

Moderators' Report/
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE
AS Design and Technology
Design Technology: Graphic Products
Portfolio of Creative Skills (6GR01/01)

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The work seen this year from the vast majority of centres was again appropriate and met the assessment requirements of the unit.

Almost all centres submitted work in three discernible sections, which were usually physically divided in one portfolio into product investigation, product development and product manufacture. This physical division of the sections often aided the candidates in recognizing the important differences in the individual assessments for each section.

Marking by teacher assessors has gained in accuracy year on year, with centres apparently getting used to the requirements of the course and the demands of the board, often adopting a very formulaic approach to the portfolio, which possibly has the effect of stifling the 'creative' aspect at times. The use of ICT has helped tremendously to organise the centre submissions and aid the communication.

Most marks were supported by appropriate annotation and this helped moderators when writing E9 feedback to centres. Again moderators did not report any great administration problems coming from centres, beyond some addition errors, incorrect transfer of some marks to OPTEMS from CABs and some CABs not signed by teachers and candidates. Centres appear to make sure any amendments are completed in good time, but there have been incidences this season of the failure to correct marks from a centre point of view. Addition errors will be flagged by a moderator on an E6 form; this is then sent to the centre examination officer for an amendment to be made. If the amendment is not corrected by the centre then Edexcel must accept the original entry and regression or adjustment may be made on candidates who do not deserve it.

Some centres failed to label folders and pages clearly. This made the moderation process much more difficult for the moderators. Centres should ensure that each page in the portfolio is clearly labelled with candidate name and number, or at the very least the front page, and title each page so it can be clearly connected with the relevant section of the coursework. Electronic submissions must be in either PDF or PowerPoint formats, or we cannot guarantee them being seen. Each A3 page should be viewable in one without the need to zoom in to view individual words. There was an increase in problems accessing electronic submissions this year and centres should note that Publisher submissions are not acceptable. Where electronic submissions are used then centres need to recognise that CABs are needed in hardcopy not electronic. A number of centres had to print off CABs after submission, thus delaying the process of moderation.

The problems in meeting the requirements for the highest assessment criteria are still centered on candidates who had not met the level of demand required for an AS level submission. The best work came from centres that introduced elements of choice and diversity into their tasks encouraging individual work that fulfilled course requirements but allowed candidates to express their skills and talents. Many centres adopted a formulaic approach where all candidates investigated the same product, were given a very prescriptive design brief and all produced the same manufacturing task, or all 'investigating' the same product. Where

candidates are asked to investigate exactly the same product they often “share” information, which sometimes shows enormous similarities in content between candidates and can in severe cases be referred to the compliance department at Edexcel on malpractice grounds. There has been an increase in the decision to submit class focused practical work, with all candidates making the same product, this is acceptable but it needs to be managed carefully to ensure that all candidates have independent work and decisions documented, or they may not gain the credit expected.

Product Investigation

In Product Investigation, candidates need to select a product that contains at least two materials and is manufactured using more than one process. They are required to investigate the selected product under the headings performance analysis, materials and components, manufacture, and quality. Students, under teacher guidance have complete choice in selecting appropriate products for investigation. Work can be presented in either A4 or A3 format, however the vast majority of candidates submit in A3 format.

The requirements of the Product Investigation element of the course are now more familiar to centres, the vast majority coping well with this section, producing commendable work. Most of the problems in this section still tended to be associated with the comparison of products that were too complex, or too similar, although there was a minor increase in the use of far too complex products in this section this year. Analysing an IPAD against a laptop leaves the student with so much more work to do at the relevant depth than if they were looking at two comparable packaging products.

The work in this section tended to be appropriately completed and the work was generally well marked. Centres often use a template system to enable students to construct their thinking and if any errors are inherent then the entire class makes the same mistake. There are still a significant minority of centres utilising the same products for all their candidates. Whilst this is recognised as an easily managed system the work can often turn out to be formulaic and very similar. The utilisation of a wider range of products in the centre for this part of the submission often helps the centre to discover different products, manufacturing techniques, and processes; thus in turn, extending the knowledge base for commercial manufacturing processes and aiding understanding for the unit 2 examination. This section was generally well presented by schools, and the majority of centres followed a similar pattern of presentation.

In situations of where the candidates failed to perform well, many did not select an effective second product, which was different enough to allow an informative comparison / contrast. This was a particular issue in this year’s submission, with moderators seeing a rise in the number of comments that did not offer any comparisons to the initial product. It is difficult to justify marks allocated for a justified comparison, if the candidate is simply stating ‘there is no alternative’; hence this is a bad comparison to use. The single most obvious reason for a failure to gain the very top marks was a lack of any reasoning that connected to the product being looked at or candidates may just state what the specification point would be for this product or this

attribute of a product, but then would fail to state how the product meets that requirement.

The use of ICT helped candidates to organise and manage their work. Although the wholesale copying of information and then pasting onto sheets is not helpful and we need centres to discourage this from the outset as the structure of the vocabulary and language used often stands out from other work submitted by the same candidate.

The best work was seen where candidates had disassembled products in order to analyse the component parts in detail or at the very least had used or handled the products. Some candidates used only photographs of products to investigate, which severely limited their experience in this section. In the worst cases no image was offered at all for the product and the moderator was left in a difficult position to agree the accuracy of the work submitted.

Criterion A - Performance analysis

This section of the product investigation found some top marked candidates needing adjustment on a regular basis. Too many candidates still do not give sufficient detail to earn the maximum marks; they failed to justify their choices. A few still dealt in generic terms and some gave the information about the function etc. and failed to apply it to the chosen items. A large number of candidates fail to consider the commercial manufacturing process when justify the shape of products, tending to stick rather generically to the aesthetic or ergonomic properties. To state that a drinks bottle is shaped cylindrically to fit in your hand is not the whole story and some connection to the manufacturing requirements should be made, printing pressing etc. Similarly large numbers of candidates failed to justify the materials properties in the materials section. Stating instead the choice of materials rather than the property requirements of the materials to do the specific job required, after all there is an entire section to follow to discuss choice of materials. Many candidates stated that there was a need for the product to perform in a certain way (advertise or seal easily etc.) but failed to state how this point was met, hence there likelihood of meeting the agreed assessment criterion was very limited.

The most successful scenario for the majority of candidates was to set the evidence out as described in the assessment criteria; form, function etc. and then go on to detail each of the elements and attribute them to the products to be compared.

The choice of a similar product to compare and contrast was again central to reaching the higher marks and many candidates failed to consider this fully, selecting products that were too similar such as a glass perfume bottle, compared to another make of glass perfume bottle. Where candidates pursued these very similar products, opportunities to compare and contrast them were minimal.

Criterion B – Materials and components

This section is probably the most successfully completed in the product investigation. The centres clearly have a good idea of what is required. The performance this year is as previously described, dominated by the formulaic approach, which aids the clarity of communication but discourages creativity and real investigation in to the materials requirements, there are still too many centres covering multiple materials in very generic terms rather than focusing on two different materials at the required depth. A significant number of candidates missed out on the top marks by not directly relating the information to the product and too few used good technical terms for the materials properties. Advantages seem to be covered and disadvantages were often left to the readers own determination. Alternative materials were usually suggested, however their justification again failed to focus on the specific material properties to do the job required of the product. Where material alternatives are not obvious the candidate should return to the product to seek an alternative component or make a reasonable attempt at suggesting an alternative with justification for choice. It is not acceptable to state no alternative available. If this is truly the only way forward, the product selected is probably inappropriate for this submission.

Sustainability was addressed by most candidates but again, often at a generalised or superficial level. Candidates sometimes failed to apply their analysis directly to their chosen product. When describing the environmental impact of using particular materials, the majority of responses were generic and superficial, usually mentioning energy use, depletion of resources and problems of disposal.

Criterion C – Manufacture

It was again, rarely a problem for a candidate to identify a manufacturing process, but it was increasingly uncommon to see that process fully justified in terms of the need for the process in the product's manufacture. There were a large number of entries that settled on a description of the manufacturing processes, indeed often copying wholesale from text or internet sources rather than justifying why the choice had been made. We also saw an increase in the failure to offer advantages and disadvantages against the chosen processes in this section. Candidates had some difficulty in suggesting alternatives for some of the products identified, stating; 'no alternative process' in this section. Clearly they will lose out in this situation.

The biggest failing for most candidates was to not be able to state why injection moulding is the best manufacturing process for the screw top on the bottle, or why blow moulding is seen to be the most appropriate process for making the bottle itself.

The majority of candidates offered something to do with the impact on the environment, although many again slipped into talking about the material rather than the process of manufacture, and few really got to the heart of the issue for this in this section.

Criterion D – Quality

This section is much improved and centres have clearly made significant steps forward in the delivery of this section. The work submitted was largely correctly broken down into a whole process QA system and then identifying individual QC steps within that process. The process needs to be explained in terms of the entire manufacture of the product, giving examples of general checking and testing that would take place in the whole process from design to dispatch. Within the quality control examples it is not good enough just to say 'make sure that' or 'check that'. These points should already have been made in the QA process but the statements in the QC process should be specific and state how the quality control checks take place. Quality Standards are often exemplified by candidates but it is not so regularly explained in terms of how it helps maintain the quality of the product and what the manufacturers must do to obtain the specific standard.

Product Design

In Product Design, students are required to submit at least one design task appropriate to AS levels of response that demonstrates their design competencies. They are encouraged to be as creative as possible and to support this there is no requirement for the designed product to be manufactured, which means there are no constraints placed on designs through the limitations of resources found in students. Students have the option in Product Manufacture of making what they design as part of the manufacture section that follows.

In the course of designing, students are expected to produce a range of initial design ideas accompanied by technical annotation, a review of design ideas based on product specification requirements and development of designs into a final design proposal that includes details that would allow a skilled third party to manufacture the intended product.

This section was again considered the weakest part of the portfolio by the moderators this year. The work was often too simplistic and lacked detail and depth. Whilst work was seen at the highest end of the mark scheme, there was a lot of low to mediocre designing offered this year. The vast majority of centres setting topics that stayed within the safety zone of what they have been comfortable with in the past. Many centres adopted a class approach, requiring candidates to design within a given topic.

Criterion E - Design and development

The work submitted in this section requires centres to submit alternative designs that are realistic and detailed. The candidates need to give themselves the opportunity to present information that sells their knowledge about a given topic or technical aspect of a materials application or processes. Offering a new external shape for a building or a bottle gives little to talk about except style or form. Detail is applied through the discussion of the sub-systems in the design and how these factors would be overcome by the designer. Body styling exercises were too common and these failed to deal with the technical detail and sub-system design work required for mark at the highest level. The best all-round work came from

candidates who added informed, succinct and useful annotation to designs, which demonstrated their understanding of materials and processes likely to be used in manufacture, and who presented summative evaluative statements focused on the set design criteria.

Development of a final design proposal varied from (a minority of) varied high quality explorations to an explanation of what manufacturing will take place for a given product. Good levels of credit were achieved by candidates where they understood that development meant 'change', and that they should illustrate this by bringing together the best or most appropriate features of their design ideas into a coherent and refined final design proposal that met all of the design criteria. The work in this section was consistently reported to be disappointing by the moderators. Too many candidates depended upon an explanation of how this would be built with very little exploration or developmental changes taking place.

For successful development there should be evidence of the final design proposal having moved on from an original idea through the results of graphical exploration and evaluation. It is not acceptable to simply take an initial idea and make superficial or cosmetic changes to it and then present it as a final developed proposal. Candidates should include as much detailed information on all aspects of their developed design as possible, as this is an opportunity to show knowledge and understanding of their design and make activities.

The use of modelling was almost always evident, but ever increasingly not as a developmental tool. Too often it was offered at the end of the process to 'prove' the final design would work. We ask the centres to encourage candidates to use the models made to improve designs and move the design forward. Similarly where CAD was used often the final design was not significantly different from, or improved on, the early attempts. The best use of the CAD was to show clear changes and make realistic presentations of how the changes will work in the final product, then assess them and choose the way forward to the final design. A viable working drawing in orthographic was then invariably supported with an isometric derived from the orthographic.

The evaluation of this section was well completed, the work was often formally evaluated at the end, the designs were often evaluated as they progressed and centres often developed a formula approach to ensure this was completed. Evaluative comment can then accompany the development of the section and the specification be used to objectively evaluate at the end.

Criterion F - Communicate

Many candidates achieved good marks in this assessment section. Credit in this section can be gained from communication evidence throughout the design portfolio. However, the level of communication was very varied. Candidates, in some cases, had been coached to use a variety of media to good effect. The use of CAD was widespread and often of high quality the vast majority of candidates demonstrated expert skills in using CAD programs they were familiar with. There was again too little evidence of

candidates producing drawings and enough information for a skilled third party to manufacture a designed product. Where orthographic working drawings were produced, these were very often generated automatically from 3D CAD sketches, which is acceptable. However, a problem in using this technique is that dimensions are often recorded to two or three decimal places, which makes them unrealistic, resulting in a third party being unable to make the product from the drawings provided. It is expected that when this short-cut to a working drawing is used, students will edit and modify dimensions to make them realistic.

A disappointing feature of this section was again the widespread lack of basic drawing ability. Some candidates are in significant need of formal presentation support before they are asked by teachers to present the work at this level.

Product manufacture

In Product Manufacture students are required to plan, make and test one or more products that match the manufacturing criteria of the task. If a single product is made, it must be manufactured using more than one material and process and if more than one product is produced, the collective group must contain more than a single material and process. In this section of the portfolio, it is strongly recommended that teachers set the manufacturing tasks in order to ensure that students improve competencies and learn new skills in preparation for A2 tasks. It is a rule that where CAM is used, it must not exceed 50% of product manufacture. It is recommended that a range of products be submitted to enhance the range of advanced manufacturing skills on display. Where more than one product is made, planning and testing should only be evidenced once.

It is a requirement that clear photographic evidence is submitted that shows the quality and complexity of challenge relating to all manufacturing tasks.

Work in this section should be presented in A3 format.

Making was the most productive element for most candidates in eliciting marks and overall, some very good standards were presented, although a few centres allowed candidates to submit work that was barely of KS4 quality. Yet again even more centres submitted only a single product outcome, hence failing to demonstrate the range of processes and manufacturing techniques looked for. The most successful centres offered two product outcomes, often from different graphical pathways, i.e. architecture and packaging. Some had found demanding projects that allowed for a very wide range of skills in the single outcome, such as a board game. Centres are increasingly finding new technologies to assist with the manufacturing process and we see an increase in the use of CAM outputs every year. It is also worrying this year, to note that centres have begun to utilise the press of the 3d printer to attempt to elicit high marks in manufacturing. This must be balanced with other modelling skills and the candidates must produce a range of skills, not just repeat the same ones. There are still occasions where centres rely too heavily on evidencing skills that are not demanding enough for AS level, the simple placing of a given

mould in the vacuum former and its processing cannot be compared to the student who has prepared a complex mould and added extraction holes, draft angles etc. to manufacture a quality vacuum formed output.

A major growth area in manufacturing is the undertaking of the group project. Candidates can work from a given diagram or picture, but they must decide how to proceed in making the model, from deciding on materials to the final processing and assembly of the product. The use of centre-provided jigs, patterns, templates and files will significantly reduce the candidate's access to the top range of marks in this section. Clearly if a centre makes a net for a candidate to drop graphic images on, there is little in high level skills involved in this. Similarly where candidates are instructed on how to manufacture, sometimes being given instruction booklets, or told to use specific jigs to aid manufacture/moulds to form around, then the work will not be credited to the candidate. This route through manufacturing must be carefully handled, with centres ensuring that all aspects of credited manufacture are the candidates' own work.

Criterion G – Production plan

This section was usually completed to a good standard and well marked. Detailed production plans of the manufactured product appeared in most folders, with clear evidence of tools/processes chosen. A small number of centres do not offer a sequence of key deadlines. This is often most usefully delivered via a Gantt chart, with broad deadlines offered for key components. A diary was often given as supporting evidence; although this did not support the assessment in this section it was useful as a guide for criterion H. There are also a worrying minority of centres producing process statements in their plans that lack significant detail, statements such as 'turn bottle on lathe - 3hours' or 'make vacuum forming mould – 2 hours' gives no indication that the candidate understands the rigors of the process being undertaken and certainly lacks the detail required for the marks at the higher end of the scale. Detailed timings were occasionally missing from the plans, often blocks of days, or lessons, were cited but considered too vague.

Criterion H - Making

The work in this section was largely erratically marked, with level of demand being the main issue that prevents the candidates from meeting their potential. It is not enough to simply collate a list of process completed if those processes are simple basic steps that could be undertaken by a KS3 or KS4 student. Some centres opted to set only one manufacturing task, which is acceptable. However, a significant number of these tasks used only a single material, which does not match the criteria for the higher levels of response despite being generously rewarded by centres. The assessment criterion states that a 'range' of appropriate materials must be selected and that candidates should work with a 'variety' of materials, processes and techniques. In order to fulfill these requirements, the use of at least two materials and processes must be evidenced. It is important to note that candidates for Graphic Products do not need to submit a 3 and 2d element for this submission, but where they did it no doubt supported the

understanding of the theoretical elements involved in other parts of this course and can enhance the range of skills seen in this section.

The majority (and increasing year on year) of centres embraced the ethos of this section and set manufacturing tasks that allowed candidates to experience a range of materials, processes and techniques, planned to develop skills that candidates could call upon when designing and making their A2 project, and some high quality outcomes were seen. Most centres set two tasks and a few set three, but one of these tended to be a paper based output such as a leaflet or advertising material. Some centres opted for a single yet complex product, such as a board game, with packaging to be manufactured, the playing pieces, board and cards/components in the game. It is possible to maintain level for demand with some products if they have a range of processes that recognised as more demanding or have involved the manufacture of jigs or moulds to make the product.

Naturally there were occasions when the level of demand was wanting and candidates were thus unable to access the full range of marks. Where centres set group tasks, the work was often structured too heavily for the candidates to access the full range of marks available. Candidates should only be given working drawings and should then be asked to establish their own choice of materials and production processes for the manufacture of the product. Too many centres were not able to manage this situation satisfactorily and candidates all produced exactly the same products with no input from them about choice of materials, some even having cutting lists supplied by the centre. In these cases the candidates often failed to live up to the high expectations placed upon them in comparison to candidates who had negotiated their own manufacturing and choice of materials. Where candidates were given no choice of materials, for example when a task involved aluminium casting, they should still have an understanding of why that material was appropriate to the product under construction, i.e. good strength to weight ratio, printability, fluidity for moulding, good light conductivity, etc. This information should be offered as justification. Where it was carried out successfully, justification of selection was evidenced through annotation of photographs of making or in the plan for production.

The level of accuracy and precision needs to be in-built to the project selected. Using a laser for cutting and printing did mean that some of the projects were unable to show a full range of skills and techniques. The work produced was unquestionably of a good quality, but this is not within the spirit of the course or the exam or demonstrating a range of skills and processes. It is vital that centres control the range of skills utilised in the manufacturing section, in order that candidates demonstrate a range of manufacturing processes. A simplistic guide is a 50/50 balance of CAM output to more traditional modelling skills. It should be noted that the use of a graphics manipulation package such as in the compilation of the external graphics on a packaged item, this will count towards the range of manufacturing skills.

Where photographic evidence was shown of the making it made it much easier to credit a range of making skills, techniques and materials. The moderators would also welcome a photographic manufacturing record for

the 2nd or 3rd products manufactured too, although there is no requirement to offer any other planning or testing paperwork for these items. Safety awareness was invariably demonstrated through statements within the schedule of making.

Criterion I – Testing

The submissions for this area were erratic in their quality; many candidates are still completing subjective evaluations and leaving the testing as a minor aspect. Moderators have reported that tests are not being explained as evidenced as thoroughly as required and this is therefore not feeding into the evaluations making them less realistic and focused. Centres need to be aware that a good range of tests should to be carried out and these clearly explained, justified and put into context. To enable the evaluation and testing to take place with some value attached, it is worth the candidate putting together at the outset, a specification for the projects undertaken. Candidates then should apply tests to the specification points and use this data to inform their evaluation of the product manufactured. The majority of candidates failed to earn full marks as they carried out an evaluation solely from a personal stand-point. Where third parties were involved, often with a questionnaire, results were fuller and more interesting in that they usually carried a broader spectrum of comment.

The use of photographic evidence was invaluable at this stage and often conveyed the outcomes or experiences of testing at a glance. It was also a significant source of evidence of the use of 3rd party testing, where this had not been evident elsewhere in the portfolio.

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