
AS

Fashion and Textiles

7561/C

Report on the Examination

7561

June 2018

Version: 1.1

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2018 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Introduction

The approach to this subject is significantly different to the legacy specification. Many centres failed to recognise or acknowledge the changes. Teachers are advised to study the assessment criteria in depth, complete the teacher on-line standardising exercise and also to pay careful attention to this report. The focus is now very different and students must investigate the context thoroughly in order to identify design opportunities. Only when the investigations are complete and opportunities, including problems, needs, and wants have been identified, will they develop a design brief.

On a positive note, development work was good and the developed prototypes were appropriate and challenging for an award at this level. The NEA work should be individual and teachers should not be providing a route through the process using teacher-set formats. Moderators reported that students appeared to follow an approach determined by the teacher. Whilst no writing frames were used, the students did not greatly deviate from what appears to have been a prescribed process i.e. the same types of investigation, development and testing work were carried out.

Prototypes made

- Finished prototypes were generally sufficiently demanding for AS Level.
- Very few products were truly innovative. Garments were, at times creative but would not be considered innovative or original.
- Interpretation of the natural forms context lacked the expected elegance in a lot of prototypes.
- Some garments lacked constructional challenge with a few students selecting commercial patterns to work from.

Presentation of portfolios

There was a mixture of ICT presentation and handwritten work. Where work was handwritten it was often difficult to read, with large hand writing, poor use of space and spelling and grammatical errors were noted. Most folders were appropriately concise, usually in the region of 35 pages.

A few made it difficult for the moderator to access the work when they included folded up bits of paper, which needed unfolding to read. The ordering of work in the portfolios mostly matched the order that was logical for the legacy specification assessment criteria rather than embracing the notion of students working independently and employing an iterative approach. The order was sometimes illogical with many writing a design brief on the first design sheet before any investigation into the context had started. Unfortunately, in most instances, the work appeared to be teacher led.

Focus group feedback

Students are required to design and make prototypes that are both fit for purpose and meet the needs of a client or user. All sections of the assessment criteria address the requirement to obtain third party feedback. The most successful chose a focus group at the start, generally made up of people that were related in some way to the context, whether professionals or end users. This group became very involved and provided feedback and guidance throughout the development of the prototype.

Moderators reported that this aspect was a weakness for many, with peer groups and hypothetical clients continuing to make up the focus groups. Few students made the choice to use real people who they could authentically profile and interview to find potential design opportunities. Objective comments and testing in the students' work were therefore limited and 'client' comments tended to be superficial and subjective. This also meant that legitimate and challenging design opportunities were not identified making it difficult for some students to succeed in Section A.

Teacher annotation

When making a judgement on marks, moderators rely on the evidence provided in the portfolio and photographs of work in progress along with the final outcome in use. The teacher annotation is essential. There was some evidence to suggest that some teachers did not fully understand the new assessment criteria and were marking against the legacy specification.

Where there was good practice, the teacher gave a detailed account of manufacturing skills used by individual students. Some annotation was very bland and yielded little useful information other than to repeat the assessment criteria. Examples of useful annotation were seen, such as the use of an A3 sheet at the end of the student's portfolio, including a large front and back view photograph of the student's prototype with annotations that listed all the manufacturing processes and techniques used. This was an effective starting point when justifying marks for the development of the prototype.

Section A – Identify, investigate and outline design possibilities (16 marks)

- This objective was the least well met. Very few students had embraced the requirements of this new specification. Design briefs were often presented before any research had taken place. The design opportunity did not emerge through investigation and most had decided what they wanted to make before they started the project.
- The assessment criteria states clearly that: "All investigations relate directly to the design context". In the majority of cases the investigation was into aspects that would feed the design brief or help to design the product they had identified at the very start. When students met the criteria, they did this well and identified gaps in the market, in real life situations.
- Few students explained their rationale or the constraints they needed to consider. Few even mentioned "the elegance of nature". Most did not expand on the content of the context. Many went straight in with preconceived ideas of one aspect of the context e.g. leaves, rather than look for opportunities within the context of the elegance of nature.

-
- The very few students who selected the gender neutral context seemed to see this context as more of an intellectual/topical/controversial challenge. Some selected sources of information from the media/current affairs but few identified the link to existing products and retail products that already exist.
 - Most students appear to have picked up on the need to constantly refer to the context but for some this was superficial and not done in a constructive way. Contexts were not fully investigated for possibilities. Investigation focussed on one aspect of the context rather than consideration of anything else appropriate. Because this was limited to begin with, there was little for the students to refer back to when developing.
 - Students are required to use a range of strategies and techniques to explore the context. Most focused on the product they had decided to make, not the context. This section for many resembled the content seen for the legacy specification with students failing to grasp that they should be investigating the context and looking for design opportunities.
 - Alexander McQueen and Vivienne Westwood featured a lot for existing product designers but few actually analyse how and why this has been done. Mood boards are generally creative but tend to be focused on the one aspect that will inspire designing rather than looking for opportunities. The criteria states that investigation will include “practical experimentation and disassembly”. Very few students experimented in order to find design opportunities and disassembly was an activity that provided them with information about the construction of the product they had decided to make. A few more able students did experiment with existing designs looking for possible modifications – they were looking for opportunities.
 - The criteria states, “First concepts are both fully relevant to the context and feasible for further development” Not all students presented concept ideas, where they were present they were simple basic sketches, rather than considering them to be essential to the development of initial ideas in Section C. Some students did produce quality experimental first concepts using a range of different media and this was used well as ideas developed. They proved to be an excellent starting point.
 - All investigations should relate to the context, though most revolved around the types of products the students wanted to make. Products were established right at the beginning of the folder along with design briefs in many cases. Where good practice was shown, students identified design opportunities and wrote initial design briefs only to develop them further following more focused investigation. The most able demonstrated a detailed and perceptive understanding of the information gathered but for most it was limited and restricted to product information. Very few students wrote summative investigation analysis reports. This led to most design briefs either lacking in detail, lacking in coherence or both. In the worst cases, some design briefs included information that was only introduced at the point of writing the brief.

Section B – Produce a design brief and specification (8)

- This objective carries 8 marks and the design briefs must be comprehensive, detailed, and challenging. The specification should be detailed and well explained and be used to fully guide the student's design thinking. This was a weak area for many because of the lack of adequate investigation and poor analysis of their findings
- For many the specifications were generic and unlikely to be used to guide design thinking. Often the content did relate to findings but they tended mostly to be vague. At worst, some students introduced new information that did not link back to analysis or any of the investigation work undertaken.
- However, some did investigate and analyse well, wrote challenging briefs, explained specification criteria and then went on to produce well developed prototypes

Section C – Development of design proposals (20)

- At the top end, if the school had understood the changes and guided students correctly the work was exciting and purposeful. Where schools had not embraced or fully understood the requirements of the new specification the work was very similar to the legacy specification single project approach.
- Many students had clearly tried to be innovative in their use of the context. Design work did show good creativity and in the majority of cases a willingness to take risks.
- Not all involved a third party or focus group members when developing and comments from them were often brief and of little real value. Often this was because class peers were used rather than carefully selected users and professionals.
- For some, concept ideas were not carried forward, not all designs were explained and design decisions not always clearly documented. Most had used basic sketching skills with some detailed annotation including third party opinions. Much of the development work would have benefitted from ongoing experimentation.
- Toiles were produced, though often as a practice of the commercial pattern and not as development activities. Work would be improved by better explanations and more photographic evidence to document modifications made. For some, little was recorded about the pattern production process and moderators had to search for evidence to see what had been done, how and why.
- For most there was little consideration of modern materials or technologies explored. Well-equipped schools had used 3D printers, laser cutters and sublimation printers. Many had looked at CAD for the presentation of the designs and considering different colourways. Few students formally explored fabrics, or wrote fabric specifications and then narrowed down fabric choice in relation to working and aesthetic properties. Students on the whole did however make appropriate choices of fabrics as a result of investigation work e.g. product analysis activities and then demonstrated good understanding of fabric properties to provide rationale for choice.
- The exploration of techniques and processes varied. Techniques were often trialled, though in some cases the resultant samples lacked sophistication and quality of finish. Students often failed to take the opportunity to fully exploit the development work through experimentation e.g. fabric manipulation to create innovative work. Group activities were

evident for a lot of decorative techniques and samples were presented without real explanation of how and where and why they would be used.

- There were some poor decisions or lack of application of subject knowledge and understanding e.g. when testing construction techniques, the selection was often shown to consider every type of seam.
- Most manufacturing specifications were either accompanied with a flowchart or a production plan. Quality checks appeared as feedback loops in flowcharts or in a dedicated column in the plan. Some students used ICT to produce very detailed formal documents whilst some hand wrote the document. When this was the case the information was harder to extract. Quality control seemed to be a constant throughout the all of the work and usually in flowcharts and production records along with health and safety issues

Section D – Development of design prototypes that are fit for purpose (20)

- This objective was met with varying degrees of success. Quite often when development work and photographic evidence was poor, it was hard to tell if appropriate techniques were used and whether they were skilfully executed. Most prototypes fully addressed the design brief with the most able considering all modifications to their original design proposals as necessary. These were often well explained. Many designed and made challenging prototypes and provided excellent, clear evidence to justify the marks being asked.
- Students were largely very honest about manufacturing errors. Modifications documented at the manufacturing stages were usually explained and rectified. Most prototypes were photographed “in use” which was helpful to the moderator. A few schools failed to show explicit close-ups of decorative work or internal workings of the prototype construction.
- Some students wrote very detailed production plans which included a column to show if modifications had been needed. Quality control and health and safety issues had been applied and evidenced by most.
- Teacher annotation for Section D was most useful when the skills and techniques used during the production of the prototype had been listed. The most able students made modifications to the prototype in the light of feedback from user trials and focus group feedback at every stage of the development.

Section E – Analysing and evaluating (16)

- Most students used a variety of methods in order to test and evaluate the prototype effectively with most students testing and evaluating throughout the project. Testing was generally done well though the results were not always used to inform the development. The most able chose to test fabrics for qualities that were required specifically for their prototype and always sampled machine stitches. Some, however, missed an opportunity to effectively record third party comment for later use when trying to come up with appropriate and authentic modification suggestions. If the design specification lacked detail, then it was difficult for students to effectively test their prototype against their original intentions.
- The vast majority of students evidenced user trials. At its best, students evidenced a range of photos showing the prototype being tested through sitting, dancing etc.

The criteria states “...how modifications could be made to improve the outcome, together with a full justification for these modifications and full consideration provided for how the prototype could be developed for different production methods.” Many students focused on correcting poor fit or inaccurate manufacturing when considering modifications and few gave full justifications. Some met the modification aspect well with students producing design ideas to show modifications and then evidencing where these had come from and why they would benefit the client product.

A small number sketched possible changes that could be made as a result of analysis of third party and user feedback. Some designed a coordinating range of garments to show how the prototype could be extended to form a range. It was a weakness for many when writing well-reasoned critical analysis reports of their final prototypes with many writing an analysis of their performance and not the final prototype. When students had carefully selected members for their focus groups, they actively became involved in the whole process but mostly with design work, fabric choice and prototype performance.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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