



A-level

D&T: Product Design

7552/C NEA

Report on the examination

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Presentation and administration

Students continue to produce a wide range of creative and imaginative design and practical work for their Non-exam Assessments (NEA). When choosing a context for their work it is vital that the students choose a task is of an appropriate level of complexity and contain a degree of uncertainty of the outcome so that they can engage in an iterative process of designing, making, testing and evaluating. Many students select contexts that restrict their ability to reach higher grade bands by starting a project that is likely to have a straightforward final prototype or by taking a linear approach to the assignment.

The presentation of the student's work was submitted in a well organised and rational manner. Most centres submit their work electronically. Centres are reminded that the only acceptable formats for work submitted electronically are Microsoft PowerPoint and PDF files. When submitting electronic format folders some centres sent in files that were very large. The file size of PowerPoint files can be reduced by compressing the picture size. If submitting files as .PDF files, selecting a compressed format when saving helps. Centres need to ensure that pen drives containing electronic folders are clearly labelled and named.

Students' work should be labelled in the following format: 7552/C_Cand no._Centre no.

Some students still go over the 45 pages that are advised in the specification. Reducing the font size and better organisation of the layout individual pages can often reduce the number of pages. In the most effective projects, students either divided their work into sections under the design criterion categories or coloured-coded their pages to highlight the criteria being covered. This is especially useful for activities covered under Sections A and E, which may come up at different stages of the project. In most centres, Candidate Record Forms were well annotated which was helpful to show how marks had been awarded. Unfortunately, there were some centres who did not fully utilise the Candidate Record Forms and this really does hinder the moderation process.

Section A: Identify and investigate design possibilities

The majority of students are now working with actual clients and carefully examining the context to help define the direction of their NEA assignments. This sets the scene for the rest of the project and is best shown by using the first few pages of the folder to fully understand the client's needs and requirements. The research and design components of the project should be focused by conducting a structured interview with the customer and observing, evaluating, and recording the challenges they discovered. Photographing where the prototype is going to be used and documenting the client carrying out the tasks or showing the issues faced can add further credibility to the context. Some students continued to lose out on important marks by acting as their own clients and concentrating on a product they intended to create.

The research work produced varies widely in quality; students that score higher include a larger percentage of primary research and do a better job of analysing it. Throughout the project, the research should be included in the most appropriate areas. Fewer students are beginning their projects with generic materials and process research, which frequently has little relevance to the materials and procedures utilised to produce the finished prototype. The development area is the ideal place for materials and process investigation after students have narrowed down their design concepts. Students are using a wide range of primary research methods, including focus groups, interviews with potential customers, observing similar products being used by the client, disassembling similar products to identify useful features/components, materials, and construction techniques, measuring pertinent

components (such as circuit boards, bulbs/fittings, speakers, screws, rivets, and any other standard components), and site/shop visits to analyse potential uses for a product.

Students' primary research findings can be enhanced by the efficient use of secondary research. Only designers and design movements that directly result from conversations with the client should be highlighted when examining design movements. Mood boards must be annotated to clarify their significance to the design's evolution and how the students have found the pictures to be helpful. Measuring the client and comparing the results to the current data might be helpful when utilising ergonomic and anthropometric data.

Section A requires the students to produce a range of creative and imaginative conceptual ideas in their work. These are distinct from the designs that they will produce in Section C which should be more developed in form. The ideas can be produced using a variety of different techniques such as modelling and sketching. These first concepts should demonstrate the student's initial thinking on the problem, and be as imaginative and creative as possible.

Section B: Producing a design brief and specification

The design brief should clearly state the requirements of the prototype that they are going to make; include a description of how the product will help resolve the issues discussed during client interviews. The Brief should be challenging and relate to the context that they have chosen.

It was encouraging to see that more students are creating their own specification criteria rather than following set formats. Students should support the criteria they have selected for their specification with the results of their study. Students should, if feasible, base their criterion on quantifiable factors like size, weight, and anthropometric information.

Gantt charts are commonly used to demonstrate project and time management aspects of this section, although some students produced their time planning in tabular form. All of the types of planning are most successful if they are updated throughout the project with explanations as to why certain targets were met or missed.

Section C: Development of design proposals

This section gives the students the opportunity to demonstrate their imagination and creativity in the production of a range of design proposals which fulfil the brief and specification. Students with higher scores took into consideration a variety of proposals, which were subsequently modelled in appropriate materials and developed through sketching, modelling and CAD. A number of materials and construction techniques should be considered in developing the proposals, resulting in a range of forms and proportions. The best results were then determined by testing these materials and procedures.

Students with lower scores had a predetermined idea of what they were going to develop and were very linear in their progress through design process. Modelling tended to be a three-dimensional representation of their sketched work with little testing and development involved. Students must demonstrate that they have taken into account a variety of designs, materials, and manufacturing processes while creating their final prototype and provide a comprehensive explanation of the design choices they made. The client should be actively involved in the development process, providing input following the creation of the original designs, modelling, and final design.

Most students now include an accurate dimensioned working/orthographic drawing. For complex products containing many parts, individual component drawings were also used to show the finer

details. Most students are now using some form of CAD either in the development or the final presentation of their design. Exploded drawings and rendered final designs were widely used which was great to see.

Additionally, students must create a thorough production plan. Each step of the manufacturing process should be described in this, together with details about the time, materials and components, tools and equipment, quality control, and health and safety.

A number of students are including designs obtained from 3D file databases such as thingiverse, turbosquid and 123dapp. If students are using files from these websites, it is vital that their use is clearly documented in the design folder. Any attempt to pass off downloaded files as the students' own work will be considered as plagiarism. Students can demonstrate ownership of designs by screenshotting the production of the CAD design during their development.

Section D: Development of design prototypes

A wide variety of challenging, high-quality prototypes were produced by students this year. Although several centres overrewarded practical solutions that were built using straightforward manufacturing procedures that lacked the complexity and rigour necessary at this level, even though the majority of centres appropriately marked this portion.

It is essential that the students have experimented with a variety of hand skills and conventional machines during the modelling portion of the development process if the final prototype is to be created exclusively utilising Computer Aided Manufacturing techniques, such as 3D printers and laser cutters. Many students' results in this part will be limited because they have depended too much on CAM approaches.

During the construction of the prototype the student can use the opportunity to carry out further tests on the prototype during manufacture and gain further feedback from the client.

This section allows for the crediting of the practical abilities and procedures that were employed during the Section A and C to research which were the most appropriate for use in the project.

Section E: Analysis and evaluation

The intention of this specification is that evaluation should be an ongoing feature during the design process, with formal evaluation involving the client occurring after the initial ideas, development, modelling, final design, and final prototype. Informal evaluation can occur at any point of the project and may involve the client, when necessary, in supporting design/prototype development. A number of students highlight the ongoing evaluation by adding it in a colour coded text box to emphasise it. The majority of students are successfully comparing their finished prototype to the specification. They must evaluate how well their prototype satisfies the requirements and explain why.

In the summative evaluation, it is helpful to include images of the prototype being used by the client in the situation it was designed for; and using the feedback to demonstrate how the prototype could be improved. In this section, higher level marks are supported by suggesting and outlining potential modifications to the product, possibly using further sketches to show any alterations.

Students are also required to state how the prototype may be manufactured commercially. Higher marks were awarded to students who considered why a specific manufacturing process was selected having compared it to a range of other possible commercial procedures.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

An increasing number of centres and students are making use of Artificial Intelligence in the production of their NEA assignments. Students should make sure that work submitted for assessment is their own. Any submission of work that is not their own will be considered as malpractice. Centres should refer to the Joint Council for Qualifications document “AI Use in Assessments: your role in protecting the integrity of qualifications”, for further clarification on the issue.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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