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# A-LEVEL DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY FASHION AND TEXTILES

7562/C Non-exam assessment  
Report on the Examination

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7562/C  
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## Introduction

The original marking criteria was reinstated this year following three years of COVID disruptions.

Students were able to develop their ideas in a practical manner and were expected to carry out cohesive evaluations to meet the expectation of the marks obtainable within sections D and E. Most students chose interesting contexts which allowed for detailed investigation and development. Some centres misunderstood the need for a realistic setting and created celebrity clients and events that realistically would not be achievable. Some students also stated what they intended to make at the very early stages of the NEA prior to investigating the context and identifying an intended user. This approach limits the quality of investigation and exhibits design fixation. Centres should use the TOLS resources and consult their NEA adviser for guidance on the contexts selected by their students. It is also good practice for each student to be given the assessment criteria and for them to consider how they would meet each criterion.

There was ongoing confusion between the design context and the brief. Within the work of these students there was a consistent pattern of the students' own opinions dominating the NEA rather than engaging with the intended user/s to gather feedback which could then be addressed in an iterative manner. As before, this evidence shows a lack of freedom within the development process and ability to respond to the input of a third party. The context should be a concise statement which offers scope for wide and varied research before the student decides, in conjunction with a real client, what to design. Those students who had decided at the very outset what they would make limited their opportunity to explore design possibilities. Missing or poor contexts also affected every part of the project as, without a good foundation to build on, the content of the whole work suffered.

Contexts should be of interest to the student without having a definitive outcome in mind. Students who had a connection to their chosen context often flourished as their obvious interest and passion for the investigations were reflected throughout the NEA. This came in the form of extended development within all areas. The centre may offer feedback and guidance to contexts suggested by the students but must not suggest a context where all the students within an individual centre use the same context. NEA advisers are always happy to offer guidance on the suitability of contexts with teachers. Some examples of broad contexts which gave students the opportunity to create successful projects included:

- *Disabilities*
- *Body Confidence*
- *Performance Fashion*
- *Adaptive Clothing*

Teachers should remember to continually engage with the marking criteria in order to make sure that all objectives are being met. In order for a student to access all marks within each section they should attempt all parts. Aspects that were often missed or not done well by students included:

### Section A

- Engaging continually with the intended user
- First concepts
- Practical experimentation within the research activities.

### Section B

- Detailed project management
- Gantt charts that were irrelevant and not used through the NEA.

### Section C

- Experimentation within the proposed design considerations often lacked extensive illustrative and practical development of processes

- Manufacturing specifications were often lacking in detail.

#### Section D

- A lack of quality photographic evidence to support the manufacturing process.

#### Section E

- A cohesive user trial with questions that encouraged a detailed response.

Students should be encouraged to read the mark band descriptors in the assessment criteria and consider how they will complete work that meets the requirements. Centres are reminded that students should not be working to a teacher-prescribed formula. The work should be their own and reflect their style, interests and the context selected. If it is necessary to provide scaffolding for a particular student this should be reflected in the marks awarded.

### **Presentation and administration**

Most assessing teachers provided detailed supporting commentary for the marks awarded. The vast majority of students also understood the importance of cross referencing where they had met the marking criteria. This combination was helpful to the moderation process. Detailed feedback on the candidate record forms enables moderators to see where/why the marks have been given by the centre.

Students should number their pages and the student name and centre should be displayed clearly on the front cover of each NEA project as the CRFs can often become detached from the work therefore making it difficult to identify the work of specific students. Centres are advised that if submitting their work on A3 sheets, that they are bound in their portfolio to preserve the format and protect the work within each polythene sheet.

### **Section A: Identify and investigate design possibilities (20 marks)**

**Criterion – Excellent rationale provided for the context selected, with continuous reference throughout the project to the end user and the constraints that need to be considered in formulating a final solution.**

- Understanding the difference between a context and a brief was a consistent problem for some students. Those who selected an interesting context were able to explore the theme and develop it extensively.
- Some carried out the expected methods of investigation but did not use the findings to iteratively move forward with their projects. This evidenced a teacher led approach where the students were completing assigned work without actually extracting the value of it to support their prototype development.
- In the majority of cases where Gantt charts featured, they were not used effectively. Most neglected to reflect on them throughout each section and therefore they did not serve any credible value.
- Some students chose a fictional setting and client where their intended user feedback was also fictional. This does not comply with the expectation of the NEA format and all students must understand that the intended user should be accessible and be able to provide primary feedback throughout all stages of the NEA.
- Students used pie charts to reflect the responses of a demographic that completed their questionnaire. This is not discouraged but fixed responses limit the quality of focussed feedback; students should be encouraged to develop these responses into focus group

chat or questionnaires where the respondents can be open with their feedback and suggestions.

**Criterion – Student employs a comprehensive range of strategies and techniques, including both primary and secondary methods of investigation, practical experimentation and disassembly, to thoroughly explore design opportunities. All sources have been fully referenced.**

- The majority of students carefully planned their research activities after refining their contexts to define which investigations would be most useful.
- The most successful work included an aim and outcome within each investigation - this addressed the need for planning and reflection consistently.
- Closed questions responses in the form of pie charts were beneficial when further supported with questions that allowed for free response. Those that didn't gained limited feedback that was primarily determined by the student.
- The most successful students carried out a primary disassembly task and used the findings to support their fabric/component choice. Some used the disassembled pieces to develop a template for their toile/prototype.
- High achieving students carried the outcomes of their research activities into small scale practical sampling. For example - researching a designer who specialises in dyeing techniques and then experimenting with the process is evidence of active response to research.
- Where a centre had taken part in a class visit, most students included this in their NEA regardless of its value to their individual context. A visit should only be referenced if it effectively contributes to the development of the context.

**Criterion – First concepts are both fully relevant to the context and feasible for further development and are clearly communicated through a fully appropriate variety of methods and techniques.**

- Those awarded marks in the lower band demonstrated only a basic level of creativity within their initial concepts and did not take the opportunity to include all the inspiration gained from the outcomes of their research.
- First concept ideas are an excellent way for students to experiment in drawn, modelled or textile form, with ideas suggested by their research. It was a pity, therefore, that many failed to recognise that first concepts were required in order to meet the assessment criteria. Several students missed this requirement completely. Others failed to take the opportunity and only provided very basic pencil sketches.

**Criterion – All investigations relate directly to the design context, issues are identified and fully addressed and the student demonstrates a detailed and perceptive understanding of the information gathered.**

- Some failed to understand that all their investigative work should relate directly to the design context.
- Students who defined the aim of individual investigations and then linked this to the outcome appeared to achieve better marks within this section.
- Some students are conducting 'research' they think should be in their portfolio rather than investigating areas that have relevance to their context. This may be evidence of a teacher led approach.

- Students who wrote a detailed summative analysis report at the end of Section A were able to develop design briefs and specifications with greater clarity and that better covered assessment objectives.

### **Section B: Producing a design brief and specification (10 marks)**

**Criterion – A comprehensive, clearly stated and challenging design brief resulting from a thorough consideration of investigations undertaken, that fully addresses both the context and the needs and wants of the intended user(s).**

- A few students do not understand the difference between a context and design brief. The context sets the theme for the research and the brief is derived from the research findings and the needs and preferences of the intended user.
- A number of students began their NEA projects with a design brief rather than a context. This limited their opportunity to explore design possibilities. It was mostly these students who fixated on a product type without a thorough discussion with a real client.
- Some students remained focussed on their opinions rather than those of their intended user/third party.
- Some students completely neglected to include a definitive client. This limited their investigations and all ongoing activities where there was no third party opinion contributing suggestions for development.
- The most able students wrote challenging briefs that allowed them to fully engage in an iterative and experimental design process.

**Criterion – The student has produced a comprehensive, detailed and well explained design specification which will fully guide the student's design thinking.**

- The most successful design specifications were written by students who were clear on the issue or need they were going to solve. They analysed their relevant investigations in depth and liaised fully with their client on first concept ideas.
- Some students failed to include considerations for costs and quantities. This is an important part of any prototype development and should be acknowledged within the design specification.
- Students should be encouraged to provide a justification for each point of the design specification based on research and client preferences.
- Some students neglected to acknowledge the time frame within which they were working.
- Use of the design specification as a tool for checking and evaluating is central for success in Sections C, D and E. Surprisingly a significant number of students did not do this.

**Criterion – A detailed project management approach to prototype development, including time management and determining quantities and costs of materials, has been fully integrated into the specification.**

- Most students understood the importance of planning and evidenced this well.
- Students who were most successful within this section used their planning measures initially and then reflected on their progress throughout the NEA. Adjustments to their approach were made where necessary.

- Gantt charts can be a useful method of project management but they need to be detailed and used. Too often the Gantt chart was a tick box chart that was never used or updated by the student.

### **Section C: Development of design proposals (25 marks)**

**Criterion – The rationale for design decisions is clearly documented and fully justified with constant reference being made to the design brief, specification and investigations throughout the development of their design proposal.**

- Those awarded high marks explored a broad range of design possibilities on both an illustrative and practical level. These students were able to showcase their creative ability and comply with the design brief in order to refine their ideas through effective communication with their client.
- High achieving students supported their creative concepts with detailed annotations where it was clear they understood the technical challenges with their ideas.
- Students who presented basic ideas with minimal experimentation limited their potential. Considering the marks available for this section, students should be encouraged to provide a broad range of concepts coupled with relevant experimentation in order to access the highest marks in relation to their ability.
- Successful students were focused fully on designing prototypes to meet the needs of the end users. They explained how the designs met the needs of the client and made reference to the brief, design specification and research at every stage.

**Criterion – In the development of innovative design proposals the student will demonstrate clear evidence of originality, creativity and a willingness to take design risks.**

- There was some very exciting work seen from creative students who achieved in the upper mark band of this section. These students understood the requirement to comply with the context, address client needs and to demonstrate their creative ability.
- Some work was over rewarded despite not evidencing the criteria expected. Assessing teachers should refer to TOLS for clarification of the standard.
- For many students, there was a consistent lack of practical development.
- The most successful students took an iterative approach, remaining focused on their client needs and preferences during the development and completion of their final prototype.
- Some students showed originality and took risks in initial design work but did not take this innovation through to the final design prototype. Too often the final design idea was similar to a commercial pattern they had decided to make. This prevented them accessing the higher mark bands.
- Students that used CAD methods alone demonstrated only a relatively simplistic level of skill.

**Criterion – Excellent use of a variety of modelling techniques to support ongoing development work throughout. This is supported by the use of drawings, sketches, annotations and notes showing clear evidence of design thinking.**

- The most successful students included modelling methods within section A, C and E.
- Few students drafted their patterns from stock size blocks. The majority obtained their patterns from shop bought patterns, toiling or through disassembly.

- Higher ability students had a sophisticated style of annotation throughout their NEA. Their comments demonstrated their understanding of the technical challenges, suitability of fabric and components and general suitability of their work in relation to client needs.
- The higher mark bands were achieved when designs were developed as a result of client opinion and input. There was strong evidence of detailed analysis of proposed design ideas.
- Highly capable students developed their prototypes using 'on the stand' methods.

**Criterion – Excellent ongoing development of design proposals, achieved through exploration of and experimentation with different materials, techniques and processes leading to an excellent quality design of a prototype for manufacture.**

- The highest marks were awarded to students who demonstrated an iterative approach. They experimented with practical ideas in Section A and conducted further research during development in Section C with the higher level learners even carrying practical methods through to proposed suggestions for modifications within section E.
- Some students followed a prescriptive formula of drawing a certain number of designs followed by some basic level, small scale samples that assessed their application but failed to assess the success of the sample or otherwise. For example - inserting eyelets but neglecting to test them through wear and agitation.
- As part of a project management approach some students had planned and given reasons for the work they intended to carry out as they developed a final prototype.
- Successful students experimented with product construction by physically testing the strength, durability and functionality of the technique in relation to how and where it would be used.
- Many students evidenced fabric testing by presenting swatches where factors such as absorbance and flammability were assessed. Aspects such as durability can only be effectively tested through wear or use and therefore should be tested in this manner.

**Criterion – Comprehensive and fully detailed manufacturing specification produced which makes specific reference to relevant quality control checks and allows fully accurate interpretation by a third party.**

- The quality of manufacturing specifications had vastly improved in comparison with those assessed last year. Most were effective for third party interpretation.
- Students who did not attain well with the manufacturing specification would have benefitted from presenting a better technical sketch with detailed information in relation to specific dimensions.
- Few students completely neglected to include a manufacturing specification; those who produced lower quality ones would benefit from referring to TOLs examples and feedback events in order to understand aspects that could be improved.
- The most successful students produced technical documents similar to those used in industry with working drawings, dimensions, tolerances, stitch type, fabric swatches, material/component quantities and lay plans.
- Methods of explaining the quality control checks for manufacturing the prototype included flow charts with feedback loops or production planning in table form. For the higher marks the explanations required detail relevant to the product. Feedback loops needed to show the stage that would be required to return to should there be a problem. Bright colours and decorative arrows are not needed on this type of technical document.
- The most able students calculated the cost of their prototype product and compared it to the budget outlined in the design specification.



**Criterion – Project management for manufacturing allows for further development of design proposals in response to ongoing evaluation, testing and full consideration of contingency planning as prototype development takes place.**

- Most students presented evidence of project management within section A and B but then neglected it going forward.
- Project management worked well when students had a definitive prototype idea. They were then able to plan processes alongside the intended time allocated for manufacture.
- The vast majority of students presented flow charts to document the intended manufacturing processes whilst foreseeing possible constraints and how they would be addressed.
- Students working at the lower end of the ability range had minimal evidence of project management as they had determined their final prototype quite early on in the project and therefore they were clear on the ongoing manufacturing processes.
- Client input throughout section C was generally poor. Comments were often quite superficial, particularly in the work of those in the lower mark band.

#### **Section D: Development of design prototypes (25 marks)**

**Criterion – Excellent justification provided for selection of appropriate materials and components and proposed techniques and processes.**

- Some students misunderstood this section and presented rote learned theory content about materials and equipment rather than referencing them fluently in relation to their own bespoke activities.
- Students in the higher mark band demonstrated their understanding of materials and components throughout section C.
- The majority of students were able to select material and components as well as the equipment required for manufacture as a result of effective trialling in section C.
- Lower ability students did not reference how they selected their materials.

**Criterion – Excellent understanding of material properties, tools, equipment and processes is demonstrated to ensure excellent quality prototype design(s) that are fit for purpose.**

- It was pleasing to see that most students were able to produce a prototype in toile form and that many also completed a final product. Those that documented the manufacture with photographs and detailed commentary performed very well on this criterion.
- Some students evidenced their range of skills through photographs of a final prototype but neglected to supply an acceptable level of photographic evidence to support the ongoing manufacturing process. It is essential to provide photographs that support the evolution of the manufactured prototype for the moderator to assess effectively.
- A wide variety of traditional textile machinery and equipment was evidenced and many schools used CAD/CAM for laser cutting and sublimation printing to good effect.
- The more able students explained how the equipment and processes ensured the prototype would be of high quality and fit for purpose.

**Criterion – Prototype design(s) fully address the design brief, satisfying all major points of the specification and take into account all amendments/ modifications to their original design proposals as necessary.**

- A clear brief and design specification with measurable points were central to success in meeting this criterion.
- The higher achieving students evaluated their prototype design against both documents regularly and used the results to inform modifications. By doing so they were engaged in an iterative design process.
- The majority of students neglected to reflect on their specification points during manufacturing and there was a consistent lack of client input as well as partial fittings carried out as the prototype evolved.

**Criterion – Student makes all required modifications to their final prototype design(s) in a fully considered manner in light of third-party feedback and as a result of testing and evaluation carried out against earlier models/iterations of the prototype.**

- Students who had a fictional client were unable to meet this criteria and therefore limited their mark attainment overall.
- Successful work sought feedback from the client at all stages of development and used the feedback to create iterations of the design.
- Students should be encouraged to seek honest critical feedback that will guide improvements.
- The most able students not only re-drew their designs but modelled their ideas. Some re-made toiles or part toiles incorporating client suggestions which were then user trialled.
- Students within the higher mark band who made notable changes presented clear evidence of why this was necessary and then documented the amendments in an articulate manner.

**Criterion - Quality assurance planning is evident throughout to ensure consistency and safety.**

- Those achieving top marks factored quality control into their original specification points and continued to reflect upon these throughout the manufacturing process.
- A focussed approach to quality control is essential in the manufacture of specific sections.
- Lower ability students made only superficial quality control comments.
- References in the manufacturing specification of finished dimensions, tolerances and seam and neatening types were credited as contributing to quality assurance planning. Detailed flow charts with appropriate feedback loops were also relevant.

**Criterion – Clear evidence that appropriate health and safety processes have been considered.**

- The very best work included a risk assessment relevant to the equipment, materials, components and processes being used to make the prototype.
- The less able students mentioned only basic workshop health and safety rules such as tie back hair or keep fingers away from the sewing machine needle. This was not sufficiently rigorous to warrant high marks at A-level.

## **Section E: Analysing and evaluation (20 marks)**

**Criterion – Comprehensive evidence of analysis and evaluation throughout the process, which has clearly informed the chosen context, client or user and the subsequent development of the prototype design(s).**

- Successful students understood that evaluation had to feature throughout the NEA and not only post prototype development and included ongoing evidence of analysis, reflection and evaluation at all stages in order to determine the next steps.
- As with evaluation in Section D, students who were using a pretend or celebrity client could not access the marks for this criterion.
- Some students neglected to complete a final evaluation. There were general comments from the student perspective on the process of manufacture rather than the success of the final prototype in relation to meeting the intended users' needs.

**Criterion – Testing is carried out in a focused and comprehensive way with clear evidence of how the results have been used to inform the design and any modifications to the prototype design(s).**

- Testing of methods, process, fabrics and functionality was continuous within the work of those in the higher mark band.
- Students who engaged with their client throughout the NEA provided excellent evidence of intended user engagement and, in most cases, achieved in the upper mark band as a result.
- Testing included seeking feedback through interviews, focus groups, user trials and fitting sessions.
- As previously stated, the testing of fabric and components was executed less well.
- For this criterion it was important that the student used the feedback and explained the modifications made through drawings, annotation and written explanation. Active response to intended user feedback was essential within this criterion.

**Criterion – Student has provided a well-reasoned critical analysis of their final prototype design(s) which links clearly to their design brief and specification and provides full justification for the extent to which the prototype design(s) is both fit for purpose and meets the needs of the client/user.**

- Detailed commentary on the success or otherwise of meeting specification points was essential for the upper mark band award.
- This is another criterion that depended on the student having produced a brief and design specification with measurable points which could be used to evaluate against.
- Students approached this in different ways. Some opted for a table style comparison with the specification which worked well if the student explained how the point had been met or not. A simple tick/cross or yes/no response did not justify how needs were met or explain fitness for purpose. Some students used a simplistic 'traffic light' colour coding system for evaluation that did not justify decisions or explain outcomes. In these cases, the higher marks for section E could not be achieved.

**Criterion – A comprehensive critical evaluation of their final prototype design(s), clearly identifying 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 design(s) could be developed for different production methods.**

- Some students reflected upon the manufacturing process as opposed to the final prototype itself.
- Those in the upper mark band demonstrated small scale practical experimentation with proposed suggestions for modification.
- The most successful students summarised the feedback they had received from clients and focus groups. They used this and their own evaluations against the brief and design specification to suggest modifications which would improve fitness for purpose and meet client needs more successfully. Using the findings, they drew a modified design and annotated where the improvements were and why they improved fitness for purpose.
- The second half of this criterion was often overlooked. Many students did not explain the modifications needed in order for their prototype to be produced using different production methods. Some made only generic reference to what the different scales of production meant rather than how their product could be modified and made.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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