

GCE

Product Design: Textiles

TEXT4

Report on the Examination

2561

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Introduction

The quality of design work and the application of the assessment criteria continue to be impressive across the ability range for this specification. Many students have worked independently showing confidence in developing their own individual style, approach and route through the design process. Adjustments to centre marks were few however when there was an occurrence the reduction of marks was significant. This was usually where teachers had overvalued all the assessment criteria rather than just one, not being able to recognise the complexity and challenge expected for top band work. Pressure is on for teachers to achieve very high grades at A level and some appear to be pushing the marks too high.

There is still an issue in that some teachers are awarding high marks to students who have done little more than copy existing dress designs. They replicate designs from commercial patterns, adding minimal embellishment, research manufacture through producing a mock up and then make up a garment that may well look sophisticated but lacks originality, complexity and is often just the commercial pattern made well.

Administration

Moderators reported that administration procedures had improved greatly this year. Folders arrived promptly and were sent in rank order. All other aspects were dealt with efficiently.

Applying the Standard

- The majority of centres have referred to AQA exemplar materials when applying the standard and this has proved successful however there is some evidence to suggest few have accessed the teacher on line standardising;
- Some centres continue marking low ability students too generously in order to ensure they achieve a pass;
- In some cases particularly when special occasion dresses were designed there was a misinterpretation of the assessment criterion 3 when students were over rewarded for work that lacked originality.

Candidate Record Forms (CRFs)

The teachers supporting statements on the Candidate Record Form were generally excellent and a strong feature of some centre assessments. Students had also taken this task very seriously and if supporting evidence was not on the CRF they identified precisely where it could be found in the folder. However there was an increase in the number who had paid lip service to completing the CRF and they failed to provide the evidence needed.

Annotation provided by the teacher was particularly helpful when it:

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

Criterion 1 Context and Objectives

There was some concern expressed by moderators this year that teachers were giving full marks to all students for this criteria when the work clearly lacked a depth of understanding:

- It was encouraging to see that many students had explored a wide range of modern, exciting contexts and worked to very individual design briefs;
- Many students grasped this criterion very well and provided interesting contexts showing perceptive understanding;
- It is important that the objectives of the activity are clearly stated at the start of the task.
- There was little variation in the marks for this criterion awarded by some centres with most students getting 4 or 5, when many deserved only 3.
- There was a lack of depth shown in the context and supporting statements from some with many still completing a task analysis spider diagram instead of unravelling all aspects of the context.
- Some contexts were very contrived, students had decided what they wanted to make and then wrote a context to fit, this is not good practice and rarely achieves the most creative work.

Criterion 2 Plan of Action and Clarification of Problem

Students are expected to use a range of investigative techniques when carrying out research, though it is not a requirement to present the material in the folders. It appeared that the most able did not present the research aspects spending their time focused on analysis and the development of solutions. This showed a maturity, excellent practice and was an improvement this year.

- Planning was generally well done though not all students produced a detailed and realistic plan of action at the start of the work though many did it retrospectively. There was a decrease in the use of Gantt charts with students choosing alternative, more meaningful methods to plan their work.

- There are still some students that are finding it difficult to stop presenting page after page of existing products taken from fashion magazines with very little analysis of them.
- It is unnecessary for students to present sheets of research into industrial practices, quality assurance and health and safety in an attempt to prove they have met this criterion. Evidence can be submitted in the form of planning documents that apply industrial practice, health and safety considerations and quality checks can be included in plans for making, evaluation reports and through teacher annotation.
- As expected the most able showed very perceptive analysis of information and went on to produce comprehensive, well-reasoned and explained design specifications.
- Students working at lower levels tended to list the research they had carried out failing to analyse it to any depth and the resulting specifications were not a reflection of information gleaned. They often appeared from nowhere and merely described the garment they had decided to make from a commercial pattern.
- There is a worrying aspect in that some teachers are providing students with prompt sheets for specifications and they do not always reflect the task or the product required. At this level students are expected to work independently without the support of teacher led activities.

Criterion 3 Development of design proposal

This criterion presents problems for some students, mainly through their lack of understanding or teacher misdirection through the processes involved in developing ideas. In addition some are not writing original design briefs, they are basic and often nothing more than a garment for a friend or celebrity. They fail to encourage challenge or originality. We have seen some excellent design work, often creatively presented showing originality, and using a variety of media.

- At this level students are expected to present imaginative ideas that are original and show flair in their ingenuity. Teachers are often asking very high marks for ideas even when the designs have been copied from existing designs usually from commercial pattern catalogues or fashion magazines.
- Occasionally students seem to have been advised on how many design ideas to present followed by sheets labelled Development 1, 2, 3 etc. This was a very teacher led, contrived approach and should be avoided if students are going to have the opportunity to work independently and show their flair and creativity.
- Some students are proficient in copying existing garments and then adding pattern and colour to make them look exceptionally appealing. They are often presented to a very high standard using professional graphic techniques. However the development work hereafter tended to be superficial.

- On occasions initial ideas were drawn, descriptive comments made and then the final design emerged with no changes from the original sketch. There was little or no development of the product shape and yet high marks were given.
- There was some good creative, experimental sampling in the folders but very often it was not evaluated or used in the final product which was a missed opportunity to develop their work into something original.
- In some cases the style and shape of a garment was copied directly from a commercial pattern and often the only sign of originality was basic decorative work. In some instances the candidate went through a folder of pretence and then during the final stage of development declared they had found a perfect matching commercial pattern. Having spent little time developing original outcomes many of these students had time to spend on making their products to a high standard. Teachers know this is the approach students have taken and yet are unfairly awarding them top band marks.
- Students are expected to have a knowledge of fabrics and components. They should be selecting fabrics they know are likely to be suitable because of their working properties. They should be testing their handling properties and giving reasoned accounts of the most suitable. Many students said which fabric they were going to use but few related it to the relevant properties. Many explanations were superficial.
- In order to achieve imaginative ideas students must explore and experiment with different construction techniques and methods of creating special effects with fabric, thread and colour. Students generally do this well and we saw some outstanding work this year. Many are making full use of the modern materials available on the market.
- Many made excellent use of modern, creative techniques, sublimation printers, laser cutters, conductive thread and special effect lights and computerized sewing machines as they developed their ideas.

Criterion 4 Manufacture/Modelling

Photographic evidence of made the outcomes being tested or in use were outstanding from most centres. This quality helped moderators as they tried to agree centre marks. Much of the work was original, marketable and could take its place on the cat walk. The originality shown by the most able students was clearly degree level.

- A strength of this year's entry was the quality of making with a high percentage of students using appropriate methods, technologies and materials and using a range of skills that demonstrated high levels of accuracy and finish;
- Students has selected appropriate methods well and most products had the complexity expected at this level;
- There was an increase in the use of laser cutters, conductive thread, computerised sewing machines and sublimation printers resulting in very professional looking work;

- There was again an encouraging reduction in the number of students making special occasion dresses. The variety of textile products in our world is vast and the opportunities for students to develop original products in this field are enormous and yet for many the creativity is limited to special occasion dresses for their favourite celebrity.

Criterion 5 Conclusions, Evaluations and Recommendations

Evidence of testing, analysis and evaluation has been evident in the vast majority of projects and has taken place throughout the design process. Most students have produced a detailed, summative report. However, there has been an increase in the number of students who fail to test and evaluate in depth throughout the process and yet high marks have been awarded because of the thorough testing at the end.

- The most able seem to address the criteria in full as they include comprehensive testing as the work develops.
- The focus should be on evaluating the design aspects and final outcome against the original specification not on the process and how well the project went.
- The opinion of others appears to be sought more often when the product has been made and students generally offer suggestions for modifications and improvements. The most able consult the client throughout the process.
- Most students provided excellent photographs of the final products in use.
- Evaluative comments made by clients or users were used well to inform the students about improvements or modifications;
- Fashion shows, productions and user trials were performed and proved to be useful to the evaluation process;

Criterion 6 Communication and Presentation

Textile students excel at meeting this criterion not just because they present their work originally, with flair but because they choose appropriate methods to communicate details of their design and manufacture.

- A variety of methods were used by students to present their work: A3 plastic flip folders and sketchbooks proved most popular though some had used Windows Power Point presentations. A few students had used A2 folders though these presented some problems with posting and packaging;
- There was excellent use of photographs with many images included during the development stage and in a making diary;
- The most talented students worked at degree level and used techniques favoured by textile designers when presenting fashion drawings;

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion