

# Unit 135: Developing Costume Design Skills

<b>Unit code:</b>	<b>F/502/5662</b>
<b>QCF Level 3:</b>	<b>BTEC National</b>
<b>Credit value:</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Guided learning hours:</b>	<b>60</b>

## ● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is for learners to develop the skills needed to carry out the role of the costume designer in the performing arts industry. Learners will do this by studying skills required by the costume designer and by designing costumes for a performance.

## ● Unit introduction

Every production has a costume design requirement. The budget usually dictates the complexity of the costume design and the costume designer's role could be as small as coordinating the actors' personal clothes or as sophisticated as a big budget production, which requires lavishly detailed period costumes. The costume designer is responsible for the selection of costumes to suggest the subtleties and status of the character, to describe the context and the period.

The costume designer has two main responsibilities. The first is a creative role, the development of costume design ideas through research, text analysis and discussions with the director; the second is a communication and managerial role, the ongoing communication of costume design ideas and the management of the materials, resources and costume construction team to realise the costume designs.

Learners will understand how to analyse a text, to consider the practical and aesthetic demands of the text and to recognise the possibilities and limitations for the costume designer. Learners will develop skills to access and use a range of research sources to inform the development of costume design ideas. They will use these skills to develop final costume design ideas.

Finally, learners will be able to communicate the final costume design concept and costume design ideas to the director and the actors. They will also communicate the practical construction considerations of the final costume design ideas to the costume construction team. Learners will consider the qualities of different fabrics for costume design use and will develop budgeting skills to enable them to work to a costume design budget.

## ● Learning outcomes

**On completion of this unit a learner should:**

- 1 Understand costume requirements of a text
- 2 Know how to apply research skills to develop costume design ideas
- 3 Understand the practical demands of costume design
- 4 Be able to communicate costume design ideas.

# Unit content

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## 1 Understand costume requirements of a text

*Analyse text:* group reading/discussion/interpretation; compiling text analysis; contextualising text; costume plot; historical context; social context; performance demands

*Development of character:* director's concept; character analysis; social status; historical context; motivation of character

## 2 Know how to apply research skills to develop costume design ideas

*Research from a range of sources:* eg exhibitions, galleries, museums, libraries, costume collections, film, video, internet, real life scenarios

*Research:* eg historical, contextual sources, period, style, other productions

## 3 Understand the practical demands of costume design

*Demands of costume:* length of run; location of performance; laundering considerations; actors' movement; stature; body temperature during performance; health and safety

*Materials:* understand and be able to apply a knowledge of costume construction material; laundering; construction; flexibility; fireproof qualities; durability of fabrics; suitability to performance demand; decorative finishes; health and safety

## 4 Be able to communicate costume design ideas

*Communication of design ideas:* eg notes, sketches, guidance for construction methods, fabric swatches, costume design budget, sourcing suitable patterns, dyeing costumes, altering existing costumes, distressing costumes

*Presentation of costume ideas:* to the director; costume construction team; actor; coloured images of final design ideas which show front and back of costume; details of accessories; details for hair/wigs; ability to present and promote costume design ideas

## Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
<b>P1</b> analyse the general costume requirements of a text [IE]	<b>M1</b> competently analyse the costume requirements of a text in some detail	<b>D1</b> analyse the costume requirements of a text in full accurate detail
<b>P2</b> provide rudimentary character analysis and a costume plot [IE]	<b>M2</b> provide a considered character analysis and an appropriate costume plot	<b>D2</b> provide a fully detailed thoughtful character analysis and costume plot
<b>P3</b> use research findings to inform the design of the costumes [IE]	<b>M3</b> use the research findings creatively and effectively to inform the design of the costumes	<b>D3</b> use the research findings in an innovative and wholly appropriate way to develop the creative design of the costumes
<b>P4</b> anticipate and consider some practical performance requirements when designing costumes for performance [IE]	<b>M4</b> competently consider most of the practical performance requirements when designing costumes for performance	<b>D4</b> demonstrate a fully informed and wholly appropriate consideration of the practical requirements when designing costumes for performance
<b>P5</b> design costumes for a performance [CT, SM]	<b>M5</b> design creative and considered costumes for a performance	<b>D5</b> design a set of fully considered and wholly appropriate costumes for a performance
<b>P6</b> demonstrate how to communicate general costume design ideas to a director, the actors and a costume construction team. [TW]	<b>M6</b> demonstrate effectively how to communicate considered costume ideas to a director, the actors and a costume construction team.	<b>D6</b> demonstrate how to communicate fully considered costume ideas with wholly detailed accuracy to a director, actors and a costume construction team.

**PLTS:** This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

# Essential guidance for tutors

## Delivery

The initial focus of this unit must be on the development of learners' costume design skills. The unit must teach and develop research approaches and design development skills through practical experiments with the focus of producing costume designs for a theoretical performance. It is advised that learners develop their research and design skills through small practical exercises to build confidence and to develop their own individual style which is important for a designer.

Learners will develop the ability to analyse a text to discover the performance requirements and to complete a detailed character analysis which identifies the role of the character and the contribution of the character to the plot. Learners will develop the ability to identify the costume requirements of a production in a costume plot.

Learners will need to understand the properties and behaviours of possible costume design materials to enable the confident application of materials in their costume designs. They will also have to develop a working understanding of costume construction or alteration skills.

Learners will develop the skills to enable the clear communication of the final costume design ideas with an understanding of how to promote and sell their design ideas and to communicate clearly possible construction approaches.

## Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities/assessment
Introduction to structure and content of unit.
Introduction to the purpose of costume design and the role of the costume designer within the production process.
Introduction to costume requirements of a text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• text analysis</li><li>• character analysis.</li></ul>
How to produce a costume plot.
<b>Assignment 1:</b> Costume Design Skills – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2 Learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• analyses costume requirements of a given text drawing on skills taught in previous sessions</li><li>• carries out character analysis of a given text drawing on skills acquired in previous sessions</li><li>• produces a costume plot for a given text drawing on skill taught in previous sessions.</li></ul>
Introduction to applying research skills.
Introduction to communication of design ideas – sketches, notes.
Presentation skills – mock presentation.

## Topic and suggested assignments/activities/assessment

**Assignment 2:** Analysis, Research and Design – assignment project on given text  
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4, P5, M5, D5

Learner:

- analyses costume requirements for three characters from a given text, drawing on text and character analysis skills taught in previous sessions
- carries out research and uses it to inform costume designs
- designs costumes for three characters from the given text using techniques taught in previous sessions
- gives presentation of costume designs.

Consideration of practical performance requirements when designing costumes for a production – lecture/discussion.

How to communicate costume designs effectively to directors, actors and a costume construction team – lecture/discussion.

**Assignment 3:** Designing Costumes for a Production  
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4, P5, M5, D5, P6, M6, D6

Learner:

- attends production design briefing by director
- analyses costume requirements for three characters from a production
- carries out research and uses it to inform costume designs
- discusses design ideas with the director
- produces initial design ideas
- produces coloured images of at least three final designs ideas which show front and back of costume costumes for three characters from a production
- produces costume plot
- produces evidence of having considered practical demands of the costume design
- considers accessory details
- considers details for hair/wigs
- gives presentation of costume designs to director and actors
- communicates with costume construction team
- produces guidance or construction methods
- discusses fabric requirements
- discusses patterns
- discusses altering existing costumes
- discusses dying and distressing costumes
- attends technical rehearsal, dress rehearsals and first performance.

Feedback and review sessions – whole class and one to one.

## Assessment

It is important that learners are able to experiment with approaches and gain frequent formative assessment feedback on their success from the tutor and from peers in the early stages of the unit to contribute towards the development of their individual design style.

The delivery system within the centre may suggest a number of smaller assignments focused on specific criteria, or a longer term more detailed assignment that covers all criteria areas. There is scope within this unit for integration with work carried on other units. In this case, assessors must be able to correctly identify the components belonging to this unit and assess in an appropriate manner.

Assessment evidence should include a variety of formats, for example sketches, swatches, finished costume/s, research notes.

Learning outcome 1, which relates to grading criteria 1 and 2, requires learners to demonstrate their ability to analyse the general costume requirements of a text and their ability to provide rudimentary character analysis and a costume plot. Differentiation between, pass, merit and distinction will be apparent through the level of understanding that learners demonstrate in the work submitted.

- At pass level, learners will analyse some costume requirements. The answer will be straightforward but correct. The character analysis will show a limited understanding of the characters and learners will make few references to the text. The costume plot will be simplistic.
- At merit level, learners will analyse the text in some detail. A sense of thoughtfulness will be shown in their work and examples given. The character analysis will demonstrate an understanding of a character's role within the production and examples from the text will be given to back up learners' findings. The costume plot will be accurate and detailed.
- At distinction level, learners will produce a thoroughly detailed and accurate analysis of the costume requirements of the text. Learners will articulate their understanding intelligently and back up their ideas with reference to the text. Learners will comment critically on the characters within the text and produce examples within the text to justify their findings. The costume plot will be wholly accurate and comprehensive.

Learning outcome 2, which relates to grading criterion 3, requires learners to carry out research and to use their findings to inform the design of the costumes. Differentiation between pass, merit and distinction will be apparent through the level of learners' ability to use research findings to inform the design of the costumes.

- At pass level, learners will produce some basic research, which will be used in a simple way to inform the costume designs. Learners will attempt to identify how the research has informed the costume designs but the information will be limited and lack clarity.
- At merit level, learners will produce detailed research and will successfully use it to inform the costume designs. Learners will clearly explain the link between the research material and the development of the costume designs. A sense of thoughtfulness will be shown in learners' work.
- At distinction level, learners will produce detailed research findings and will use them intelligently and creatively to inform their costume designs. Learners will demonstrate a sophisticated development of the research material and will fully articulate the link between the research and the development of their costume designs.

Learning outcome 3, which relates to grading criterion 4, requires learners to understand the practical demands of costume design. Differentiation between a pass, merit and distinction will be shown in the level of understanding that learners show of the practical performance requirements when designing costumes for a performance.

- At pass level, learners will identify some practical performance requirements when they are designing costumes for a performance. Their answers will be basic but correct. Learners will show a limited understanding of performance requirements and little attempt to justify their responses will be made.
- At merit level, learners will assess most of the practical performance requirements when designing costumes for performance. Their answers will show thoughtfulness and that they understand the demands of the production. Learners will be able to justify their findings and will give examples to support their comments.
- At distinction level, learners will critically comment on all of the practical performance requirements when designing costumes for performance. Their answers will demonstrate a sophisticated awareness of the demands of the production. Learners will be able to articulate their findings fluently and provide full justification for all statements made.

Learning outcome 4, which relates to grading criteria 5 and 6, requires learners to design costumes for a performance and communicate the ideas to a director, the actors and a costume construction team. Differentiation between pass, merit and distinction will be shown in the level of skill and appropriateness shown in the costume designs and the level of communication skills shown by learners when presenting and discussing their designs.

- At pass level, learners will produce basic costume designs. The designs will be unelaborated and although simplistic must clearly show the artistic intentions of learners. Learners will show limited communication skills and will expect to receive support from their tutor to achieve this criterion.
- At merit level, learners will produce designs that demonstrate a creative response to the text. Aesthetic decisions will be considered and on the whole satisfying. Learners will be proactive and will use some effective communication skills. Learners will expect to receive some help from their tutor to achieve this criterion.
- At distinction level, learners' designs will be characterised throughout by creative thinking. The designs that learners develop will show that they have a secure understanding of the text and the demands of the production. Learners will work independently and communicate their ideas to the director, actors and the construction team confidently.

## Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2	<b>Assignment 1:</b> Costume Design Skills (Group exercise on character/text analysis and costume plots.)	Brief from a designer to carry out text/character analysis for a given piece of performance material.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>written evidence of having carried out text and character analysis</li> <li>a written costume plot.</li> </ul>
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4, P5, M5, D5	<b>Assignment 2:</b> Analysis, Research and Design (Group exercise on designing costumes for a production.)	Brief from a theatre company to design costumes for a given piece of performance material.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>written evidence of having carried out text and character analysis</li> <li>a written costume plot</li> <li>a portfolio of historical and/or contemporary research</li> <li>written evidence of considering the practical requirements of the costumes</li> <li>final costume designs presented to director and cast (recorded).</li> </ul>



Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4, P5, M5, D5, P6, M6, D6	<b>Assignment 3:</b> Designing Costumes for a Production  (Learners work as part of the production team.)	Brief from a theatre company to design costumes for a given piece of performance material.	Project portfolio consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written evidence of having carried out text and character analysis</li> <li>• a written costume plot</li> <li>• a portfolio of historical and/or contemporary research</li> <li>• written evidence of considering the practical requirements of the costumes</li> <li>• final costume designs presented to director and cast (recorded)</li> <li>• all pre-production documentation and notes relating to all discussions with the director, actors and the costume construction team.</li> </ul>

## Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Art and Design sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Art and Design suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Introduction to Fashion Visualisation and Presentation	Developing Fashion Visualisation and Presentation Techniques	Fashion Presentation Techniques
	Developing Pattern Construction Skills	Garment Production
		Accessory Production

This unit may also have links with the following National Occupational Standards:

#### Technical Theatre

- CPD4b – Overseeing technical production work for performance
- G4a – Managing finance for a defined work activity
- G6a – Providing Leadership
- G11b – Developing and maintaining work relationships
- HS2 – Assessing risks
- HS5 – Controlling risks
- TP4b – Provide design information to enable drawings to be produced
- TP2.1a – Contribute to the interpretation of designs for costumes
- TP3.1b – Planning costume requirements for a production.

### Essential resources

Learners will need access to a learning resource centre, library, internet, specialist video, film, exhibitions, galleries and museums for research. For the design element, a basic design studio environment will be required with the appropriate drawing/designing materials and storage facilities for finished work.

### Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Learners should develop links with theatre, film and television studios that have costume design/construction departments. Most of the large producing these companies such as The Royal Shakespeare Theatre and The National Theatre offer work placements to learners – [www.rsc.org.uk](http://www.rsc.org.uk) and [www.nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk). Costume designers and makers are usually willing to talk to learners about the processes involved in designing and constructing costume.

Both Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the audio-visual industries and the BBC have a substantial sections of their websites dedicated to careers, including job descriptions – [www.skillset.org/careers](http://www.skillset.org/careers) and [www.bbc.co.uk/design/careers](http://www.bbc.co.uk/design/careers).

## Indicative reading for learners

### Textbooks

Betzina S – *Fabric Savvy: The Essential Guide for Every Sewer* (Taunton Press, 2002) ISBN 9781561585731

Blumenthal E and Taymor J – *Julia Taymor: Playing With Fire, 3rd Edition* (Harry Abrams, 1999)  
ISBN 9780810930773

Campbell H – *Designing Patterns: A Fresh Approach to Pattern Cutting* (Nelson Thornes, 1980)  
ISBN 9780859504041

Huaixiang T – *Character Costume Figure Drawing: Step-by-Step Drawing Methods for Theatre Costume Designers*  
(Focal Press, 2004) ISBN 9780240805344

Ingham R and Covey L – *The Costume Technician's Handbook, 3rd Edition* (Greenwood Press, 2003)  
ISBN 9780325004778

Moss S – *Costumes and Chemistry: A Comprehensive Guide to Materials and Applications* (Batsford, 2001)  
ISBN 9780896762145

Peacock J – *Costume 1066 to the Present, 2nd Edition* (Thames & Hudson, 2006) ISBN 9780500286029

Peacock J – *Fashion Accessories: The Complete 20<sup>th</sup> Century Sourcebook* (Thames & Hudson, 2000)  
ISBN 9780500510278

Peacock J – *Men's Fashion: The Complete Sourcebook* (Thames & Hudson, 1996) ISBN 9780500017258

Peacock J – *The Complete Fashion Sourcebook: 2,000 Illustrations Charting 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fashion* (Thames &  
Hudson, 2006) ISBN 9780500512760

Thorne G – *Designing Stage Costumes: A Practical Guide* (The Crowood Press, 2001) ISBN 9781861264169

### Website

[www.theatredesign.org.uk](http://www.theatredesign.org.uk)

British Society of Theatre Designers

## Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are...
<b>Independent enquirers</b>	carrying out text/character analysis and research
<b>Creative thinkers</b>	generating costume design ideas
<b>Team workers</b>	communicating costume design ideas to the director, the actors and the costume construction team collaborating with others to produce costume designs
<b>Self-managers</b>	showing initiative, commitment and perseverance when working towards the objective of producing costume designs for a production.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>Independent enquirers</b>	planning and carrying out research and appreciating the consequences of decisions analysing and evaluating information, judging its relevance and value
<b>Creative thinkers</b>	trying out alternative ways of producing costume designs and following ideas through adapting costume design ideas as circumstances change
<b>Reflective learners</b>	inviting feedback on costume designs and dealing positively with praise, setbacks and criticism evaluating experiences and learning from them to inform future design projects
<b>Team workers</b>	showing fairness and consideration to other members of the costume production team providing constructive feedback and support to other members of the costume production team
<b>Self-managers</b>	working towards goals, showing initiative and perseverance responding positively to change, seeking advice and support when needed
<b>Effective participators</b>	discussing issues of concern regarding their designs, seeking resolution where needed identifying improvements that could be made to their designs that would benefit others as well as themselves.

## ● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>ICT – Use ICT systems</b>	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	carrying out historical and/or cultural research
<b>ICT – Develop, present and communicate information</b>	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• text and tables</li> <li>• images</li> <li>• numbers</li> <li>• records</li> </ul>	collating historical and/or cultural research producing a costume plot
<b>English</b>	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	presenting costume design ideas to the director, the actors and the costume construction team
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	reading text and producing appropriate text analysis carrying out historical and/or contemporary research
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	reading text and producing appropriate text/character analysis producing research findings.