



National Diploma in Calligraphy

Helpful hints for FOUNDATION Diploma Module A

THE LETTERFORM ANALYSIS

“In A4 format make an analysis of the letter-forms of an historical manuscript which reflects your chosen basic hand. Your analysis should include x-height, letter formation and construction, heights of ascenders and descenders, etc. This can be in the form of notes added to enlarged photocopies of a relevant historical manuscript, together with your own lettering studies”

At this first level, you will be working with one basic hand only and its associated capitals. This will be either Foundational (Roundhand) in which case study the Ramsey Psalter, or Formal Italic, where you can study a hand by Arrighi or Francisco Lucas, or other fine Italian scribe. Find enlarged detailed illustrations from ‘Historical Scripts by Stan Knight, or A Book of Scripts, by A Fairbank, or search the internet. Stan Knight’s book is the ‘bible’ because the enlargements are clear and at least 5mm or larger body height – this is the ideal.

As well as showing by pencil lines & measurements on the enlargement how you have worked out the pen angle, nib-widths, ascender & descender heights and shape of O, arch formations etc, use a separate sheet to write down this information, perhaps as numbered or bullet points.

Next, you should demonstrate your understanding by actually writing as many letters of the alphabet as you can find on your enlargement, arranging them alphabetically, then writing them out again in the modernised version.

Finally, write a few words copied exactly from the historical manuscript, and a few words in the modernized version. If you are working alone and ‘blind’ you may find it helpful to see someone else’s past submission, as a visual is worth a thousand words – contact the Administrator.

THE ESSAY

ii. ‘In A4 format , and in about 1,000 of your own words, use illustrations and photocopies to give a brief summary of the changes in letter-form from Roman Capitals to the present day.’

1,000 words is rather restrictive, it is totally acceptable to exceed this, up to about 2,000, as necessary, but remember the assessor may have to skim-read it if it is lengthy as he/she is time-restricted. Keep it concise.

You need to include a bibliography at the end of the essay of books used as reference, useful ones include:

For historical information:

- 'Historical Scripts, Stan Knight
- 'The Story of Writing, Donald Jackson
- 'Practical Calligraphy' , Nash & Fleuss
- 'The Art of Written Forms' Donald M. Anderson

For information about 20th c calligraphy & lettering

- 'Calligraphy Today' ed Heather Child
- 'Calligraphy', David Harris, publ. Anaya (profiles of 20thc calligraphers)

Calligraphy exhibition catalogues, 'gallery' pages in how-to-do-it calligraphy books, back copies of The Edge,
Use the internet too!

The following hints are suggestions, for essay structure, they do not preclude other approaches.

Give a brief introduction mentioning the derivation of Roman Capitals from the Greek alphabet etc.(one sentence will do – don't waste your word-count going pre-Roman)

Letterforms evolved gradually, and there is overlap in the use of different scripts throughout the history of the alphabet, but it helps to give the essay a structure by dividing it with sub-titles into historical phases, based on main letter-form developments, describing main scripts for each phase, with one or two photocopied historical examples, and including any information about the development of one script into another or being replaced by the introduction of another script from elsewhere etc. Remember to keep the focus on letterform, including when you come to the 20th c. – 21st c.

Allow approx. 250 words for each historical phase plus approx. 500 words for the 19th/20th/21st C's, and include the following for EACH script within a particular historical phase:

A photocopy of 1 or 2 historical examples of the script, with name of manuscript/ inscription, date it was made, scribe/letterer (if known), place where script / letterform originated etc

To set the script in context, - approximate time-span of the script from appearance to cessation of use (if known), country of origin/use - brief summary of the main characteristics of the script eg pen angle, letter weight, slope, shape (ie a round or compressed script), formal/cursive etc any other relevant observations about the script.

Pictures need to show the letter-forms clearly, part ie detail of a manuscript page/inscription is fine. Pictures can be any size up to A4, usually A5 or smaller is adequate, images fed into the text at the relevant point is ideal, otherwise put images separate from text, but interleaved at appropriate places as near as possible to the associated text.

HISTORICAL PHASES:

ROMAN PERIOD: (dates)

Letterforms to include: Classical inscriptional (stone-carved) Roman Capitals, Rustic capitals (pen, brush, carved) pen-written square (quadrata) capitals, Roman cursive (with stylus on wax tablets and reed on papyrus).

EARLY 'DARK AGES':(dates)

Letterforms to include: flat pen artificial uncial and angled pen ie natural pen angle uncial, half-uncial, pointed Anglo-Saxon

CAROLINGIAN PERIOD: (dates)

French Carolingian 9th C, English Carolingian 10th c, Versal capitals

GOTHIC PERIOD; (dates)

(Passing mention of compressed transitional scripts between Carolingian and Gothic), Blackletter (there are several slight variations of this script, see Stan Knight's 'Historical Scripts' book), Gothic cursive, Rotunda

RENAISSANCE: (dates)

Scripts to include: Round humanist minuscule, soft and sharp italic, italic capitals (flourished and San Vito)

COPPERPLATE PERIOD; (dates)

Scripts to include: transitional scripts between italic and copperplate, development of copperplate and influence on letterform of the engraving process.

Allow approx. 500 words for the following and final phase:-

Here we recommend you TAKE A DEEP BREATH:

The following list may frighten you if your knowledge of living and recently-dead calligraphers is a bit thin. Take heart – we have saved you some time by listing the primary movers. Look some of them up, and be inspired, but don't feel inhibited about selecting names we haven't mentioned.

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19th CENTURY- PRESENT:

There were 3 main parallel strands from the early 20th c in Western lettering development, in Britain, Germany and the U.S. A.

It may be simplest to follow these 3 separately. Give a picture in colour where possible, and brief comment on the letterforms of each lettering artist you mention. Include the effect of more experiment and different tools with letterform .

In England mention the Arts & Crafts movement and William Morris' italic, Edward Johnston and historical influences on his letterforms, and those of his early 20th C successors, eg Graily Hewitt. Mid 20th c onwards rapid developments, Irene Wellington, Donald Jackson , Ann Hechle, David Howells, Ann Camp and influence on teachingand many other calligraphers more recently, mention half a dozen prominent calligraphers of your choice – Denis Brown is one - and brief mention about their letterforms. We hesitate to provide names lest you feel inhibited in choosing anyone not listed – please choose whoever has made an impact on you in some way by their work; this list is just to set the ball rolling.

In Germany, Rudolph Koch, in parallel with Edward Johnston in England, was a huge influence on the development of 20th c lettering. Anna Simons (taught in England by Edward Johnston), and half a dozen prominent German lettering artists of your choice, eg Hermann Zapf, Karlgeorg Hoefer, Friedrich Poppl, Werner Schneider, Gottfried Pott etc

In the U.S. A. , often a marked graphic design influence from the early 20th c in the U.S. Include Spencerian script, mention lettering of early 20th C American lettering artists, eg Dwight Dwiggin, Arnold Bank etc and half a dozen more recent U.S. Lettering artists of your choice eg Thomas Ingmire, John Stevens, Sheila and Julian Waters (both English, long resident in the U.S.), Georgia Deaver, Susan Skarsgaard etc

Conclusion about development of letterforms in Western calligraphy across many other countries, influence of the computer on lettering development etc

Good luck – this should prove to be an exciting journey of calligraphic discovery!