AQA

ASSESSMENT and

QUALIFICATIONS

ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Design and Technology
(Textiles Technology) Full Course
3547

Report on the Examination

2007 examination – June series

Coursework

2007 has proved to be a successful year for this specification with the majority of centres assessing the design component accurately rewarding candidates with the grades they deserved.

Teachers who had attended one of the Autumn Teachers' Meetings responded positively to the advice given and encouraged candidates to produce concise design folders. However, some new centres had not achieved a satisfactory balance between the designing and making components, giving too much importance to the creation of a design folder at the expense of the higher weighted making.

Though moderators have seen some stunning work this year it will also be remembered for the administration errors made by centres, which were more numerous than in previous series.

Coursework – Design Briefs

Moderators have reported that candidates are working to a much higher standard of design brief with very few having inappropriate starting points. There has been an increase in the number of candidates entered that come from different cultural backgrounds, with many having English as their second language. These candidates need careful guidance as to their choice of product. Many such candidates had used decorative techniques that are well developed in their culture, such as weaving, tapestry long stitch, hand embroidery – satin stitch. This is wise, but other techniques need to be incorporated in order to offer the variety and to meet the level of demand required at GCSE level. For example, a woven square with a backing fabric made into a cushion with no fastening or other technique involved is insufficient to meet the criteria at the highest levels.

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. Problems appear to have arisen in centres where there are staffing issues.

Most popular products

There was an equal split between fashion and other textile products.

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

Less successful products

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

- Ball gowns
- Scarves, ties, fleece hats and sarongs
- Duvet covers and throws
- Giant play mats and floor cushions

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

Teachers understand that candidates need to be taught how to decide on what to research, how to research, how to summarize research, how to cut down on the time given to research and how to include prior knowledge rather than carrying out a research activity for which they already have the information.

- Planning research is more common.
- They are selecting to research sources that will inspire original designing. Some excellent research into existing products and comparative shops has been seen.
- In a few centres candidates are unwisely producing four and five pages of mood boards. They need to select only the very best, inspiring images.
- The most able candidates are showing – 'How my mood board has inspired me'.
- There has been an increase in the number of questionnaires completed, which often take three to six pages to show the results. Superficial comments from friends often produced worthless data. Carrying out public surveys at this early stage is not worthwhile because they establish little that the candidate does not already know and in many cases they are completed on mass by the candidate themselves. It is better to spend the time on more worthwhile activities that feed into the design process.

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

- There appears to be a trend towards producing thought showers that illustrate analysis. The most able candidates should be producing extended pieces of writing. 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. The simple question "How is this relevant to my work and what can I learn from it?" should be applied to all research material and this would have aided many candidates.

Produced a detailed specification, which focuses closely on the analysis

- 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

- 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, again, the strongest part of many folders with both creativity and originality evident. However, some centres appeared to have directed candidates to produce four to six superficial ideas and had over rewarded this achievement.
- A small number of candidates were being over-rewarded for ideas which had been copied from existing products. Whilst it is expected that many candidates will draw ideas that closely resemble existing products, it is vital that this is clearly indicated in the design folder or in the candidate declaration when it has been the case. In some instances candidates were being over-rewarded for work that was blatantly copied from other sources.
- Some candidates had stuck pictures of the source product onto the ideas sheet then continued with their own ideas. This was seen as an excellent strategy.
- One important issue for candidates is whether a third party can assess the feasibility of the ideas. Whilst the more able candidates had often thoroughly annotated the ideas, too often

superficial single view sketches were submitted with no indication of the materials and constructions that could be used.

- 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.
- Higher-level candidates summarised and evaluated their ideas giving clear information on why one or more might be developed further. Often more than one idea had been substantially developed and both the generation and development was one continual section within the folder. Once again, this is closer to commercial practice than the artificial divisions more often seen.

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

- This is has now been recognized as a very important part of the design folder and a broad range of work was seen. Some candidates are still being encouraged to "hoop-jump" the assessment criteria in a linear manner. It is important to recognise that the development stage should represent an influential part of the assessment process.
- Candidates need to be taught how to 'think on paper'. This should include showing them how to annotate 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.
- Once again, some candidates are undertaking little real development of their ideas and are simply redrawing one of their initial ideas as a design proposal. It is expected that alternatives are considered and design details explored in some depth.
- 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.
- It appears that some candidates are being advised not to mention where the pattern template has come from, with some tracing a commercial pattern and pretending they have developed it themselves. Teachers are reminded that there is no problem regarding the use of commercial patterns. It is similar to the way industry uses blocks. However, the most able candidates will have come up with an original design and will be using the commercial pattern as a block to aid them in the production of a pattern to meet their requirements.
- Sample decorative techniques which have obviously been done as class activities often have little or no relevance to the proposed product.
- 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.
- Construction samples are presented, though these are often testing techniques rather than actual development of the product
- Many candidates show excellent practice, producing prototypes as part of testing and development
- Photographs are very useful to get a feel for the product and how it has developed. It does assist in making final judgments on the design work when you can see the outcome.

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

- Candidates are producing excellent production planning charts which provide evidence of modifications, industrial practice, quality control and health and safety issues. These charts make the candidates' thinking very clear and bring about an improvement in the final product evaluation.
- 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.
- Flow charts were often used and this relates to industrial practices. More able candidates were able to indicate the Quality Assurance / Quality Control checks that would take place at various points and the action that would be taken.
- Some candidates had simply listed the quality assurance and quality control measures they would take throughout their work. This was often no more complicated than tacking parts together prior to machine stitching or pressing fabric. Moderators were looking for an application of QA/QC in the candidate's making as well as a design folder exercise and sought evidence in many areas, e.g. planning, evaluations etc.

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

- This was a weak area for some candidates. Evaluation evidence should be found throughout the design folder in ongoing annotation. Some candidates drew attention to this by highlighting their evaluation comments wherever they appeared in the folder. This was often helpful to moderators. Many candidates offered only a superficial final report of just a few sentences.
- Centres often appeared to be encouraging a detailed evaluation of the process when it is the evaluation of the product which is the most important aspect.
- In general, not enough time had been allowed for this part of the design component. By contrast, it was clear that some centres had provided a great deal of guidance and support for this work. Proformas were occasionally used to good effect with checklists linked to the specification criteria found in the better examples.
- Candidates who compared their product with a similar bought product impressed the moderators with their level of thinking.
- The use of real consumer trials were 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 candidates suggesting modifications for future products
- Some centre's candidates are still testing fabrics irrelevantly with no explanation of why they are doing it and what they hope to establish that is not already known from the fabric specification.
- Many candidates are now given the opportunity to test their products on the catwalk, with centres organising fashion shows.
- Many candidates now include advice to the factory production planner in their reports. This shows excellent awareness of industrial practice.
- Some candidates had made excellent use of interviewing experts such as designers, parents, teachers etcetera.

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

- Teachers should remember that this assessment criteria does not just relate to the use of ICT and the quality of presentation of the folder. 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.
- The use of ICT varied considerably from one centre to another.
- Good ICT needs to be more than mere word-processing. It is better for candidates to show expertise in-depth using a limited number of packages, rather than trying to use a wide variety of ICT in a shallow and superficial manner. Some centres still allowed their candidates to waste time producing 'nice' looking work that lacked any real depth and content.
- Some CAD seen was not relevant to the brief, and this is not used effectively in the majority of centres. It was common to see a design 'drawn' then shown in different colours, irrespective of the specification.

Use of formats

- Again 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 two centres were provided with formats for every page. This was very unwise as it restricted individual, creative designing.
- Formats for recording can speed things up which allows more time for challenging aspects such as development.
- Many fashion candidates developed a body shape which they used very effectively as an underlay for their garment designs.
- 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.

Camera use

- Excellent use was made of the digital camera for recording development work as well as testing.
- Some used it as part of a short Power Point Presentation promoting their product

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.
- There is still a tendency for some centres to encourage candidates to include large amounts of copied material. This is a waste of time and has no value.
- 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.

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.
- There are too many candidates who leave all sorts of unnecessary work in folders including mock examination papers, preparation sheets and other general syllabus notes/work for textiles. The moderator has to check these sheets in case there is something of value and it wastes their time.
- There is still a tendency for some centres to encourage use of over-elaborate titles and borders and to over-reward this section. However, this was a reduction of this in comparison with last year. There were numerous candidates who demonstrated a range of very high quality communication skills.
- Centres have generally discouraged time-wasting activities such as colouring the background of design sheets, decorating with ribbon, braid and stick on motifs in favour of generally clear communication. Higher-level skills should be found in some sections of the folder but it is not expected that every sheet is presented as a pristine end product.

Quality of written communication

- It appeared that many centres had responded to advice regarding the importance of this assessment.
- 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

- Moderators reported some teachers are still over rewarding made outcomes that lack challenge as well as accuracy and finish.
- Some very technical made outcomes were seen. Very 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
- Made outcomes – overall candidates worked 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 lacked sufficient finish to gain marks as awarded by the centre.
- Unfortunately there is a lack of CAM facilities in some centres, although candidates are still showing their awareness of the availability of this technology in industry.
- The practical outcomes in centres visited revealed that the making process was less well assessed than the design process and occasionally over-valued. High marks were awarded for work that lacked complexity and challenge.
- There was an improved standard of finish overall, although in some centres this was still an area of weakness.
- 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. They would benefit from teacher advice in this area.

Administration

Teachers must be given the Instruction Booklet sent by AQA to centres' Examination Officers. Every moderator reported that up to 75% of schools in their allocation had failed to follow one or more of the procedures. This hampered the smooth running of the moderation procedure.
The following were key areas of concern

- Work was not always sent by return of post which is essential if moderation is to be completed in the allocated time slot.
- There was major concern expressed this year over the completion of candidate record forms. Many Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) had to be returned to centres because either teachers or candidates had not signed them.
- Candidate Record Forms were not completed correctly – in many cases the marks on these forms did not correspond to the marks on the Centre Mark Sheets
- Teacher annotation 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.
- Where teacher annotation was given it was extremely helpful to moderators, as was the inclusion of photographs of finished practical work, or work in progress.
- There are still centres who just copy out the assessment criteria which are not very helpful.
- In many cases centres have not defined any grades with H,M,L.
- It is essential to attach the CRFs to each candidate's work. In some cases CRFs 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 twenty or fewer candidates they must send all of the design work to the moderator with the Centre Mark List by 5 May.
- Folders must be dispatched in Rank Order from the lowest to the highest with the lowest mark on top not in candidate number order. This is the same order for laying out the made outcomes.
- 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, but they also protect the work and keep it secure.
- Slide Binders often came off the folders in the post and were expected to hold in excess of forty pages in some cases.
- During moderator visits all of the made products should be labelled with the candidates details and the work presented in rank order.
- 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. In a few cases inappropriate rooms had been used. Whilst the moderators accept the pressure on rooms it is not essential to have the work displayed within a DT room.
- Some centres had included all of the development work, toiles, models, test pieces etcetera and this was found to be very helpful for moderators who could re-check, for example, the development mark. Where centres had disposed of such material the assessment often relied entirely on the candidate to record such details in their folder.

- Matrix errors were commonly found within the samples and again, this can affect a lot of candidates if unchecked. It is strongly recommended that the checking and recording of the matrix mark is a two person operation to avoid mistakes. This was surprising as centres had access to the matrix programme on the CD-rom provided by AQA.

Conclusion

This Design and Technology specification goes from strength to strength. Our young textile designers and their teachers continue to work hard to ensure this success. We have benefited from the increase in the availability of exciting, textured fabrics, components and the wide range of textile products in our shops. With a focus on improved development of innovative designing by the candidates and improved efficiency in administration by centres this specification will reach new heights in 2007.