SHOOT

- Wipe the camera lens before shooting
- Try several viewpoints and distances
- Look carefully at the background and edges of the frame
- Use natural light/window light and experiment with direction of light
- Take variations rather than one image
- Keep originals & Edited versions



AQA 2027 UPDATE

For students assessed in summer 2027, AQA has removed the previous minimum requirement for separate “further work”. Component 1 now requires a minimum of one sustained project. Schools can still include additional work, and it is assessed normally. In our course, Portrait provides the sustained project and Collections / Typology provides valuable additional portfolio evidence.

School deadlines may be earlier than AQA's submission date. Students should always work to the deadlines given by their Photography teacher. Official course information: AQA GCSE Art & Design (Photography), specification 8206 | aqa.org.uk/820