



National Diploma in Calligraphy

Helpful hints for INTERMEDIATE Diploma essay Module A

THE LETTERFORM ANALYSIS

i. "In A4 format make an analysis of the letter-forms of historical manuscripts which reflect the three or more chosen hands used in your calligraphic pieces. This can be notes added to enlarged photocopies of relevant historical manuscripts, plus your own lettering trials.

At this second level, you will most likely be working with Foundational, Italic and one other hand – possibly Gothic, or Uncial, or Carolingian. As before, find good examples of enlarged manuscripts where the detail can be seen and studied effectively – Stan Knight’s *Historical Scripts* is the ‘bible’ for this, because the enlargements are at least 5mm body height and generally clear examples of good scripts, but you are not limited to this book.

As in the Foundation level, once you have shown 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, you should use a separate sheet to write down this information, perhaps as numbered or bullet points. Look at Foundation level hints for more comprehensive listing of analysis bullet points.

Next, you should demonstrate your understanding by actually writing as many letters of the alphabet as you can find on your enlargement, leaving space round each letter to insert numbered stroke direction arrows, 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.

THE ESSAY

ii. "In A4 format and in no more than 1,500 or so of your own words use illustrations and photocopies to give a critical assessment which includes your own view linking the work of modern-day scribes and letterers to lettering styles in historical manuscripts"

More words are allowed than in Foundation level – but don’t worry if you go over a little. Try to be concise.

Follow the advice given for Foundation level for this module, as far as the sequence of scripts, but for Intermediate it asks for you to include your own opinions, and a ‘*critical assessment*’ – hence it should be more than a straightforward storytelling of the evolution of scripts. Much more, it asks you to link modern-day scribes’ work with that of the ancients.

Some of the most successful essays have selected modern examples to compare with each of the main historical scripts, and made comparisons about how each scribe has modernised and made it relevant for today’s purposes.

For example, comparing Denis Brown’s Uncials with the Irish originals, and Richard Middleton’s Foundational with the Ramsey Psalter.

Display examples of the modern work next to the historical manuscript and discuss how the

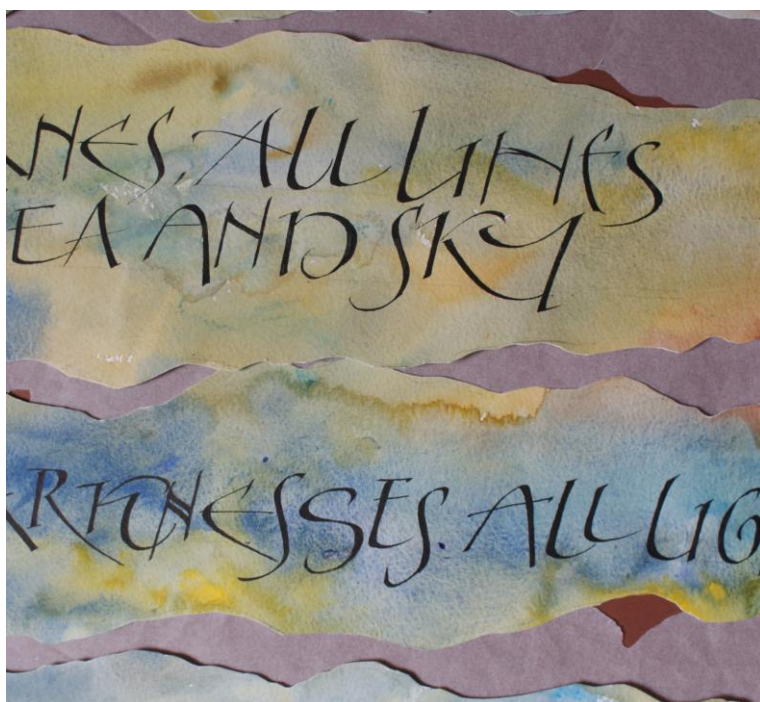
letterforms have been changed to make them relevant for today.

If you didn't start with the Foundation Level, check out the 'hints' as we save you some time by listing the main scripts/eras you should cover.

Here is an example of how you might tackle one section; keep the historical comment concise, as you have a lot of different scripts to cover.



These compound, built-up capitals, now termed 'Versals' were widely used in the Carolingian period in manuscripts, usually accompanying Carolingian minuscule. The letterforms were based on Roman inscriptional capitals, and were used for headings, text introductions, and verse beginnings, and were usually in some combination of red, blue, green, gold. The historical example shown here is from (manuscript name, date, scribe, location where written – if known). These letters were built-up with a narrow-edged nib. Their use continued into the 10th century and on into the Renaissance, departing from classical Roman forms, often becoming heavier weight and less formal, and often laterally compressed, though adhering to straight base-lines (apart from where letters are 'stacked' and smaller to save space).



Although Versals with classical Roman forms are still used in contemporary calligraphy, this detail of a work by (...name) shows an example of experimenting with historical forms. Though they are using the same 'built-up' Versal technique, the forms are completely different and they are written with movement off the baseline, and instead of writing the letters in colour as in the historical Versals, a colourful acrylic wash background has been used.