



General Certificate of Secondary Education

*Design and Technology
(Textiles Technology) Short Course
3557H*

Report on the Examination

2007 examination – June series

Short Course Higher Tier

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General Comments

Candidates used the theme as inspiration for a wide variety of products; being allowed a free choice did not appear to have had any detrimental effect on candidates' performance. Examiners were, at times, disappointed with the results as it seemed that many candidates had not researched the topics given on the Preparation Sheet thoroughly and this lack of preparation affected performance in a number of questions. Basic knowledge of fabric properties and construction was surprisingly lacking in the answers given to some questions. It would appear that many candidates do not use knowledge and experience gained in coursework to help them when answering questions requiring knowledge of manufacturing processes.

Many examiners reported having awarded some very low marks, more so than in previous years, suggesting that some centres had incorrectly entered candidates for Higher Tier papers. However, most candidates responded well, attempting all of the questions, and producing some very original design ideas. A wide variety of products was seen across all four papers; there were many novel designs, practical and otherwise, using the theme in imaginative ways. There were also many predictable designs such as shorts, bags and cushions made from cut down denim jeans, and some inappropriate use of components, e.g. sweet wrappers, old CDs, plastic bottles. A minority of candidates seemed to lose sight of the fact that this is a textiles examination, producing designs made completely from metal, plastics and card.

Although the majority of candidates understand the importance of showing colour as opposed to simply labelling it, there are still some candidates who do not use coloured pencils, even though it is stated on the front cover of the paper that this is necessary. Full colour is an important feature in the presentation of the final design.

There are still concerns that some centres are teaching to the Preparation Sheet only, and not to the specification as a whole; this does not help candidates achieve high marks on papers which are designed to test broad knowledge and understanding of textiles technology. Many candidates also rely far too heavily on Preparation Sheet images when presenting their ideas for the design question; centres are reminded that the Preparation Sheet should be regarded as a starting point, and that candidates are expected to research beyond what has been presented to them as inspiration.

Short Course Higher Tier

Question 1

- (a) As with the Full Course paper, many responses were about recycling fabrics, especially denim, to make new items, but few candidates described how they were to be used in the new products.
Answers were generally disappointing, especially since the Preparation Sheet gave ample opportunity for candidates to be well prepared. Where information had been copied information directly from the Preparation Sheet the higher marks were not awarded. Candidates should be encouraged to conduct personal research using this sheet for guidance purposes only.
- (b) This question was very well answered.
- (c) Many candidates referred to the fact that recycled fabrics would be in short supply and that many would be vintage style, but few were able to offer further ways in which products would be individual.

Question 2

- (a)(i) Many of the initial ideas were disappointingly poor with weak ideas, often fairly similar. In some cases, it was difficult or impossible to establish what product the design was for as there was insufficient annotation.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to identify the originality factor of their designs as being a good selling point and those who identified specific aspects of the design and related it to a target market scored the higher marks.
- (b) The quality of design work was generally poor this year with many uninteresting and predictable ideas such as denim jeans made into shorts or cushions with few original or exciting products presented. The naming of fabrics and components was very basic, e.g. 'cotton', 'denim' or 'polyester', and these were not incorporated into designs very imaginatively, more usually placed on products as an after thought. As with the Full Course, recycled components included zips, beads, buttons and lace, but also sweet wrappers, bottle tops, tyres, and other non textile and inappropriate examples. Decorative techniques tended to be effectively with many choosing to use patchwork or appliqué which allowed recycled fabrics to be incorporated into the decoration. Most candidates presented their designs using colour effectively; however, some candidates still do not take coloured pencils into the examination and it is then difficult for the examiner to award full marks to something described as "blue". Most papers exhibited good levels of presentation, offering at least two views with sound and descriptive annotation, although there were many untidily presented drawings which did not show detail clearly.

Question 3

- (a)(i) Appliqué was the most popular technique.
- (ii) Some responses showed some understanding of the ways in which the selected techniques might affect user requirements, function and form. There were, however, a lot of very generalised comments along the lines of "it's appealing".

Question 4

This question was not answered well: as with the Full Course, candidates either made changes so radical that the whole design altered, or else repeated the same points such as "use less buttons, less appliqué" etcetera. There was very little understanding of how to change design without altering the design features.

Question 5

There were some very knowledgeable candidates but also many who were ignorant of the problems. Many referred to the use of pesticides and the effects of dye effluent and some considered the transportation of goods across continents. Most gained at least two marks for this question.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates were able to name an industrial method of printing a design on to fabric, with sublimation printing one of the most popular choices. Although block printing is not considered to be a common method, candidates were allowed full credit if they indicated an industrial context.
- (b) Candidates commonly considered problems with smudging and the need to ensure that the print was correctly aligned. Many erroneously referred to issues relating to the production of the fabric to be printed.
- (c)(i) As with all other tiers, candidates continue to be confused about CAD and its application in different situations. This question was about preparing a design for printing – less able candidates mistakenly referred to using it for sending designs to other manufacturers. Top marks were awarded when candidates understood the specific nature of this particular application of CAD and were able to show understanding of how computers are used to adapt shape, colours and features of designs. Few candidates knew specific details of how programmes could be used in print design.
- (ii) As in (i), there was a lack of understanding with even fewer responses able to link CAM to printing of fabric. There were many generalised responses such as “quicker”, “easier”, or “more accurate”. Higher marks were awarded to those candidates who recognised that CAM is about the application of computers to drive machinery; in this particular case, printers. Encouragingly, more able candidates were able to identify the use of lasers to cut printing rollers as well as accurately placing colour in the correct position on the fabric.

Question 7

- (a)(i) This question was not well answered considering that many candidates would have made a cushion as a coursework project. Some repeated many of the stages, for example, writing “cut out squares” and then, in the next box, “cut out fabric”. Candidates did not appear to have studied the diagrams on the paper as hardly any prepared a hem on which to place buttons and buttonholes, and many inserted a zip.
- (ii) Quality control checks were identified well in the majority of cases. Less able candidates tended to repeat the same check for all steps, instead of linking it to the particular stage of manufacture and used terms such as ‘properly’, ‘correctly’ or ‘right’ without qualification.
- (b)(i) Many candidates were unable to explain tolerance levels, some thinking that the term relates to behaviour in the workplace.
- (ii) Many were able to identify an appropriate step in the manufacture of the cushion where tolerance levels would be important, but consequences of not adhering to set standards was less well understood.
- (c)(i) Most candidates understood sub-assembly and how it is used.
- (ii) Most were able to identify a part of the cushion suitable for sub-assembly.
- (iii) This was a straight forward question and many candidates gained full marks. Less able candidates tended to offer vague answers, such as “cheaper” and “quicker”.

Question 8

- (a) This question was answered poorly, with most candidates displaying little knowledge of the qualities of cotton, and even fewer able to give a true evaluation of its suitability for a cushion. Many responses were very confused.
- (b) “Additional strength for the fabric” was the most commonly given property but few candidates referred to improved crease-resistance or reduced absorbency leading to quicker drying times.