

The Certificate of Achievement

The purpose of the Certificate of Achievement is to preserve and improve craftsmanship and design in hand-weaving, spinning and dyeing and to promote education in the crafts.

Each of the crafts will be assessed separately and it is expected that candidates will submit work in one discipline at a time. It is assumed that each submission will have taken approximately two years of part-time study and instruction. Assessments are held in conjunction with the Association's Summer School and therefore take place in 'uneven' years.

The assessment consists of two parts, a portfolio of samples and a test piece, each earning 50% of the total mark; 20% is for design, 20% for technique and 10% for presentation in each part. Successful candidates will be awarded a grade. These are pass, lower credit, upper credit and distinction.

REGISTRATION

After members have returned a registration form and the £15 fee they will be informed of future assessments and given details of the venue and the relevant dates, and they will also receive a list of mentors. The registration fee is to cover the administration costs and is valid for five years.

Assessment application forms are sent to every registered candidate in the spring of the assessment year. When they are returned with the assessment fee of £50, each candidate is given a personal number which should appear on every item of work submitted. The assessment fee helps to cover the cost of the assessment.

All cheques must be made out to **The Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers** and sent to the Chairman of the Certificate Sub Committee.

NEITHER THE NAME OF THE CANDIDATE NOR ANY IDENTITY-REVEALING PHOTOGRAPH MAY BE SHOWN IN ANY OF THE SUBMITTED WORK.

Candidates must show evidence of successful study and understanding of the techniques involved in the use of natural dyes on fibres, yarns, textiles and any other matter.

PORTFOLIO OF SAMPLES

Fibres: You must show evidence of the use of natural dyes on wool, cotton, silk, linen and at least two other fibres or combinations of fibres.

You are expected to produce a wide range of well-documented samples indicating the properties of the type of dyes used, quantities and the reason for their choice. These should include:

Substantive Dyes which require no mordant to permanently fix their colour to the dye goods, although in many cases the use of a mordant with these dyes will give a different shade and add to their fastness.

Adjective Dyes needing mordants, which should include alum and iron. The natural dyes selected should include the great classic dyes, Madder and Weld, and some of the other classic dyes such as Cochineal, Logwood, Brazilwood, Fustic and Cutch. You should also include dyes from the garden, or wild plants which can be harvested without damaging the environment.

If heavy metal mordants (chrome, tin, and copper) are used, they should be used following the improved methods outlined in the books by Gill Dalby and Jenny Dean. (See book list) Special care should be maintained in the disposal of waste products. **Wild Colour** by Jenny Dean contains sections on safe disposal. They should not contaminate surface water channels designed to carry rainwater. Alum and iron are relatively safe. You will not be penalised for avoiding heavy metal mordants.

Dye Extracts: there are several suppliers of this type of natural dye, which has become popular in recent years. As well as producing reliable repeatable colours they can be useful for some of the more creative dye techniques such as space dyeing and dye painting.

Vat Dyes: these are mainly used nowadays for obtaining blue from some form of indigo, and can be made with various chemicals or by fermentation.

General: All dye vessels and equipment should be kept specifically for that purpose, always cleaned thoroughly and put away securely after use. Mordants and dyestuffs must be kept in a safe place, out of the reach of children. You should make yourself aware of health and safety regulations relating to the use of dyes and chemicals.

All samples should show innovative use of dyes and could include space-dyeing, dip-dyeing, painting, printing, stencilling, batik, tie-dyeing and over dyeing and other resist techniques. Experiments with dyes on other materials can be interesting.

TEST PIECE

You will be required to design and execute a test piece of your own choice, demonstrating the use of as many relevant techniques as you wish and which you consider will enhance the work. It should be a finished article such as a garment, shawl, jumper or any other item. It can be woven, knitted, crocheted or produced in any other way. You should choose a method that will enhance your dyeing. If you submit more than one item (e.g. a suit) the pieces must relate and match to form a set, in much the same way as items submitted for our National Exhibitions.

You must include a written description of all stages of development and manufacture and details of all the materials used, showing an understanding of the dyes and the suitability of the materials for the finished piece. Your notes should include design sources and include the samples you made leading up to the decision for your final choice. You should describe the finishing process, e.g. setting, blocking and/or pressing as is relevant to your piece.

Guidance Notes

INTRODUCTION

You may be one of those fortunate people who attend a regular class with a good teacher, in which case you will be able to get guidance and tuition appropriate to fulfilling the requirements of the Certificate syllabus. However, if you are working and reading through the syllabus on your own, you may feel

that you are swimming in a vast sea with no visible shore. It is for those of you in the latter category that these guidance notes have been prepared.

In setting out the syllabus it was intended to allow candidates complete freedom of interpretation and avoid the constraints inevitable in more formal courses. It is, therefore, up to you to make sure that the way you work through the syllabus is the one that you will find the most enjoyable and that will give you the most benefit.

GETTING STARTED

First, make sure you know what you want to get out of the Certificate.

Secondly, go through the syllabus and make a programme of work. Your programme does not need to be in the same order as the syllabus and it is often best to start with whatever you feel is easiest. This is not task avoidance! It enables you to start with something you already know at least a little about, and achieving one good sample will give you the encouragement to proceed to the next. By the time you come to the things that you have been dreading, they won't seem so difficult. In your programme, allow plenty of time for holidays, Christmas, for re-doing a sample, even for getting depressed, giving up and starting again.

As part of your overall plan, decide with which samples you want to demonstrate the use of specific dyes or dyeing techniques. Set your own limitations with care. You do not need to present everything in every conceivable manner. In your plan, include how to calculate quantities so that you will be able to produce the appropriate yarn or cloth sample for the chosen end product. Make sure you know the appropriate finishing techniques; washing, pressing. Thirdly, identify those areas in the syllabus that you can work at on your own and those for which you will need tuition.

Fourthly, consider costs. These may include equipment, materials, books, tuition, and its attendant accommodation and travel, visiting exhibitions, mounting your work for assessment and getting it to the assessment venue.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

There are many sources of information to be tapped and much of the information that you need to find is actually quite close to hand.

Books: Reading is essential, not only for the information in the text but also for the lists of suppliers and bibliography for further reading.

Journals: A large amount of information can be gathered painlessly by reading **The Journal for Weavers, Spinners and Dyers** and **Crafts** regularly. Advertisements in these journals will provide names and addresses of suppliers of materials and equipment and teachers holding courses. The classified ads offer opportunities for purchasing second-hand equipment relatively inexpensively. Reviews of books keep one up-to-date with the literature of textiles. American journals give many "recipes" for making items – use them with discretion – they may be just the jumping off point you need but don't rely on them to the exclusion of your own mind and talent.

Talks: Many towns have literary societies and local history societies and talks put on by these will often provide you with the history of textiles, of sheep, of dyeing and dye plants in your area and can provide a theme to work to.

Libraries: Libraries have an enormous amount of information in books, journals, and files and in the heads of their staff. Most library staff love to give information but you must ask and you must be prepared to explain exactly what you want very carefully. Library staffs deal with a very wide variety of queries and your precise query on lichens in Scotland may have followed queries on the Moscow underground or modern dance in Harlem.

Public Libraries should be able to obtain books and journals for you from anywhere in the country and even abroad through the inter-library loan system. Do be prepared to insist on this service if you have a really serious need for a book. In addition, do be prepared for a longish wait.

College, Polytechnic and University Libraries exist for the benefit of the institution and its members but many of them are able to give information to outside enquirers and you may be able to consult books in the library although it is unlikely that you will be able to borrow from such collections.

Special Libraries are those of business firms, research institutes and societies. Again, they exist for the benefit of the institution and its members but many are able to help the serious enquirer.

In your search for information remember that the number of staff in most libraries has been reduced over the last few years and whilst the staff may want to help you they do not always have as much time as they need to do this effectively. Press your enquiry firmly but have patience.

Exhibitions: Notices of exhibitions can be found in the journals mentioned above and in local and national papers. Most museums and galleries have mailing lists and will be glad to add your name. Some museums and galleries make a charge. Don't just stick to textile exhibitions; a painting or a pot may provide just the right stimulus. Exhibitions can be fun, informative and inspirational.

Teachers: There are many practitioners in our three skills who run courses in their homes or studios or who will teach at Guild workshops. These teachers advertise in **The Journal** and in **Crafts** or may be found in the Association's Speakers' List. The cost of courses can vary but if you select the areas where you feel in most need of personal tuition with great care, you will be able to keep expenditure within bounds

Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers: You probably belong to your local Guild already, if not, join as soon as possible and attend as many meetings as possible. Guilds are full of people with vast experience and expertise who are amazingly generous in the help they will give you – do not be shy about asking. Most Guild members will not push themselves forward and often underrate what they have to give.

Your own experience: Working for the Certificate is rather like climbing a ladder with the first rung missing. It is such an effort to get up to the starting point and then surprisingly straightforward to continue. Every so often, you need to pause and look around you. See how the scenery has changed? Or has it? Isn't it just that you see it from a different vantage point? Keep on looking at your work. Evaluate what you have done: if you think your sample should be put to a different use to the one you first intended, say so in your notes. Be self-critical but also say if you are pleased and why, if you made a miscalculation and had a happy accident. It helps the examiner understand your standpoint. If possible put your samples on the wall, stand back and look at them as a stranger might.

Handle them as you might handle yarn or cloth in a shop. Leave them for a day or two and look and feel again.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Many sellers and manufacturers of yarns, dyestuffs, fibres, books and equipment advertise in **The Journal** or in **Crafts** and most supply by mail order. They will generally give helpful advice and will often supply yarn samples at a small cost. Don't feel that just because you live on some far distant island you cannot have access to a wide variety of materials.

PRESENTATION

Presentation is important. It is allocated 20% of the marks (10% for your portfolio of samples and 10% for your test piece). Start thinking about presentation from the moment you start working for the Certificate. Don't rush into large decisions or vast expenditure until you have some feel for the work you are producing. Don't leave it too late. Mounting does take a surprising amount of time. Presentation also includes the finishing of your samples and test piece as well as the way you present them for assessing.

If you live in an area where there is an Art College go along to the degree shows in the summer. Even when not related to textiles you may well get some ideas on presentation methods.

In planning your presentation try to imagine the assessment taking place. There is an assessor for each discipline and an overall moderator. It has become the custom to unpack and lay out all the work in the evening before the assessment day and for the assessors and moderator to go through it all together in a very general way. The following morning work starts in earnest and each assessor concentrates on the work in her/his discipline. The moderator takes an overall view – looking, discussing, and comparing. The largest number of candidates presenting their work for assessment so far has been seventeen, the smallest, one. Obviously the more candidates there are the more time it takes and the more important it is that the assessors can find their way through the work. They need to be sure that all the aspects of the syllabus have been covered.

When deciding on the form of your presentation don't forget to take into account: cost, getting it to and from the assessment, the ease of handling by the assessors and the potential use to, and by, yourself. The assessors should be able to handle all samples and they must not be stuck down on more than one edge. All fabric samples should be a minimum of four inches square, and you must state the fibre used etc. Vary your materials and don't forget to state what they are in your notes. Your notation should be marked and numbered. Make sure that all writing is legible. If you are not happy about your handwriting consider typing. Take care with spelling and grammar. They are irrelevant to your ability as a dyer but mistakes can be a strong irritant and can get between the assessor and the work. - See 'No Second Mortgage'

AT NO TIME NOR IN ANY PLACE SHOULD YOUR NAME BE SHOWN NOR YOUR IDENTITY REVEALED IN PHOTOGRAPHS. It is unwise to mention tutors you have had. One of them may be your assessor!

COLOUR AND DESIGN SOURCES

Some of you will have attended Art College and courses and this section will hardly be applicable to you. There are others, however, who have not had this privilege and who find both design and choosing the colours to use very hard. All too often, the colours used are those readily available. Where there are financial restraints this is, of course, understandable but by experimentation with dyes, a whole new world can open.

Collect photographs, postcards, or magazines with good photographs, particularly those using colours that appeal to you. Select one of these for a project and if only a small area is of interest, either cut it out or mask it off with a paper cut. Try to assess the quantities of colours in percentage terms and use those to create your design. If the subject has particular textural surfaces and other design elements in shape, incorporate these into your work. You will be quite surprised how this can help you to translate into design and generally give you a greater awareness of all round you.

Design makes you look at everyday surroundings in a totally different light; the colour of bricks, old stone walls, lichen on buildings. All these can give you ideas to develop.

TEST PIECE

Obviously, you will want to start thinking about your test piece fairly early on. Make sure that it does demonstrate the requirements given in the syllabus and that it is also a piece of work finished to the highest standards and one you will be proud of ten years hence. Your test piece notes should show design sources and include samples showing how and why you have arrived at your final decision as well as the information detailing the making. Don't be shy of giving full information. A garment may be more easily appreciated if you state the specific occasion on which it will be worn, or a cushion if you describe the room for which it was designed. Photographs may be included in your notebook to good effect. Making up may be done by somebody else but this must be stated in your notes. The assessors are looking at the dyeing and the quality of the design. 50% of the total marks are given for the test piece.

PORTFOLIO OF SAMPLES

Look at your first samples. Are they good enough? Are you proud enough of them to submit them to the assessing eye of experts? Be really hard on yourself and be prepared to discard whatever you think you could improve upon. You do not necessarily have to throw away all the discarded samples. There may be elements you will want to develop in future and they can be mounted in notebooks or files with all the making notes. They will also show the assessor your progress. 50% of the total marks are given for your portfolio of samples.

GETTING DOWN TO IT

It is perhaps more difficult for dyers to know where to begin but you are likely to prefer wool or silk. Maybe you will have a good store of imported dyestuffs or the laurel is just at the appropriate stage to be cut. Start with whatever you feel happiest with. Of the three disciplines it is perhaps dyeing alone that offers the possibility of working to a theme or setting oneself a problem; working to colour sources such as a series of paintings or types of scenery, to demonstrate a colour theory or to carry out a comparative study. When planning your portfolio of dye samples consider that it may be more desirable/useful/interesting to demonstrate a knowledge of how to get the maximum from one or two dyes rather than have a portfolio full of similar shades from a vast range of plants.

Techniques such as using colour modifiers, experimenting with both cold and hot dyeing methods and experimenting with both chemical and natural mordants will often enable you to produce many shades from a single dyestuff. Some colours such as turquoise and a true black are notoriously difficult to obtain from natural dyes and it may be interesting to find ways of obtaining these colours by over-dyeing or using colour modifiers.

Notes for dyeing should include experiments and tests on colour, light and wash fastness. The results of these tests will help you determine the suitability of each dye tested for the project you have in mind. You may then choose to add some comments on your observations and conclusions from your test results, plus some recommendations for the most suitable dyes for different projects and end products.

Dye recipes should be fully described and include percentages. Cold dyes can produce some excellent results. A range of colours in both the purchased and collected-from-nature dyestuff groups will give you a good insight into dyeing, particularly if used on a variety of fibres. Different materials absorb dyes in totally different ways and you can learn a great deal by experimenting in this way as well as 'playing' with exhaust dyes.

Colour-matching to a design source can be really stimulating and often takes you out of a colour 'rut' where you go back again and again to your favourite colours.

Today we are all much more aware of the dangers of heavy metal mordants, although generally the quantities used by hand-dyers are relatively small and of little significance. However, personal safety is also important, and natural dyers should feel free to avoid any substances they do not feel confident in handling safely, especially chrome. There are a number of natural mordants that work well – for example rhubarb leaves for animal fibres and natural sources of tannin such as oak galls and the leaves of sumac (*Rhus*) for vegetable fibres.

The scope for experimentation with dyes is considerable, and many can be successfully applied to a wide range of natural materials such as shells, bone, paper, basketry materials and stones. Interesting effects can be achieved by applying different mordants to different skeins of yarn or lengths of fabric or by using several different modifiers in similar ways. Mordant solutions can also be made from scrap metals such as rusty nails or lengths of copper piping.

Reference. **Wild Colour**, Jenny Dean (See book list)

NO SECOND MORTGAGE

Remember that it is the work that is being assessed, not the packaging. Don't go over the top in terms of time or money. There is no need to take out a second mortgage. However, presentation accounts for 20% of the total marks. Presentation takes into consideration not only the way you mount your work but also how well each sample is finished and your notes presented. A dictionary definition of "to present" states "to bring to the notice of someone else." The aim should be to make the work look as good as it possibly can. Good presentation will not make poor work look good but poor presentation can be an irritant and get between the viewer and work that is otherwise good. A coherent presentation makes a good first impression and first impressions are important. Attention to detail is essential and great care is needed in choosing such things as colours and sizes.

Where does presentation start? It starts right at the beginning with the planning of the individual sample. Whilst the sample must be the very best it is possible to achieve, good notes must be kept as one goes along. The notes must be clear, concise and relevant. They must also be legible in good clear handwriting or typing. They must be near the piece to which they refer. Although it may not always be possible to have all one's paperwork with the dyed sample, it is essential that the reader/assessor can find it easily.

Think in terms of getting your work to the assessment, of how the assessors will be able to handle it and of any future use to which it is likely to be put. Negotiating large boards on a windy day can make travelling difficult. Even A2 is awkward to carry but is excellent for any kind of teaching or display. If it is possible to put eyelets in the corners of boards, it makes them easy to hang. The colour of the board can make a piece of work sparkle or it can make it look dowdy.

Individual items can be rolled round tubes. Large ones from the centre of carpet rolls are often available at local carpet shops for the price of a nice smile. The cost of saw blades for cutting them to the right length is somewhat greater.

An advantage of lever-arch files is that sheets of paper and/or card can be filed together. A problem with plastic pockets of any sort is that the work cannot be handled and the back of a weaving sample cannot be seen without removing the whole thing from the pocket. Assessing is hard physical work and it is worth

remembering that an assessor is not going to look too kindly on yet another thing to be opened, removed and replaced. Files should not be too heavy to handle comfortably. It may prove useful to ask a friend to go through your presentation to see if she/he can follow your references.

Boards, files and binders; however the work has been mounted it has to arrive at the assessment point in as good a condition as possible. The outside packaging is worth spending time, thought and money on. Reinforcing corners can be obtained for boards. Good strong boxes (wine boxes are very sturdy) can be found at supermarkets, again for the price of a smile. Cardboard is often there for the asking from cycle and motorcycle shops. Firmly tied string around the package gives anyone handling it something to hold on to and thus prevents accidental dropping, bumping or throwing. Art shops and stationer's shops (and the catalogues that they both produce) are great sources of ideas some of which can be implemented much more cheaply and interestingly with imagination.

The **check list** on the following page is not meant to indicate how many dyes etc you should use, but only to help you ensure that you cover the syllabus.

Book List

This is a list of books that you may find helpful. It is by no means a comprehensive list of the books that are available nor is it intended to restrict your choice of reading. The books marked **OoP** are out of print. However, many can be found in Guild libraries or in the personal libraries of Guild members. They can also be obtained through the inter-library loan service, or tracked down via the internet; www.abebooks.co.uk and www.amazon.co.uk are both good places to start.

BOOKS FOR DYEING

A Dyer's Garden
Interweave Press
1-883010-07-1

Rita Buchanan

Colours From Nature
The Author
0953083527

Jenny Dean

Dye Plants and Dyeing
A & C Black
1-871569-74-5

John & Margaret Cannon

Lichens for vegetable dyeing
Studio Vista **OoP**
0-289-70288-7

Eileen Bolton

Mushrooms for Color
Mad River Press Inc. **OoP**
0-913664-05-7

Miriam C. Rice

Natural Dyes
Archetype Publications, London
190498200x

Dominique Cardon

Natural Dyes
British Museum Press
0-7141-2565-2

Gwen Fereday

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| Natural Dyes, Fast or Fugitive
Haldane, Fife, Scotland
0-948020-00-8 | Gill Dalby |
| Natural Dyeing without Chemicals
The Author
0-9530835-0-0 | Jenny Dean |
| Shibori
Kondansha International Ltd
4-7700-2399-5 | Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada
Mary Kellog Rice
Jane Barton |
| The Art and Craft of Natural Dyeing
University of Tennessee Press
087049-670-0 | Jim Liles |
| The Ashford Book of Dyeing
Batsford
0-7134-7257-X | Ann Milner |
| The Craft of Natural Dyeing
Search Press
0-85532-744-8 | Jenny Dean |
| The Use of Vegetable Dyes
Reeves/Dryad
0-8521-9654-7 | Violetta Thurston |
| Traditional Scottish Dyes
Canongate Books Ltd.
0-86241-036-3
0-86241-108-4 | Jean Fraser |
| Vegetable Dyeing
David & Charles
0-7153-6652-1 | Alma Lesch |
| Wild Colour
Mitchell Beazley
1-84000-084-8 | Jenny Dean |

