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ASSESSMENT and QUALIFICATIONS ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Design and Technology (Textiles Technology) 3547/C

3547/C Coursework

Report on the Examination

2008 examination - June series

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General Comments

Key Features

- Once again this specification has achieved an improved quality of work across all mark ranges, with even the least able producing work that met the assessment criteria well. Most moderators reported seeing some work that was stunning and clearly off the scale.

- The majority of centres are assessing the design component accurately, rewarding candidates with the grades they deserve however there was an increase in the number of teachers pushing the marks up to just within tolerance.

- New centres had the most difficulty recognising the standard, with some under rewarding as well as others being too lenient. In some schools there is a shortage of specialist teachers with many candidates being taught by several teachers some of which were non specialists.

- The overall feeling from moderators this year was that textiles teachers are comfortable with the moderation process, are marking generously but within tolerance and folders are focused with well-made products as the outcome.

- There has been an increase in the number of candidates making ball gowns from un-adapted commercial patterns and with no significant decorative features.

- Internal standardising is excellent with very few centres getting the rank order wrong.

Coursework - Design Briefs

Moderator's have reported that candidates are working to a much higher standard of design brief with very few being inappropriate starting points. It has been good to see an increase in the number of recycling projects and also in the production of exciting outcomes such as textile clocks and other products with LED light and sound features.

There continues to be an increase in the number of students from different cultural backgrounds, with many having English as their second language. These candidates need careful guidance as to their choice of product. Many candidates had used decorative techniques that are well developed in their culture e.g. weaving, cross stitch, satin stitch. It is a good idea to incorporate these skills but other techniques need to be used in order to meet the level of demand required at GCSE level, e.g. a basic apron shape, with cross stitch decoration, with no fastening or other technique involved is insufficient to meet the criteria at the highest levels.

Most popular products:

- Teenage fashion garments including dresses, fashion tops, skirts and trousers
- Products for children including fashion garments, educational toys, and products for the babies room
- Fashion accessories including bags and hats
- Home furnishing products particularly wall hangings, clocks and cushions.

Less successful products
Centres do need to be aware of over valuing simple products. They maybe manufacturing marketable products but they are not worthy of the top grades.

- Ball gowns
- Aprons
- Scarves, ties, fleece hats and sarongs
- Duvet covers and throws
- Screens, giant play mats and bean bags

Used a wide variety of appropriate sources to gather relevant research information;

- Planning research is more common and research is done well. Few candidates are producing irrelevant research.
- Most are selecting to research sources that will inspire original designing. Some excellent research into existing products and comparative shops has been seen.
- The most able candidates are making it clear how the mood board has inspired them.
- There have been fewer meaningless questionnaires and pages of fabric testing.

Analyzed the task and the research material logically, thoroughly and effectively;

- This was a weak spot even from the most able candidates. There appears to be an increase in the number that only produce thought showers to illustrate analysis. And they offer no extended pieces of writing which is what you would expect from the most able. Some are not showing a clear understanding and often there was little evidence that the analysis had influenced the specifications.
- Research material was often described rather than analysed.

Produced a detailed specification, which focuses closely on the analysis;

- Textile students generally produce excellent specifications at relevant points throughout the coursework. The most helpful specifications have proved to be design, fabric, product and manufacturing.
- Some candidates fail to make use of these specifications when evaluating their designs

Produced a wide range of distinct proposals, which satisfy the specification;

- There appeared to have been an increase in the number of centres who have directed candidates to produce four to six superficial ideas and then without any development work present the final design.
- Moderators were looking for quality rather than quantity. They reported seeing some free flowing, creative thinking from a number of centres – nearly always done in the form of quick, freehand sketches.
- Ideas need to be feasible and varied to gain the higher marks. This was the strongest part of many folders with both creativity and originality evident.
- The more able candidates had thoroughly annotated the ideas and their thinking was clear.
- In some cases neat drawings were more commonly seen rather than creative and efficient designing. Often they lack originality and challenge but centres are awarding the highest grades just because they have filled two design sheets of ideas.
- The complexity of the product should be taken into account - in some cases candidates who only presented four or five very detailed ideas often gained the highest grades.
- Only the very able candidates summarised and evaluated their ideas giving clear information on why one or more might be developed further.

Used one or more of their proposals and relevant knowledge of techniques, manufacturing and working characteristics to develop a derailed and coherent design solution;

- Development work was again an improved area in the folders and a broad range of work was seen. However it is still a significant weak area with many candidates being encouraged to produce samples whether or not they are relevant to the product being designed.
- Candidates need to be taught how to 'think on paper'. This should include written pieces, and annotated sketches to show how they could develop an idea. The rule 'why?' for each step in their thinking should stimulate their response on paper. Teachers need to have a clear understanding of the meaning of 'development' themselves.
- The use of ICT has increased and improved this year, e.g. use of drawing software such as Speed step and Fittingly sew to aid development of ideas has been exemplary in some centres. Other web sites such as wild ginger have proved useful. Laser cutters and sublimation printers have been used to good effect.
- Many candidates show excellent practice producing toiles and other prototypes as part of testing and development.
- Many candidates made their own paper patterns, others modified commercial patterns. Some candidates failed to describe these developments and teachers had failed to annotate to explain, thus causing difficulties for moderators.
- Photographs are very useful to get a feel for the product and how it has developed. Many candidates produced a photographic diary showing how their product had developed.

Produced a correct sequence of activities, which shows where, why and how practical production decisions were made;

- Most candidates are providing excellent production planning charts and flow diagrams which provide evidence of modifications, industrial practice, quality control and health and safety issues.
- In some cases there was little evidence in the folder to support the modification and working errors criteria and the moderation process relied on teacher annotation. More able candidates had undertaken some testing as an integral part of the development before commencing the final product and had clear evidence of modifications.
- Many candidates have included a photographic journal showing how they made their product. This provided excellent evidence as well as feeding into the modification assessment criteria.

Tested, objectively evaluated and effectively modified their work throughout the process as appropriate;

- The testing and evaluating of the final outcome was generally done very well however some gave detailed evaluation of the project process rather than an analysis of the product they have made.
- Candidates who compared their product with a similar bought one impressed the moderators with their level of thinking.
- The use of real consumer trials was found in some folders with independent feedback provided by potential users. Some excellent questionnaires surveying public opinion on the product were seen with the most able suggesting modifications for future products.
- Very few candidates continue to test fabrics in order to establish what they already know from the fabric specification.
- Many candidates are now given the opportunity to test their products on the catwalk with centres organising fashion shows.

- Some candidates had made excellent use of interviewing experts such as designers, parents and teachers.

Selected and skilfully used a wide range of communication, graphical and ICT skills, which have helped to clarify their thinking and are sufficient to convey ideas to themselves and others effectively and precisely;

- Most candidates presented their work superbly, in a way that communicated well to a third party Candidates should be rewarded for communicating their thinking in an appropriate way.
- Most teachers encourage candidates to use ICT, which is relevant to Design and Technology and make good use of the facilities available to them.

Use of formats

- This year there was excellent use of formats based on those used in industry and they proved to be particularly useful in the later stages of the project. However candidates in several centres were provided with formats for every page. This was very unwise as it restricted individual, creative designing and it became difficult to establish what the work of the student was from the work of the teacher.
- Formats are particularly useful as a means of recording information and often give a very clear picture of decisions reached. Production Records, Manufacturing Specifications and Testing charts all helped students to reflect industrial practice, Quality Assurance, Quality Control, Risks Assessments and they often showed clearly the modifications made to their products.

They have provided evidence that they have considered and taken into account relevant issues, industrial practices and systems and control.

- Industrial aspects and wider issues were integrated throughout folder and influenced the design process for many candidates. This is a real strength of this specification
- This was particularly well done where the design brief focused on Fairtrade market area, or environmental issues
- This aspect is still seen by some centres as a “bolt on” element of the folder, rather than an integral part of the design process. Candidates should not be presenting information copied from books and not related directly to the product they are designing.

Presentation of coursework

- The presentation of design folders as always has been outstanding and demonstrates a professional approach to communicating all aspects of designing. Design folio presentation was excellent in most cases even from the lowest ability candidates.
- Candidates should avoid presenting all of the work on heavy, expensive card.

Quality of written communication

- This criteria was generally assessed well.

- Where centres had encouraged extended writing, for instance, as part of the analysis or as a formal evaluation report, moderators reported the ease at which candidates could gain a valuable number of additional marks. Word processed reports were found in many of the best examples.

TEXTILE PRODUCT OUTCOMES

Making

- The making component in the centres visited was less well assessed than the design process. Where adjustments were made they tended to be due to teachers over-valuing pupils' practical outcomes. High marks were awarded for work that lacked complexity and challenge.
- Most candidates are working with a wide range of textile materials and techniques at an impressive standard, many candidates showing an awareness of industrial practice, neat finishes often seen with use of overlocker. In contrast some candidates' work lacks sufficient finish to gain marks as awarded by the centre.
- There was an improved standard of finish overall though in some centres this was still a major weakness for many candidates.
- In some cases the level of skill and demand was not high enough for candidates to be awarded the highest grades no matter how perfect the quality of their end product.
- Few candidates made up commercial patterns without making modifications. Many candidates record the modifications they make on production plans and this provides excellent evidence of their thinking.
- Unfortunately there is a lack of CAM facilities in some centres though candidates are still showing their awareness of the availability of this technology in industry. Sublimation printing was used well.

Administration

There was an overall improvement in administration efficiency this year. Teachers had used the Instruction Booklet sent by AQA to the schools Examination Officers very well.

Areas of concern continue to be

- Teacher annotation. This is vital when the making component has been given a high grade and the evidence is not there to see. Where candidates are working independently or are given lots of help or where there are special circumstances, it would benefit their candidates if teachers write a brief statement of explanation.
- In many cases centres have not defined any grades with H,M,L.
- It is essential to attach the Candidate Record Forms to each candidates work. In some cases CRF's were sent separately and not clipped to the folders.
- A few teachers still not following basic instructions for the administrative work. Some are still using AL instead of LA. This is unhelpful to the moderator and is not following the correct AQA procedure.
- Where internal standardisation was necessary, it was generally done accurately. Rank order was spot on for most centres, suggesting that internal standardisation is taking place.
- Teacher must remember when they have 20 or less candidates they must send all the design work.

- Candidates should avoid using treasury tags when the weight of samples often causes the portfolio to fall apart and work becomes damaged or lost. The thin, lightweight plastic folders used by the majority of centres are perfect for presentation purposes. Not only do they restrict the candidate to the number of pages they also protect the work and keep it secure.
- Moderators were very well received during the visits, and centres had usually gone to some length to provide a suitable location and laid the work out well for moderators.