

**Revise for OCR GCSE Graphic Products**

*Reviewed by Michael Lawrance, Head of Faculty – Art, Design and Technology, Bishop Fox’s Community School*

As the introduction points out, ‘This book has been written as a revision guide for students studying the GCSE following the OCR specification.’ It goes on to say that ‘it can be used in conjunction with the student book’ and, of course, the GCSE specification itself. Not having seen the student book version, I am unable to compare the content of the two and this book does refer students to the other volume for more detailed coverage.

Each main section introduces the topics it will cover as a bullet-point list followed by explanations and examples. On the right of the majority of pages the writer has created a margin in which key words are listed, designed to help students focus on and remember important words and terms linked to the corresponding content. At the end of these paragraphs the student will find a section labelled ‘key points’, providing a quick summary and accessible as a recap or revision technique. Finally, the author has devised some activities at the end of each section, either to give students practice in applying the knowledge or strategies to remember and restructure information or both. On the whole, it is a set of devices which many students will find logical and easy-to-use. I myself discovered that if the guide is used as a flickbook, I could easily just read the right-hand margins containing only the key words and their explanations. This could prove a further useful revision technique, say, in the immediate run-up to the exam.

The main chapters in the first half of the book on design and making deal with the following topics: developing and writing a design brief, generating design proposals, product planning, tools and equipment, processes, information and

communications technology (ICT) applications, industrial applications, good working practice and product evaluation. Of these, I found the pages on processes and industrial applications to be very well researched and summarised. Indeed, some of the material could be useful to teachers as well as students.

The main chapters of the second half of the book deal with knowledge and understanding. The section on core materials and standard pre-manufactured components has some useful explanations and examples, but the one on systems and control is extremely basic. The last three topics are about products and applications, quality and health and safety. The book closes with seven specimen question papers and, ultimately, with answers to the various questions which are dotted about the book.

Undoubtedly, students preparing for the GCSE would find a great number of tips among these pages and, if they did all the exercises, would be well prepared for the paper. So, as a coaching device, it has advantages. There is a possible place too on the Head of Department’s bookshelf as a reference tool, having come across some pieces of information not easily found in other textbooks.

Personally, I found the format and content highly textual and rather dry and my concern would be that if I thought it was dry, then what would the students think? There do not seem to be enough visuals and, for a book about graphic products, I find this distinctly odd. Moreover, none of the graphics are in colour, something my students find very unappealing. Also, I am surprised that colour has not been adopted in order to illustrate and explain some of the points raised. At £5.99 it is not especially expensive, but neither is it very easily affordable and I don’t honestly think many students would buy it. When compared with some other design and technology revision materials on the market, more colourful and densely packed in overall content, this volume may eventually find the competition too strong for its long-term survival. The exam questions are useful practice but, given the rate at which GCSE exam formats alter, it could be outdated all too quickly.

With my limited capitation, I could not see myself investing in a class set and, like some of the Key Stage 3 textbooks that publishers are producing, it falls into the ‘OK, if I could afford it’ category.

More than half the content could be found in many other books about graphic products, some of it in past papers. The best bits for me as a teacher were on industry and processes. Now why don’t publishers do economical booklets just about those bits?

**Revise for OCR GCSE Graphic Products**

Kevin Crampton  
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Appropriate content	✓✓	Generic use
Pupil/student use	✓✓✓	One of a series
Teacher resource	✓✓	Photocopiable
Visuals	✓✓	Pupil/student activities ←
Overall style	✓✓✓	Cross-curricular