



General Certificate of Education

Design and Technology: Product Design (Textiles) 2561

TEXT4 Design & Manufacture Practice
(Coursework)

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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General

It was anticipated that this new, challenging specification would prove popular and attract a talented cohort of creative candidates. The interpretation of the specification, the standard of work, the presentation of design folders and the application of the assessment criteria has in general been impressive across the ability range.

At best the work has been innovative and met the assessment criteria in original and exciting ways. A disappointing aspect that must be addressed in the future is the award of high marks to candidates who have done little more than copy existing special occasion dress designs. They research manufacture often through producing a mock up and then make up a garment that may well look sophisticated but lacks originality, complexity and often just replicates the commercial pattern

Over the year centres have made good use of the coursework advisers who have answered a wide range of enquiries on coursework tasks. They are to be encouraged to seek further advice on development issues.

Administration

There were many new centres and moderators reported that administration procedures were adhered to effectively with mark sheets and folders arriving promptly so that the process could begin on time.

In general, centres' administration was excellent, following the instructions correctly.

It was particularly helpful when:

- Centre Mark Sheets arrived early;
- centres with fifteen or fewer candidates sent the folders of all of their candidates with the Centre Mark Sheets to the moderator before the deadline date;
- the sample requested from the moderator arrived promptly;
- schools gave helpful information re parking, access and travel to centres;
- there were no interruptions during the moderation visit;
- centres who required a visit set out the work accordingly;

Candidate Record Forms (CRFs)

The teachers supporting statements on the Candidate Record Form were generally excellent and a strong feature of centre assessments. Candidates had also taken this task very seriously and if supporting evidence was not on the CRF they identified precisely where it could be found. Annotation provided by the teacher was particularly helpful when it:

- identified individual help given beyond that of the teaching group as a whole;
- commented on any aspect of the work, which could not be seen by the moderator;
- referenced how candidates had used processes, methods and investigations;

Criterion 1 Context and Objectives

It was encouraging to see that many candidates had explored a wide range of modern, exciting contexts and worked to very individual design briefs. Considering teachers and candidates were not familiar with this criterion it was very well covered with evidence of being met through the CRF and in the design portfolio. Many candidates grasped this criterion very well and provided interesting contexts showing perceptive understanding. It was helpful when the objectives of the activity were clearly stated. Candidates working at the lower levels, as expected, lacked some focus and depth, though most still understood what was expected of them.

Criterion 2 Plan of Action and Clarification of Problem

Planning was generally well done though not all candidates produced a detailed and realistic plan of action at the start of the work and many did it retrospectively. However, excellent planning occurred throughout the process with evidence of detailed planning of research activities, development work and the making activity.

Candidates are expected to use an extensive range of appropriate, investigative techniques when carrying out research, though it is not a requirement to present the material in the folders. It appeared that the most able confidently omitted to present the research aspects spending the bulk of their time focused on analysis and development of solutions. This showed a maturity and excellent practice. The majority of candidates preferred to go for edited highlights with very few candidates continuing to present copious amounts of irrelevant material. However, there are still some candidates that are finding it difficult to pull away from page after page of existing products taken from fashion magazines with very little analysis of them.

As always the most able showed very perceptive analysis of information and went on to produce comprehensive, well-reasoned and explained design specifications. Candidates working at lower levels tended to list the research they had carried out failing to analyse it to any depth and the resulting specifications were not a reflection of information gleaned. They often appeared from nowhere and merely described the garment they had decided to make from a commercial pattern.

Criterion 3 Development of Design Proposal

It is this criterion that presents the greatest concern being the one that has been marked least accurately. At A2 level candidates are required to produce a comprehensive and imaginative range of feasible ideas resulting in the achievement of a sophisticated and elegant solution. Teachers are often asking very high marks for ideas even when they have been copied from existing designs usually from commercial pattern catalogues or fashion magazines. Some candidates are proficient in copying existing garments and then adding pattern and colour to make them look exceptionally appealing. They are often presented to a very high standard using professional graphic techniques. There was a lack of any real development in many of these candidates work. Often initial ideas were drawn, descriptive comments made and then the final designs with a slight variation from the original sketch appeared. Sometimes they were little more than an adapted commercial pattern for a strapless dress. There was some good creative sampling in the folders but very often it was not evaluated or used in the final product, an opportunity to expand and develop their work into something original being missed.

In many cases the style and shape of a garment is copied directly from a commercial pattern and often the only sign of originality is a decorative motif. In some instances the candidate goes through a folder of pretence and then during the final stage of development declares they have found a perfect matching commercial pattern. Many fail to declare where the pattern or template has come from trying to disguise the fact they have relied heavily on commercial designs. What has been presented and often to a high standard is in fact a research project. As the commercial pattern has been tried and tested in industry and the instructions are very clear to follow these candidates are making near perfect garments. They have spent little time developing an original outcome so have the time to spend on making with accuracy and finish. Teachers know this is the approach candidates have taken and yet are unfairly awarding them top band marks.

Candidate who are awarded top band marks will have set out with an inspirational context and be intent on designing an original and hopefully innovative, quality textile product. They will take inspiration from a wide range of sources – it could be the work of a famous designer or artist, an inspirational theme, or perhaps designs from other cultures or eras from where they will get ideas for product structure, shape, texture, pattern and colour. They will design with flair to create something exciting and new for their client or target market. They will not go directly to modern day fashions and replicate what is already available in the stores. In order to achieve these imaginative ideas they will exploring and experiment with different construction methods, proportions, materials and methods of creating special effects with fabric, thread and colour. They will not produce samples of techniques they have already established or have no intention of using. They will not produce sheets of glossy magazine cuttings, stain removal samples, pages of manufacturing methods in industry or health and safety issues. They are too busy developing the most effective way to design and produce their work often using modern fabrics, techniques and technologies. Many made excellent use of modern, creative techniques, sublimation printers, laser cutters and computerized sewing machines. They fully explain the design decisions made as work progresses and they are very open and honest about modifications and improvements. They show clearly where the pattern or template has come from and how it has developed. There is no pretence or jumping through hoops.

Criterion 4 Manufacture/Modelling

A strength of this year's entry was the quality of making with a high percentage of candidates using appropriate methods, technologies and materials and using a range of skills that demonstrated high levels of accuracy and finish.

There was an encouraging increase in the number of candidates not making special occasion dresses. The variety of textile products in our world is vast and the opportunities for candidates to develop original products in this field are enormous and yet for many the creativity is limited to special occasion dresses. Some of the more exciting work seen has involved the design of Rock Festival wear, educational products, men's fashion wear, new style riding jackets for equestrian events, Lulu Guinness style bags, kites, sports holdalls, musical instrument carrying bags and home furnishings with a difference.

It is unnecessary for candidates to present sheets of research into industrial practices, quality assurance and health and safety in attempt to prove they have met this criterion. Evidence can be submitted in the form of teacher annotation, planning documents that apply industrial practice, health and safety considerations and quality checks can be included in plans for making, evaluation reports and through teacher annotation.

Criterion 5 Conclusions, Evaluations and Recommendations

Evidence of testing, analysis and evaluation has been evident throughout the design process and most candidates produced a summative report on the success of the made outcome. The most able seem to address the criteria in full as they include comprehensive testing as the work develops. The focus should be on evaluating the design aspects and final outcome against the original specification not on the process and how well the project went. The opinion of others appears to be sought more often when the product has been made and candidates generally offer suggestions for modifications and improvements.

Criterion 6 Communication and Presentation

Textile candidates appear to excel at meeting this criterion not just because they present their work originally, with flair but also because they choose appropriate methods to communicate their thinking. On some occasions this criteria was incorrectly marked with candidates being rewarded for work that was over decorated often with ribbon, trims and components such as beads and sequins, work was double mounted and the project presented on heavy expensive card. This was wasteful and inappropriate.

A variety of methods were used by candidates to present their work: A3 plastic flip folders and sketchbooks proved most popular though some had used Windows Power Point presentations. A few candidates had used A2 folders though these presented some problems with posting and packaging

A3 plastic flip folders are ideal and used to good effect. They had an influence upon the quantity of pages selected and presented for moderation. It is unnecessary for candidates to provide two, 40 page folders of evidence.

There has been an increase in the over decorating of design sheets which is a pity as it often deters from quality design work and unnecessarily extends the number of sheets required. Although photographic evidence in folders is not an AQA requirement there was excellent use of photographs with many images included during the development stage and in a making diary.

Candidates performed well when:

- they used appropriate technical design and textiles technology language;
- complex ideas were expressed fluently by using the most appropriate materials, techniques and media;
- techniques used by textile designers were employed;
- their thoughts were shown in a structured and relevant way;
- there were few errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling;
- available software, equipment and machinery showed appropriate use of CAD and CAM;
- design programs were used to reduce time spent on such activities as exploring different colour ways;

Applying the Standard

- the majority of centres have referred to AQA exemplar materials when applying the standard and this has proved successful;
- some centres are marking low ability candidates severely;
- in some cases particularly when ball gowns or wedding dresses were designed there was a misinterpretation of the assessment criterion 3 when candidates were over rewarded for work that lacked originality;

Teachers approached this new specification with enthusiasm and appeared to have done a great deal of planning prior to the course in order to achieve this level of success. Criterion 3 and 5 were the least accurately assessed and this needs addressing next year.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Please see the following link:

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>