



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Design and Technology: Product Design

3544/C Coursework

Report on the Examination

2008 examination – June series

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General

This specification continues to attract large numbers of new centres which means that moderators have once again reported a wide range of standards and approaches. Despite increased levels of support offered by AQA again this year a surprising number of the centres visited had not attended one of the Autumn Teachers' Meetings or referenced the CD Rom which was distributed to all centres.

The 2007 Notes and Guidance Update provided a great deal of advice on both the suitability of projects and the standards expected. Whilst there were a considerable number of problems with new centres adjusting to the course most moderation teams reported both a general increase in standards seen and projects that were much better suited to this course. Whilst the assessment criteria and standards are the same across the whole suite of D&T specifications from AQA the Product Design examination is significantly different. It was felt that there was a much better match between the coursework projects and the examination this year and all of the moderation teams reported that the majority of centres were now adopting a Product Design approach rather than submitting projects similar to the single material specifications.

The full range of materials has been seen again this year and many centres have adopted Product Design across a broad range of material areas. Indeed, over 30 centres entered more than 100 candidates again this year. This can bring with it difficulties for internal standardisation where agreement has to be arrived at across many teaching groups. Moderators were grateful to the centres who supplied spreadsheets identifying teaching groups alongside the Candidate Mark Form. This enabled moderators to select work from all teaching groups.

Outstanding work has been reported in all material areas from Textiles through to Electronics. Where moderators have reported over marking this has often been related to paper/card products. The magazine cover and gift was one project where centres often over rewarded candidates. Few candidates took the opportunity of gaining making marks from the magazine illustration by photographing something they had made rather than using a photograph they had taken from the internet. The perfume packaging was another project which was often undertaken at a very superficial level. Many candidates simply made an empty carton or crudely used Styrofoam to manufacture the bottle. Every centre has access to a coursework advisor and full advantage should be taken of this facility.

The majority of centres chose to develop functioning prototypes where all aspects of the product could be tested and evaluated. There are a growing number of centres who are developing non-functioning prototypes such as electronic devices. Where this approach is done well it often results in outstanding work. However, moderators are once again reporting that it is often resulting in poor quality outcomes which do not access the higher marks. Unfinished or crudely painted Styrofoam models continue to be seen in this context and have often been over rewarded by centres. Few candidates made a real attempt to replicate features such as split lines, charging sockets etc. Some centres had taken the idea further by sealing the models inside poorly conceived and manufactured blister packs, again with no real attempt to replicate features found on commercial packaging. Much of this work was over rewarded, and often produced inconsistencies in assessment where the centre's marking of 'traditional' projects were marked accurately. Commercial viability is a key expectation and models do need to be of the highest order to meet this expectation. MP3 players are unlikely to access the higher grades due to the scale and levels of detail required. Some excellent examples of games consoles exploiting laser cutting were seen and they included high quality, appropriate packaging. Buttons were fitted with neoprene underneath to replicate button movement and the overall finish closely matched commercial versions.

Many of the moderator teams reported that centres often over-supported candidates by providing projects which were completely teacher led. Whilst this can be a suitable strategy for lower ability candidates this approach often prevented candidates accessing the higher grades and centres should be aware of this. By contrast some other centres had been far too open-ended with candidates taking on tasks which could never be completed in the 40 hours. Motorised go-Karts, bicycle frames and large furniture projects were amongst the less suitable projects seen and were often poorly finished or incomplete. Candidates who tackled smaller scale products often achieved higher grades than those taking on complex projects because they could address all of the assessment criteria and produce a prototype which, with further development, could be manufactured and sold commercially.

As with previous years, many centres had marked the designing well within the AQA tolerance. However, the assessment of the practical outcome was often over rewarded by more than a grade. It is important to stress that the expectation for this coursework is that approximately one third of the time should be spent on the designing and two thirds spent on the manufacturing. Whilst it must be stressed that not all designing is likely to be paper based and many candidates resolved design issues through modelling and manipulating materials. Candidates, who had an imbalance towards the designing, and especially where they submitted over-presented design folders, often did not access the higher grades.

The coursework assessment is undertaken holistically and the assessment criteria should be used as an indicator rather than a set of tick boxes which are then aggregated. This is especially important with the making mark as there are only five sections. Centres might rely on experienced teachers to benchmark work they believe to be, for example, in the C grade band prior to looking at the specific assessment criteria and to use the criteria to refine the assessment to High Middle or Low. Each of the sections in the assessment criteria are not regarded as carrying equal importance, therefore centres who had devised spreadsheets or a form of aggregation were often less accurate with their overall judgments. Key criteria in the designing assessment are the generation of ideas, development and analytical thinking rather than simply hoop-jumping. It is possible that shortcomings in research or planning, for example, make little or no difference to the overall designing grade. In the making criteria the levels of demand of the making, accuracy, finish and the commercial effectiveness are seen as the most influential areas when establishing a grade.

Designing Skills

The quality of work submitted was very high from a significant number of centres and many candidates had submitted a combination of formal presentation sheets and freehand sketches. Electronic portfolios, sketchbooks and traditional A3 folders were all seen again this year. Centres producing electronic portfolios had generally made a real effort to encourage candidates to produce a concise design folder of around 20 sheets. However, moderators reported a return to 30 plus sheets in numerous centres. There is still a tendency for many centres to encourage candidates to include large amounts of copied material and this is regarded as a serious waste of candidate's time as moderators rarely see this approach moving projects forward.

Some centres are still not insisting on candidates sorting out and securely binding design folders prior to marking and this makes the process of assessing the relevant work harder for moderators. Moderators have again reported having to sort out Y10 projects from the coursework project as well as seeing teaching material, handouts, homework and even text books within folders. Some centres are encouraging the use of sketchbooks and/or notebooks

as well as formal design sheets. This reflects good commercial practices and moderators reported that this often aided the assessment, particularly when teacher annotation was present. The use of plastic flip folders is becoming widespread and this often helps the moderator to assess the material more easily although seriously adds to postal costs.

Many candidates made effective use of ICT to present a lot of their design investigations in a concise manner. Digital photography was extensively used by candidates as both a research tool and for recording the various stages of their work. Where photographs of work in progress were provided the moderators found it to be of enormous benefit in deciding whether to accept the centre's marking. Many design folders were presented entirely using ICT. It is therefore surprising to report that so few centres submitted electronic portfolios. Where electronic portfolios were seen they were generally easy to handle (PowerPoint submissions only). The use of video and sound can provide additional evidence for moderators although it is stressed that this can be a time consuming process. Centres wishing to consider electronic portfolios in the future should contact the Subject Officer at AQA as early as possible. Two centres who had submitted electronic portfolios for the second year had significantly improved the standard of work, especially the freehand drawings which had been scanned and dropped into the document. This had clearly been a very motivational approach as strong evidence was provided across the full ability range.

It is important to note how few centres had adopted a design methodology which reflected current industrial design practices. The development stage of the process is generally where the bulk of the work takes place. Commercially, the use of CAD, modelling and sampling are used to a great extent and this is where a considerable amount of testing and evaluation takes place. Many 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 one of the most influential parts of the assessment process

Design brief

Candidates were generally more focused this year. Centres were far less often encouraging candidates to explore several potential design briefs then select the most appropriate one to continue with although this approach was reported again this year. Most candidates were able to provide a clear statement of intent which was often supported with mood boards, user profiles etc. It is important to remind centres that commercial designers use mood boards or image boards often as a background to talking to the client. It should not represent a random selection of catalogue pictures. The best were often supported by a short statement explaining the relevance of the material. Where this approach was taken, full credit was given within the analysis section of the assessment criteria. Initial design criteria was sometimes found at this stage of the folder and often provided a focus for relevant research and the generation of initial ideas. There were few candidates who showed a clear link between mood boards and the generation of ideas and it is felt that this is one area where centres need to question the relevance of this approach.

Moderators reported that there are still centres who are not working on a commercially viable product aimed at a target market. Successful product design relies on being able to manufacture products that people will purchase in sufficient quantities to keep the cost as low as possible. This concept does not appear to be followed in many centres and designing for *myself* or *my auntie* is not in line with the expectation for this course.

There appears to have been an increase in teacher led projects where every candidate is following an identical brief. Table lamps were the most popular version of this but products such as mp3 docking stations was also a popular option. As previously mentioned, this strategy does need to take account of differentiation and ensure that all candidates are able to make their own unique contribution.

In a minority of centres, genuine clients often provided candidates with real and meaningful projects such as display stands, point of sale displays, signage etc. Candidates who worked closely with experts, such as primary school teachers when developing educational aids benefitted enormously. Care must be taken not to have too restrictive an approach as this may lead to a far too narrow focus.

Research

Moderators reported concerns about the amount of irrelevant research undertaken again this year with many reporting over half of the folder dedicated to such activity. Copied material was seen in abundance and this source was often not acknowledged in the design folder or the Candidate Record Form.

Really good first hand research obviously drove the best projects with candidates using commercial products as a focus for their own designing. Some candidates had made excellent use of interviewing relevant experts such as parents, teachers etc.

Written questionnaires and graphs were found in a large percentage of folders and it is important to report that this research rarely provided useful data to influence the candidates. Few candidates really conducted this activity in a manner which would provide valid data and it is strongly recommended that this activity is discouraged in favour of more product analysis. Graphs were often used to fill pages but the analysis and relevance could often have been summarized more effectively in a single sentence.

Really good, detailed product analysis and disassembly research was being encouraged by a wider number of centres. A good range was seen in some folders but the understanding of the relevance of it to the task was variable from centre to centre. Some centres led this activity with shared photos and near identical commentary. It is important that candidates are able to make their own detailed analysis to gain credit. Frameworks such as "CAFEQUE" and "ACCESSFM" were rarely seen to aid candidates with relevant analysis which moved their thinking forward.

A lot of materials research and research on industrial methods of manufacture was either not necessary at the initial stages or irrelevant. Where it was specific to the product being developed and included alongside development sketches this material was often better used and clearly more relevant. The best example seen was from a candidate who once she had a final design concept identified the key characteristics of the materials needed for each component and analysed the alternatives available to her in school.

Letters to companies rarely provided useful material. Centres need to understand the actual cost of providing such catalogues and advice for the large numbers of candidates undertaking coursework projects. It is suggested that centres build up a product library of catalogues and brochures for candidates to access in preference to wasting time writing formal letters.

The inclusion of anthropometric data at the front of the folder was often of little use to candidates during the design stages. Including such data as part of the development was often far more useful and seen to be relevant.

Some of the better design folders had summarised research findings in preference to including large amounts of copied material. This had been made relevant to the design focus. Far too many candidates still had large collections of irrelevant research such as photocopied data on materials and jointing methods from textbooks, CD ROMs and the Internet.

It is disappointing to report that moderation teams commented that the majority of research seen had been done whilst sitting at a computer rather than through primary methods. However, it was pleasing to see an increase in centres who had encouraged candidates to explore the work of past designers, natural form, architecture, interesting commercial products etc. as inspiration boards. Exploring architecture as inspiration for lighting was one example of good practice seen.

Analysis of task and research material

The inclusion of a simple list of tasks to be undertaken was an aid to many candidates. The better candidates often explaining why, how and when the task would be completed in an action plan. Some centres had devised pro-formas to aid candidates with this potentially difficult area.

Research material was often described rather than analysed and this was seen as widespread practice in many centres. The simple question "How is this relevant to my work and what can I learn from this?" applied to all research material would have aided many candidates.

When done at the beginning of the project and kept in mind throughout, analysing the task and breaking it down into manageable stages has a significant influence on the project. A noteworthy number of centres seen are guiding students to do this although it is by no means universally done. One centre had encouraged candidates to confirm the problem undertaken was as the candidate had perceived it by surveying potential users. In the examples seen it provided a useful analytical focus.

Specification

This section was greatly improved by many centres again this year. The better candidates looked at essential, desirable and possible attributes for the product and focused on consumer and manufacturer needs as well as social, moral and environmental issues.

The position that a specification is found in a design folder is a contentious one. Whilst the assessment criteria suggest that ideas must fit the specification, in practice, this can stifle creativity. Some centres had encouraged candidates to devise initial design criteria and developed a full specification at a later stage of the process, such as prior to development. This allowed candidates to clarify their thinking and demonstrate their creativity and was seen by moderators as a more effective design strategy. Many candidates still presented a design proposal at this stage, rather than design criteria, listing the materials construction etc. before designing had commenced. This was clearly restricting the generation of ideas.

It is pleasing to report that many centres had directed candidates to cover general areas such as:

- Target market
- Function
- Size
- Weight

- Durability
- Aesthetics
- Materials
- Safety
- Cost
- Green issues
- Manufacture
- Packaging

These were suggested in last year's report and were seen in many folders. However, this list is not exhaustive and is also not relevant to every product. Centres should use this as a guide only and should not expect criteria to match every area listed. Some centres encouraged a "*must should and could*" format and this also helped many candidates.

Some of the more able candidates produced more than one specification, including a manufacturing specification within the design proposal or as part of the evaluation. Again, full credit was given for this approach even though it is not a specific requirement but does reflect best practice.

Specifications, however written and presented do need to reflect the analysis previously undertaken. Moderators reported that many candidates at all levels were not making this connection obvious. Where candidates had summarised their research, this link was often far easier to evidence. Few centres had encouraged candidates to specify the scale of production at this stage and when it was done well this appeared to be a great aid to candidates evaluating their ideas throughout the designing stages.

Generation of ideas

Moderators were looking for quality rather than quantity. They reported seeing some really 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, numerous centres appeared to have directed candidates to produce four to six superficial ideas and had over-rewarded this achievement. Candidates were also 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. Some candidates had stuck pictures of the design inspiration onto the ideas sheet then continued with their own ideation. This was seen as an excellent strategy.

More able candidates had demonstrated a variety of approaches from freehand drawing, sketch modelling, word webs, test experiments etc. There were also some excellent design strategies used such as shape borrowing from other products, observations from nature, manipulation of geometry etc. to generate original design proposals.

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 would be used. Neat drawings were more commonly seen rather than creative and efficient designing and many centres need to examine this. Whilst the complexity of the product will greatly affect the expectation for this part of the assessment, candidates who

only suggested a small range of very detailed ideas often gained the highest grades. Critical design thinking was highly rewarded.

It was pleasing to report that many centres were encouraging modelling and testing at this stage of the process and many candidates clearly benefited from this approach rather than a purely paper-based approach.

Higher-level candidates summarised and evaluated their ideas giving clear information on why one or more might be further developed. 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.

It is significant to report that moderators often could not see where centres had credited ideas and often felt that this section was over-rewarded. Many commented that they believed the centres had been more influenced by the presentation of the ideas rather than by the design thinking behind each idea. Whereas centres do have the opportunity to discuss drawings which may appear superficial with the candidates moderators do not. They rely totally on candidate annotation, or in the absence of that teacher annotation to support such judgements.

Development of a solution

This is regarded as the most important part of the design folder and a broad range of work was seen. Once again, far too few candidates are undertaking any real development of their ideas and 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. Some of the best examples were again found in textile products where samples of stitch details, fastenings and decorative details were often explored through samples as well as trial mock-ups or toiles in cheaper fabrics. Card and block models were well used by many centres and this is a pleasing development. The significance of modelling and testing at this stage cannot be over emphasised and reflects best practices in Higher Education and commercial design. Pro DESKTOP and Google Sketch-up was used for virtual modelling by an increasing number of centres. The use of Solid Works was also seen in a smaller number of centres and in those cases provided detailed proposals which closely resembled photographs in terms of quality. In some cases computer modelling represented a very superficial exploration of form whereas in the best examples sophisticated concepts were explored in detail. In a minority of cases it was used with additional modelling and sketching to refine design details and explore a range of alternatives.

Moderators reported that many candidates simply moved from ideas into a making plan. Many candidates did not provide anywhere near enough detail for third party manufacture to be attempted.

Testing is seen as an important part of the development section and, where relevant, should be encouraged and evidenced. This is by far the most appropriate time for candidates to undertake additional research into materials and constructions. A short investigation of relevant stock sizes and standard components was a useful addition for some candidates and full credit was given within the development section.

If sufficient development had taken place within the ideas section then credit was given. Sometimes additional evidence was also found in the evaluation report. As with the ideas section of the folders, moderators often reported that candidates had been over-rewarded for

development work. Again, it was felt that centres were rewarding the presentation rather than the content. Where modelling/sampling was done by the candidates but not recorded in the design folders it is important that centres record this through teacher annotation and make this work available to moderators during the visit. This can make a significant difference to the designing assessment.

Planning of making

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. Pro formas were put to good use by some centres. The use of patterns, templates and manufacturing aids were often missing completely from folders even though they formed an important part of the planning for many candidates. It is worth reminding centres that the expectation at the higher grades is for a third party to be able to manufacture the same prototype from the information supplied by the candidate and this was often not possible. The inclusion of formal working drawings was very rare even when it would have been essential to the planning stage. Cutting lists for materials continues to be a surprising omission from many design folders where the assembly of a variety of components was a significant issue. Additional components that might need to be purchased, such as jewellery findings, zips, hinges etc. were rarely detailed.

Many candidates appear to have been simply supplied with materials or the construction predetermined through the project set by the centre, and this gave little opportunity to gain marks. This is a serious concern and underlines the issue of teacher led projects where individual responses are not encouraged.

The use of diaries, supported by photographs, to record the stages of the making was seen in a larger number of centres this year and moderators commented how useful this had been in supporting marks for the development and the making as well as the planning section. Full credit was given to planning as long as there was sufficient evidence to support the judgment that planning had taken place. Where moulds, formers, jigs, manufacturing aids, CAD/CAM, patterns etc. had been used, some credit for planning was given even if there was no relevant written plan in the design folder.

Some of the more able candidates presented design proposals in sufficient detail that a separate planning document was not required. Again, credit was given when it was obvious that some planning had taken place.

A small minority of centres continue to encourage the use of diagrams to explain basic making processes such as using a try square or applying spray paint. It cannot be stressed enough that this is not what is required. Centres are encouraged to look at how industrial planning takes place and the use of simple pro formas and notes will often result in a more efficient use of candidates' time.

The use of a photo library of school equipment was used well by some centres to illustrate the processes used although moderators reported concerns when this was not specific to the candidates' own work. The use of clip art to illustrate planning was rarely used to good effect and moderators questioned the value of such approaches.

Some good examples were seen where industrial planning sat alongside planning on how to make the prototype and comparative flowcharts were the most common method of communicating this.

Where candidates had manufactured their prototypes using CAM it was essential that candidates had evidenced this work to gain credit. Screen dumps showing each stage together with photographic evidence of the set-up procedures were seen in the best examples.

Gantt charts were often seen in folders although this was generally provided by the centres and offered little opportunity for candidates to be rewarded for their planning.

Evaluation, testing and modification

This was once again a weak area for many 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 it 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. Moderators do value the information contained in an evaluation of the process as candidates do include information that is not clear elsewhere, however, if the on-going annotation is clear throughout the folder then this approach is unnecessary. Generally, 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. Pro formas were occasionally used to good effect with checklists linked to the specification criteria found in the better examples. The use of real consumer trials were found in some folders with independent feedback provided by potential users. This genuine testing is to be encouraged and it must be stressed that sufficient time needs to be provided for this to take place. Superficial comments from friends often produced worthless data but some surveys provided valid results, which were then commented on by the candidate. Moderators expressed some concerns over the limited number of candidates who detailed the modifications that would be needed to the prototype in order to commercially manufacture the product. This is a key expectation for this specification and centres need to plan for this.

In a minority of centres, detailed midpoint evaluations had taken place prior to finalising every detail of the product. For example, children's furniture had been tested prior to painting to ensure that sizes were correct. This approach is to be encouraged where appropriate.

A small number of centres structured the evaluations to include the products that were collected and analysed in the research section and made comparisons with their candidate's own design solutions. In the best examples, candidates were noting costs, marketability, improved features etc.

Use of communication, graphical and ICT skills

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 trend appears to be reducing year on year. There were numerous candidates who demonstrated a range of very high quality communication skills. Whilst the 40-hour requirement for the coursework does impose some challenges for centres, there is an expectation that candidates will demonstrate good communication skills at various points in their folders. Centres have generally discouraged time-wasting activities such

as colouring the background of design sheets and using coloured mounts in favour of generally clear communication.

The most notable inclusion this year has been the use of CAD which was used very well by many centres. In general, whether they were informal folders or immaculately produced using ICT and A3 colour printers, the actual content of the communication has been an improvement again this year. However, some moderators reported that centres were still valuing presentation skills rather than communication skills

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. The folder should clearly and concisely demonstrate effective and efficient design skills.

Some very good “rough work” was seen in the ideas and development sections and it was pleasing to note how many centres had responded to the advice of not re-presenting such work. Many candidates were able to sketch fluently and efficiently, using notes to clarify their thinking.

A wide variety of presentational drawings and working drawings were seen. It continues to surprise moderators how few candidates demonstrate an ability to construct an accurate technical drawing which could be followed by a third party. Dimensioning conventions and even the simple alignment of views were often poorly executed. Fashion drawings combined with patterns, engineering drawings, marker rendered 3D views and virtual modelling was seen in the folders of many of the better candidates. DTP was evident both for the presentation of the design folder pages as well as for the creation of related graphical components such as packaging, labelling and leaflets. It is pleasing to report that modelling was more apparent again this year.

Many candidates used CAD effectively, prior to the use of CAM. Many centres continued to report inadequate access to ICT facilities although it was obvious that many other centres had made a significant investment. It was clear that where effective use of ICT was used that this did have a positive effect on the motivation of candidates. Photographic evidence was often abundant in the better design folders and moderators commented how useful this had been, especially in determining whether a visit was required. It is extremely useful to have several photographs of the product, with close-up details of constructions and moderators were grateful to centres who had taken the time and trouble to provide this.

Where food work was not available for the moderator to see then high quality photographs of what was actually made by the candidate was a clear expectation. This was often not the case and moderators commented that it was often difficult to support the centre assessments in such cases.

Social issues, industrial practices and systems and controls

Moderators, once again, reported that the majority of centres had not addressed this aspect of the coursework despite this being a significant expectation of this specification. Many candidates had approached this as a bolt-on at the end of the folder. Copied material on general issues related to the various scales of production was the most common evidence seen. It was also common to see material on injection moulding and similar processes even when these were irrelevant to the product.

Many centres still appeared to be providing handouts for candidates to put into their own words as every candidate had near identical evidence. Few candidates demonstrated any real understanding of how their prototype might be commercially manufactured and the cost implications of tooling. Comments such as “My product will be batch produced using injection

moulding in several hundred” simply highlighted the lack of understanding about tooling costs and the scale of commercial manufacturing.

Even fewer candidates had taken into account the impact their design might have on society, for example, through over-packaging. These are major areas for centres to address both to meet the coursework criteria as well as adequately preparing candidates for the written paper. It is not expected that this evidence be found in a single isolated sheet titled “Social issues, industrial practices and systems and controls”

Where centres had thoroughly addressed this aspect, candidates provided a good understanding throughout their work. References were made to commercial production in the specification and throughout the designing. Ongoing evaluation comments included both the social and industrial issues.

The issue of whether candidates are modelling a design or designing a model is an important distinction. Many centres, once again, appeared to have encouraged candidates to design a model or prototype and ignore the final product. The complexity of some projects made this aspect of the work extremely difficult and especially so when candidates had tackled large-scale architectural problems.

It is not expected that candidates will fully understand all aspects of commercial production at this level. Some centres had directed candidates to consider one aspect, such as the packaging, and to deal with this in some detail. This is regarded as good practice and should also help with preparation for the written paper.

Where candidates had made manufacturing aids such as jigs and formers some credit was also given to industrial understanding. The use of CAD alone was not seen to evidence this well and centres should refer to the specific assessment criteria not just the bracketed reference in the Candidate Record Form.

In a small minority of centres, visits to relevant industry had provided candidates with an excellent understanding of the issues necessary to access the higher grades.

Making skills

A very wide range of work was seen from very professional and well finished artifacts which would not be out of place at A level standard, to very simplistic models more appropriate to KS3. Expectations varied enormously between centres and many moderators raised concerns over levels of demand seen in their allocation of centres. Whilst the majority of centres had produced work using resistant materials and paper/card, all materials listed in the specification were seen. Textile products were widespread and the number of products containing electronic greatly increased. Fewer centres offered food products or ceramics although food was common in the larger centres where everyone followed a product design route. A small number included control components. Products which use of a range of materials appear to be growing. Where centres had encouraged a range of related outcomes, such as merchandise for a charity promotion it is important that the evidence is not simply a collection of KS3 projects but does reflect some rigour appropriate to GCSE level. This continues to be a cause for concern.

The overall standard of making was disappointing in a significant number of centres. A considerable number of centres had fully embraced the multi-material approach and this was a pleasing development. However, many centres were often severely limiting the candidates

(sometimes because of resource implications) to a very narrow band of materials and manufacturing processes. There were many examples of materials and construction methods being so prescribed by the centres that it was difficult to separate candidates at the moderation stage. This was especially the case where laser-cutting was the primary process.

It is important to point out the expectation for around two thirds of the available time to be spent on making activities. Comparability with other specifications within the D&T suite is also commonly ignored. Some centres continue to misunderstand the requirements for this specification believing that it is less rigorous than the others. This caused particular difficulties where centres had restricted candidates to single processes which required minimal effort on the part of the candidates. The use of CAM is greatly encouraged but centres do need to be aware of the need to demonstrate a range of making skills. Outcomes such as laser-cut key fobs do not meet the requirements for this course.

The pleasing development of CAM was overshadowed by moderator concerns regarding who was being assessed – the candidate or the teacher/technician? Section 15 of the Specification deals with this matter in some detail and it is recommended that centres review their procedures as far as technician support is concerned. The Candidate Record Form should be used for detailing the support given to avoid any confusion during moderation. Centres are reminded that credit can only be given to work which is solely that of the candidates. CAM was reported as being over valued by many centres although some real excellence was reported in the majority of centres visited.

There was evidence from candidates in several centres of substantial amounts of work being undertaken outside of the centre, usually in the garage at home. Section 15 of the specification outlines the centre's responsibility to supervise the work of the candidates.

Correction of working errors

There was often little evidence in the folder or through test pieces seen at the time of the visit to support this criteria and the moderation process often 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. This is probably the most effective way of addressing this aspect of the criteria. If the candidate fails to record this work in the folder it is essential that it is retained and shown when the moderator visits. Where candidates had made no obvious errors in the manufacture of their prototype or model but had described changes needed for commercial production full credit was given even though it is not strictly making criteria but knowledge of making.

It was a common strategy for candidates to prototype their product in less expensive modelling materials such as MDF or Styrofoam. It is important that candidates can explain the modifications needed when a more appropriate material would be used. Centres had often awarded too much credit for repairs or modifications as a result of bad workmanship. Modifications due to poor crafts skills rather than as a result of testing and development did not receive high credit for this section of the assessment.

Use of appropriate equipment and processes (including the use of CAM)

Once again, moderators often needed assistance from teacher annotation to make a judgment in this area, as many candidates did not provide details of the equipment or processes used. It is an expectation that centres will give considerable guidance to individual candidates on the

appropriate use of equipment and processes taking into account skill levels and the required standards.

Moderators commented that it was often difficult to know whether to award the grade to the candidate or the technician, especially where CAM is being exploited. Candidates do need to record all aspects of this work and centres need to be clear that making grades can only be awarded to the candidates' own making. Whilst many candidates require considerable assistance centres do need to be vigilant about monitoring this work and recording assistance on the Candidate Record Form.

Moderators, again, reported that candidates were often using unsuitable construction techniques although there has been a general improvement year on year. A disappointing number of candidates used construction techniques that were unsuitable both for prototyping and commercial production. Knock-down fittings and the use of biscuit-jointing continues to grow in popularity where furniture projects had been undertaken. Timber materials were still being cut out by a teacher/technician and the candidates simply finishing and assembling the parts. Some of the larger scale projects do restrict access to the higher grades mainly because of the amount of work done by staff. Centres who adopt this strategy do need to review the type of work undertaken. It was easier to support the award of marks to candidates who evidenced their CAM understanding through annotated screen dumps and photographs. It is surprising to report how many candidates did not even evidence the computer drawings (for example, taking account of tool paths rather than component shapes) even though outcomes relied heavily upon CAM.

More able candidates produced some very high level work which would compete well at Advanced Level. Where CAM was available this undoubtedly had a positive impact on the work seen in the majority of centres. In a small minority of centres the use of CAM was inappropriate and did not enhance the work.

Some centres have begun to exploit rapid prototyping systems to produce candidate outcomes. Laser-cutting had also increased dramatically this year. Whilst these do represent good commercial practices moderators often commented that the CAM had not been exploited to make the best use of the time available for manufacturing. It was difficult to compare a product manufactured at the touch of a button with one manufactured through the application of traditional craft skills. This specification does encourage and embrace the use of this type of technology but centres do need to be aware of both the benefits and the pitfalls. As a general guide, centres should ask themselves whether the work represents 27 hours worth of rigorous work for a 16 year old and demonstrates a range of skills. If the answer to either question is no then they need to examine what the benefits might be in terms of freeing up time to undertake other work, such as packaging, exploiting the nature of quick and accurate manufacturing by producing a variety of outcomes or by comparing with other manufacturing methods. The latter is where developmental modelling can play a major part in supporting the grade.

Moderators are aware of the development time needed to draw some of the products or components prior to outputting to CAM and try to be as flexible as possible in allocating some of this work to the making criteria as an alternative to, for example, marking out materials. However, the assessment criteria must be applied consistently across a whole range of approaches. Centres that have any doubt regarding this type of work should attend one of the Autumn Meetings or contact their Coursework Adviser.

Centres continued to use computer printouts of one form or another and claimed this as appropriate CAM. Whilst this is undoubtedly the case with many graphical products, moderators were looking for this used with die cutting tools or other aids to access the higher marks. Some

centres used this as part of a transfer printing system, for example on T shirts and similar commercially made products. This printing method and the use of sublimation printing can produce near commercial standards, however, unless there is a substantial range of manufacturing undertaken candidates are unlikely to achieve C grade or above.

By contrast, some centres are still totally reliant entirely on hand production techniques and it must be stressed that the application of traditional skills is still highly valued. In the better centres, the use of jigs and similar manufacturing aids gave candidates a good understanding of batch production systems even if they did not have access to CAM.

Moderators did report that with the growing interest in the use of electronics within products that they do need to be able to access any circuitry for which the centre is claiming manufacturing marks. Circuit boards that are glued into place are unlikely to access the higher grades for either commercial effectiveness or manufacturing skills.

Production and effectiveness of outcome

Once again, higher-level candidates produced very effective products which were commercial viable and this was particularly the case with many of the textile products. Some high-level craft skills were evident in all material areas.

The criteria for this section of the assessment continues to be commonly misinterpreted by centres. It is crucial that the level of demand is taken into account when making judgments. A key fob might well be complete and of very high quality but is unlikely to be worth an A grade because of the level of demand. T shirt printing, simple graphical products such as CD covers or stationery, vinyl cutting applied to commercial products all fit into this category.

Electronic or mechanical products are expected to function to access the higher grades. It is essential, for example, to have a suitable power source to test electronic products. It should also be clear how the product functions and moderators commented that this was not always the case with this type of product. Lamps without the necessary fittings are another example of where higher level awards are restricted. It is worth mentioning at this point that centres continue to allow candidates to work with mains electricity and moderators continue to report instances where products are both dangerous and illegal. Whilst AQA does not recommend the use of mains electricity, any such device which uses mains electricity should have been checked by a competent person and the necessary PAT label attached. The use of pre-wired 12 volt lamp units which come with a mains adaptor plug are highly recommended for candidates wishing to design lighting.

This is one of the more influential sections of the making assessment and one where moderators often disagreed with the centre's mark. Using holistic marking moderators often tend to start with this evidence to establish the making grade before refining the grade using the remaining criteria. A useful reference would be to ask the question would this product sell to the target customer. Many candidates at the higher levels produce products which are almost indistinguishable from similar commercially manufactured products. This is where centres often need to review the projects offered to candidates to ensure that there is a good match between the manufacturing facilities available and the skills of the candidates.

Level of accuracy and finish

Generally, this has continued a year on year improvement as fewer candidates undertook inappropriate projects given the time limitations and resource implications found in many

centres. However, moderators continued to report that a surprising number of products were left unfinished by choice. This was particularly the case with Styrofoam models left unpainted and/or lacking the graphical details which form such an important part of the product styling.

Where candidates had access to CAM it was often easier to access the higher marks although this was not always the case. Spray painted models of the highest quality were seen when candidates had been modelling injection-moulded products. The use of vinyl cut lettering often provided additional detail to closely resemble the commercial product.

Timber products continue to be the least well finished and it is often the nature of the material combined with the time needed to seal and finish a porous fibrous material which had not been allowed for in the planning. In the best examples the products were of a saleable quality.

Textiles products were often finished to a commercial standard and displayed high levels of accuracy. The use of care labels and swing labels often replicated the product as it would be sold.

Moderators reported seeing some excellent examples of prototypes that were often packaged or labelled and appeared to be very similar to commercial examples. In these instances, candidates had generally undertaken more appropriate projects.

Board games were one example where moderators commented on the wide range of standards seen from crude to commercial. In the best examples they exploited the ability to manufacture in quantity and create a product complete with instructions and packaging. Where CAM was readily available some candidates had produced two variants of the product, one assembled and one packaged in self assembly form. This was particularly appropriate with some of the less demanding constructional products.

As more centres had included packaging as part of the whole product it was disappointing to report how low the standard of packaging was in many cases. The use of inappropriate nets was common and centres should acknowledge the extent to which industry uses standard nets. Few centres had used appropriate carton board or constructed the cartons in a structurally sound manner which would protect and transport the product in transit. Too often moderators reported that candidates had crudely adapted existing packaging. In the best examples packaging was in the style of the chosen company and included the internal elements required to keep the product securely protected. The use of larger format printers and techniques such as sublimation printing and vinyl printing had greatly improved the quality for some candidates. Some centres are using commercially produced plain cartons and directing the candidates to resolve the graphical issues, though labelling, and/or the transit issues and this is seen as good practice for this course.

Use of Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Control (QC)

Many candidates continue to provide no evidence of quality assurance either through the design folder or the manufactured product and moderators needed to rely on teacher annotation. Candidates who had utilised CAD/CAM or produced moulds, formers, templates or jigs were much more likely to gain credit for this criteria. Some centres had encouraged a theoretical approach to this with candidates writing an extensive section on QA/QC in very general terms, which gained little credit. Again, it is important to emphasise that this is part of the making assessment and is not regarded as a section within the design folder.

Some centres had simply asked candidates to list 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, checking angles in a construction using a try square etc. Moderators were looking for an application of QA/QC in the candidate's making rather than a design folder exercise and sought evidence in many areas, e.g. planning, evaluations etc.

Once again, it was pleasing to see how many centres had encouraged some degree of volume production. In some cases this was simply the production of identical components for a lamp or storage rack. Some centres had encouraged multiple production, with board games being a good example of a project that requires this. At least one centre had designed and manufactured slip moulds so that a set of ceramic products could be manufactured. As well as replicating industrial production it was easy to address the QA/QC criteria

CAD/CAM, pewter casting, injection moulding, die-stamping, vacuum forming, printing and embossing were some of the processes which allowed QA/QC procedures to be fully utilised and candidates who had experienced this approach would have been well prepared for the written examination. It is surprising to report how few centres encourage the use of CAM for manufacturing aids rather than the production of components. Pewter casting moulds were amongst the best examples seen of this approach.

Quality of written communication

It appeared that many centres had, once again, responded to advice regarding the importance of this assessment which can provide a mark to the value of almost a full grade on top of the matrix mark.

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.

Basic technological vocabulary was still a major omission for many candidates and this is surprising considering the emphasis on literacy across the curriculum in recent years. It was obvious where this had been taught and monitored by the centre. Subject-specific words were often spelt incorrectly and this prevented access to the higher marks.

The advice given at teachers' meetings has been that the over-use of pro formas sometimes prevented candidates gaining the higher marks as they were encouraged to use simple bullet points or notes rather than complete sentences. It is pleasing to report how few examples there were of this strategy again this year. A structured approach to extended writing had been adopted by many centres this year. Moderators also reported that the majority of centres had applied the assessment criteria for QWC fairly and consistently although a considerable minority did not appear to have linked it to the assessment criteria at all and appeared to have picked a number based on quantity rather than quality. Some moderators reported that centres were harshly marking this section, reducing marks considerably for spelling errors. It is possible that candidates can still be awarded the highest mark for sophisticated writing which contains a small number of errors. Moderators tend to look for best evidence and centres can really help in this matter through teacher annotation, even though there is not a specific box allocated to this on the CRF.

Architectural modelling

Centres continue to encourage this type of work with sporting venues and night clubs being popular themes. Although there are often problems with this work a slightly different approach will result in a better match to the criteria. The first suggestion is to ensure that the buildings are indeed products that can be made in quantity and are perhaps better matched to the age of the students concerned. Holiday chalets, caravans, bus shelters, play structures would all fit into this category.

Another approach suitable for larger scale buildings would be to consider the product as a kit for railway modellers, a set of collectable buildings moulded in Plaster of Paris for painting at home, sales models for new housing developments manufactured in pack flat form or a wall relief for a shopping centre based on local buildings. Products in this category might include packaging and instructions.

A third approach for utilising the architectural modelling skills in a product design way would be to produce modular/transportable designs. Examples such as set designs which can be dismantled and packed in a lorry to transport to the next theatre, kiosks for selling band merchandise at a concert, exhibition stands, and survival shelters for disaster areas would be typical of this group.

Crude constructions, inappropriate materials, poor finishing and problems with scale continue to dominate the architectural modelling seen from the majority of centres who continue to offer this as a route through product design.

Whilst the list above is not definitive it does indicate the expectation of a Product Design course. It is also worth mentioning the need for preparing candidates for the written paper. Whilst the awarding body does not attempt to suggest a single method of specification delivery, many centres do try to match up coursework projects to the requirements of the paper. Packaging, labelling or instructions are likely to be addressed in the written paper due to the compulsory material being paper and card. Many centres insist on the products being packaged as a means of tying this together. Many centres also encourage multi-material products as this can give the candidates an advantage in the written paper. Whilst it must be stressed that this approach is not mandatory it has been the advice given consistently at all of the teacher meetings.

Moderator visits

Moderators continued to report that they were made welcome by centres that were, in the main, eager for any feedback they could give. However moderators are instructed not to talk about possible adjustments or offer any view on the work they have seen. It is not the role of the moderator to provide feedback during a visit and centres that feel that they need support over and above that provided by the autumn teacher's meetings should contact their coursework adviser.

Centres had usually gone to some length to provide a suitable location and the work was laid out well for moderators. Moderators do appreciate the time and effort some centres go to in ensuring that the work is clearly labelled and work displayed in an appropriate manner. There were far less cases reported that inappropriate rooms had been used this year although that has been the case in several instances. The length of the moderator visit can vary enormously with two/three hours being common. Centres do need to be aware that the room may be out of action for a large proportion of the day but should not be alarmed if the moderator is satisfied

within the hour. In a very small minority of cases a second visit by a senior moderator may be necessary to ensure the AQA standard is maintained. Moderators also experience problems with traffic and delays in previous centres and it is pleasing to report how understanding the majority of centres were to any delays in the arranged time.

Whilst the letter to centres required the sample to be laid out in total mark rank order some moderators commented that it was easier if the rank order for just the making component was used. This would certainly have been helpful when work was from different teaching groups, as internal standardisation continues to be an issue in some centres and is addressed in more detail later in the report.

Some centres had included all of the development work, models, test pieces etc. 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. As previously mentioned, this is very often a crucial part of both the designing and making process and work at this stage can often be credited in more than one area of the assessment.

It continues to be disconcerting to note how many centres need to substitute work that has gone missing or had been badly damaged. Whilst storage is a major problem for many centres, it is vital that work submitted for assessment is available to the moderator. It is also important to note that the moderator may need access to additional work during the visit and appropriate staff support would be needed if that is the case. This is particularly common where centres have several candidates on maximum mark. Moderators may well need to be satisfied that the maximum mark chosen in the sample is representative of the centre's marking. They sometimes need to ensure that marking from a particular teaching group is in line with the rest of the cohort.

In many centres the work of every candidate was clearly labelled and stored for easy retrieval. This was often easier if the physical size of projects had been restricted. It is concerning to report how many centres are allowing candidates to take away their projects once the sample has been chosen. Centres are reminded that they are required to store the work in secure conditions until the end of October in case there is an appeal against the grades awarded.

Internal standardisation

Internal standardisation continues to be a major issue and there is an expectation that where a number of teachers have been involved in the assessment that rigorous assessment has taken place. This is a time-consuming issue, especially in large centres, but the moderation process involves sampling a maximum of 20 projects and the moderator will choose the sample based upon a spread of marks. The impact of a single teacher marking at a different standard can have a dramatic effect upon any adjustments to the centre marks.

It is a requirement that where more than one teacher is involved in the assessment of work that internal standardisation is carried out. This needs to be consistent and centres must ensure that all material areas and all teachers are involved. Sampling work in isolation is not regarded as an effective method of undertaking standardisation. This specification has attracted some very large centres where it would be impractical to assemble all of the work in rank order within a single room. If that is the case, it is recommended that a range of work is marked and agreed by all teachers involved and that this becomes the standard to check against.

Moderators always appreciate centres with a range of teachers involved to spreadsheet the total marks, indicating the teaching groups, so a representative sample can be chosen. Whilst this is not mandatory it does help to smooth out any small differences between teachers and ensure that a balanced sample is taken.

Administration

Moderators once again expressed concerns about the number of centres who did not forward all of the coursework folders if the entry is under 20 by the May 5th deadline. Likewise, there were often severe delays in receiving the sample once selected. Any efforts that can be made to ensure this deadline is met will be much appreciated.

Moderators reported that matrix errors were 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. Where adjustments have been made as a result of internal standardisation it is essential that these alterations are clearly recorded on the candidate record form to avoid any later confusion.

A significant number of centres show differences between the marks recorded on the Candidate Record Form and the Centre Mark Form. This is sometimes as the result of internal standardisation but does cause confusion.

It is an essential requirement that all candidates sign the Candidate Record Form and this is countersigned by the supervising teacher. By so doing the candidate is recording all assistance and all sources of information which is not clearly shown in the design folder. The teacher signs to agree that this is the case and to detail any specific help provided.

An individual mark is required against all of the criteria and an overall grade for the designing and making recorded with the QWC mark. A small number of centres failed to complete the form adequately. Teacher annotation is only required where evidence is not clear. For example, food products often require extensive annotation because of the nature of the material. Such annotation is greatly appreciated by the moderator who is trying to agree the centre marks based on the evidence submitted.

Whilst the report outlines a number of minor problems encountered by moderators centres do need to be congratulated on the way they have embraced this specification and established it as a viable alternative to focus material courses.

AQA continue to support Product Design centres through:

- Coursework Adviser Service
- Promoting Excellence in GCSE Design & Technology Coursework CD
- Half-day Autumn Teachers' Meetings
- Exemplar projects, Notes and Guidance Update available on CD
- Full-day workshops on aspects of coursework planning and exam preparation
- Individual Centre Support Service

Key points from the report

- Keep projects manageable in size and related to expertise and manufacturing facilities available
- Ensure projects are suitable for this specification and if in doubt check with coursework adviser and refer to Notes & Guidance Update
- Ensure there is an identified target market and scale of production specified at an early stage
- Keep research to the absolute minimum, avoiding letters, questionnaires and copied materials unless essential
- Include a detailed specification at an appropriate stage of the process, not necessarily before undertaking some initial ideas
- Demonstrate clear strategies for generating ideas based on research undertaken
- Ensure that development includes alternative design details as well as enough detail for third party manufacture to take place
- Evidence real planning such as cutting lists, screen dumps, working drawings, manufacturing aids etc.
- Testing and evaluation should be evident throughout the project
- Demonstrate appropriate graphical and ICT communication skills efficiently and effectively
- Demonstrate relevant issues and industrial understanding throughout the project
- Ensure all modifications are documented or available through modelling
- Ensure that a range of demanding making skills are evidenced in development and/or final prototype
- Ensure the final prototype is as close to the commercial version as possible
- Accuracy and high quality finishes are essential ingredients to high grades
- The application of QA is a making criterion and should be clear in the making
- Supervise the candidates' work and document all help given
- Be most influenced by ideas, development and analytical thinking when assessing designing
- Be most influenced by levels of demand, commercial viability and levels of accuracy and finish when assessing making

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.