

A-level

**Design and Technology: Fashion
and Textiles**

7562/C NEA

Report on the Examination

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Introduction

The standard of work produced across the series was diverse and students had a better understanding of the marking criteria in comparison to previous years. Most students chose interesting contexts which presented a good platform for detailed investigation and development. A greater than average number created fictional settings and celebrity clients and events to design for. A minority of cohorts stated what they intend to make from the very early stages of the NEA prior to investigating the context and identifying an intended user. This method limits the quality of investigation and exhibits design fixation. The centres where students performed most successfully used the TOLs resources and the assessing teachers within these centres referenced TOLs projects to further explain their justification for the mark awarded. Many centres did not avail themselves of the support of their NEA advisor and, as a result, their students produced work that neglected to address the assessment criteria.

There were more than a few issues highlighted in the 2023 report on the exam that appear to have resurfaced this series, specifically regarding the clarity of the design context and engagement with users. A recurring problem was students' reliance on their own opinions, rather than seeking and incorporating feedback from intended users in an iterative process. This evidence underscores a lack of flexibility and responsiveness to third-party input in the development processes.

The design context should be a concise statement that provides a broad scope for research, allowing students to collaborate with a real client to determine the design direction. However, some students predetermined their project outcomes from the start, restricting their ability to explore diverse design possibilities. Poorly defined or missing contexts negatively impacted every aspect of their projects, leading to weak foundations and compromised content throughout.

The most successful students were those who crafted contexts that were deeply personal and relevant to their own experiences. These contexts addressed real problems that had previously remained unresolved, providing a genuine foundation for their investigations. By identifying issues that mattered to them on a personal level, these students were able to approach their projects with a heightened sense of motivation and engagement.

Teachers should remember to continually engage with the marking criteria to ensure that all objectives are being met. For students to access the full range of marks within each section, they should attempt to cover all parts of the criteria comprehensively. Commonly overlooked aspects by students include:

Section A:

- Engaging continually with the intended user: it is crucial that students maintain ongoing communication with their intended users throughout the project to ensure that the design remains user-centred and relevant.
- First concepts: students should develop and present initial design concepts early in the process. These serve as a foundation for further development and refinement.
- Practical experimentation within the research activities: practical experimentation is essential to explore and validate ideas. Students should actively incorporate hands-on research activities to test and iterate their concepts.

Section B:

- Detailed project management: effective project management is key to staying organised and on track. Students should provide detailed plans and timelines to demonstrate how they will manage their projects.
- Gantt charts: these should only be included if they are relevant and actively used throughout the NEA. A Gantt chart can help students visualize their project timeline and ensure they are meeting deadlines.

Section C:

- Experimentation within the proposed design considerations often lacked extensive illustrative and practical development of processes. Detailed manufacturing specifications were frequently missing.

Section D:

- Quality photographic evidence to support the manufacturing process was often inadequate.

Section E:

- User trials lacked cohesion, with questions that did not encourage detailed user responses.

Students should be encouraged to read the mark band descriptors in the assessment specification and consider how to meet these requirements in their work. They should not follow a formula prescribed by a teacher; instead, their work should reflect their unique style, interests, and the context they have selected. Centres should ensure that A-level students' work is independently crafted and not dictated by a teacher's formula. If scaffolding is necessary for a particular student, this should be reflected in the marks awarded.

Administration

Some centres used a marking grid that featured the assessment criteria, highlighting where they had allocated marks based on the student's NEA submission. This was effective for the moderation process. Most assessing teachers provided detailed supporting commentary for the marks awarded, which greatly facilitated the moderation process. Additionally, most students understood the importance of cross-referencing where they had met the marking criteria. This combination was instrumental in ensuring clarity and agreement on the marks provided by the centre.

Detailed feedback on the student record forms enables moderators to accurately agree with the centre's marks. To further streamline this process, students should number their pages and clearly display their name and centre on the front cover of their work. This precaution is necessary because CRFs can sometimes become detached from the folder, making it difficult to identify specific student's work.

Centres are advised that if submitting work on A3 sheets, these should be bound in a portfolio format. Submitting as loose leaf or tied with strings within the margins, proves difficult to mark as the pages become torn and dishevelled through the moderation process. Presenting pages in an A3 portfolio not only preserves the presentation but also protects the work within each polythene sheet. Proper binding ensures the integrity and organisation of the submissions, making them easier to handle and review. It is

strongly advised that students avoid having aspects within their pages that have to be unfolded or lifted to be able to reveal additional content. This makes the moderation process difficult and should be discouraged from the offset of the NEA.

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.
- Some students stated what they intended to make at the very beginning of their NEA evidencing design fixation.
- There was a lack of bespoke investigations. Students should select areas of investigation that will provide valuable insight into their context and avoid carrying out investigations that serve no value.
- Evidence of project planning was a weakness in the work of those in the lower mark award. In the majority of cases where Gantt charts featured, they were not used effectively.
- Some students chose a fictional setting and client, and 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 project.
- The general feedback and outcomes from disassembly tasks was broadly superficial in most cases. One group of students successfully used their disassembly findings to draft toile patterns and to determine fabric and component suitability.

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 most successful students stated an aim and outcome for each investigation - this addressed the need for planning and reflection consistently.
- Pie chart responses from focus groups provided some direction for ongoing development but limited to the ability to write an extended response from a definitive singular client.
- The most successful students used mixed media and a range of modelling methods to develop and experiment with the findings of the research.
- Higher 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.
- There was a general lack of primary visits to a place of interest/inspiration amongst the submissions within this series. A primary visit should only be made if relevant, although students should be encouraged to use this area of research as it may provide a broader perspective of their 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 on the lower mark award demonstrated a basic level of creativity in 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 did not recognise that first concepts were required in order to meet the assessment criteria. Several students ignored this requirement completely. Others 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 students carried out investigations but neglected to evidence their value in terms of inspiring their ongoing research activities and possible design solutions.
- Some students appear to be conducting ‘research’ that they think should be in their portfolio rather than investigating areas that have relevance to their context. This may be indicative 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 design specifications with greater clarity and alignment with 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 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 needs and preferences of the intended user.
- Some students designed entirely for fictional clients and scenarios, for example: celebrities attending high profile events such as the met gala and tasks that required them to design a range for a high street store. It is a clear deviation from the specification to design for a fictional client/setting and this should be discouraged in the work of all students.
- A number of students remained focused on their own opinions rather than incorporating feedback and insights from their intended user(s) or third parties. This approach limited their ability to fully understand and address the needs and preferences of the end users. Consequently these students missed valuable opportunities to enhance their design proposals through iterative development and user-centred design practices.

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

- Most students presented specification points that were bespoke to their context. Essential specification points for prototype development were featured within the work of all students. Those who were awarded within the lower mark in this section supported their points with superficial justification.
- Students who were awarded top band marks within this section continually referenced their client, highlighting their needs and preferences and how the student intended to address fulfilling them.

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 provided substantial evidence to support this. Some presented a table of intentions with the research activities listed and then justified the reasons for the chosen investigations.
- The most successful students used their planning from the outset and continuously reflected on their progress throughout the NEA, making adjustments to their approach as necessary to ensure they remained on track.
- While Gantt charts can be a useful project management tool, they need to be detailed and actively used. Too often, they were treated as a mere formality, with students not updating or utilising them effectively.

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.

- The most successful students explored a wide range of design possibilities, both illustratively and practically. They effectively showcased their creative abilities while adhering to the design brief, refining their ideas through ongoing communication with their client.
- These students supported their creative concepts with detailed annotations, demonstrating a clear understanding of the technical challenges involved.
- Students who presented basic ideas with minimal experimentation had limited potential for high marks. Given the number of marks available for this section, students should be encouraged to provide a broad range of concepts and relevant experimentation to maximise their potential.
- The highest achieving students remained focused on designing prototypes that met the needs of the end users. They consistently explained how their designs addressed the client's needs, referencing 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 from creative students who achieved in the upper mark band of this section. These students understood the need to comply with the context, address client needs, and demonstrate their creative ability.
- There was an even distribution of designs that were illustrated by hand and designs that were illustrated with the use of an app, photoshop as well as other CAD methods.
- Some students were generously credited despite not meeting the expected criteria. Assessing teachers should refer to TOLs for clarification on the standard.
- The most successful students took an iterative approach, remaining focused on their client needs and preferences, which was evident during and upon completion of their final prototype.
- Some students showed originality and took risks in initial design work but did not carry this innovation through to the final design prototype. Too often, the final design resembled a commercial pattern they had decided to make, preventing them from accessing the higher mark bands.

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 incorporated modelling methods in sections A, C, and E.
- On the stand modelling and draping methods were used successfully to obtain the pattern for prototypes. Those who were less successful used commercial patterns and adapted them minimally.
- Higher-achieving students displayed a sophisticated style of annotation throughout their NEA. Their comments demonstrated an understanding of technical challenges, fabric and component suitability, and general relevance to client needs.
- Higher marks were achieved when designs were developed based on client opinions and input, with strong evidence of detailed analysis of proposed design ideas.

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 most successful students exhibited an iterative approach, experimenting with practical ideas in Section A and conducting further research during development in Section C. Higher-level learners even carried practical methods through to proposed modifications in Section E.
- Many students presented samples of features and proposed decorative methods on a small scale but neglected to test the proposed feature in the ergonomic setting in which it would be used - this in turn, did not test the sample's functionality. Carrying sampling methods out like this only tests the student's ability to create the features rather than actually testing out the features' ability to function as intended.
- Successful students tested product construction by physically assessing strength, durability, and functionality in relation to its intended use.

- As part of their project management, some students planned and justified the work they intended to carry out while developing their final prototype.
- Many demonstrated fabric testing by presenting swatches with evaluations of factors such as absorbency and flammability. However, aspects like durability can only be effectively tested through actual wear or use and should be tested accordingly.

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 most successful students produced manufacturing specifications that were representative of the standard that would be seen at industry level.
- Students who were less successful neglected to include technical sketches of their prototypes from a range of viewpoints and inclusive of dimensions.
- While few centres completely omitted manufacturing specifications, those with weaker quality specifications could improve by referring to TOLs examples and feedback events to identify areas for enhancement.
- Methods for explaining quality control checks in the manufacture of the prototype included flow charts with feedback loops or production planning tables. Higher marks required detailed explanations relevant to the product, including feedback loops that indicated the stage for returning if issues arose. Bright colours and decorative arrows are not necessary for technical documents.
- The most capable students calculated the cost of their prototype and compared it to the budget specified 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.

- The most successful students engaged with their clients throughout the design development process and made quantifiable decisions to address client needs and preferences whilst complying with the time constraints of the project.
- Most students provided evidence of project management in Sections A and B but then disregarded their planning within section C and onwards.
- A majority of students used flow charts to outline their intended manufacturing processes, anticipating potential constraints and their solutions.
- Those at the lower end of the ability range showed minimal evidence of project management, having settled on their final prototype early in the project and therefore having a clear manufacturing process.

Section D : Development of design prototypes (25 marks)

Criterion – Excellent justification provided for selection of appropriate materials and components and proposed techniques and processes, demonstrating an excellent understanding of material properties to ensure excellent quality prototype(s) that are fit for purpose.

- The majority of students provided valid evidence to support their choice of equipment, materials, and components.
- Lower ability students did not explain their material selection process, which suggested that the materials may have been chosen based on teacher recommendations rather than their own assessment. These samples were presented as swatches on a table of information that informed their featured properties, weave type and aftercare information. This format is factfile-esque and therefore not iterative.

Criterion - Significant complexity or challenge is involved throughout the production of prototype(s). The student demonstrates excellent manufacturing skills combined with an excellent understanding of the need for dimensional accuracy and precision.

- The most able students produced prototypes that presented technical challenge which the students were able to address. The quality of finish within these prototypes was excellent and there was sufficient photographic evidence to support this.
- The majority of students produced prototypes that were made to an excellent standard; however, the complexity and challenge within the manufacture processes was basic and therefore the ability to attain top band marks was limited.
- There was a lack of close up photographs to support evidence for the internal workings of the prototypes – it is essential that these are presented to fully support the manufacture process so that the moderator can make a cohesive judgement on the marks awarded.

Criterion – The student has selected and used appropriate tools, machinery and equipment, including CAM where required, and worked with a high level of skill, precision and accuracy to produce their prototype(s).

- The most successful students presented clear photographs that were of a reasonable size to support the toile and prototype development. These images were supported with annotations that supported the processes required to produce the final outcomes.
- A number of students supporting the prototype development process with minimal photographs. This raises concerns during moderation as it is then difficult to validate that the student has produced the prototype as an individual and without intervention from a third party.
- A diverse range of traditional textile machinery and equipment was used, with many centres effectively employing CAD/CAM technologies for laser cutting and sublimation printing.
- More able students explained how the equipment and processes used ensured that the prototype would be of high quality and fit for its intended purpose.

Criterion – Prototype(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.

- Most students did not engage with their intended user/client during the production of the prototype. There must be consistent engagement with the client and modifications made if and when required, based on fittings during the manufacture process.
- The success in meeting this criterion was largely dependent on having a clear brief and a design specification with measurable criteria.
- The most successful students consistently evaluated their prototype design against both documents and used these evaluations to guide modifications, demonstrating engagement in an iterative design process.
- Most students did not reflect on their specification points during the manufacturing process, and there was a consistent lack of client input and partial fittings as the prototype developed.

Criterion – Student makes all required modifications to the prototype in a fully considered manner in light of feedback from user trials and third party feedback and as a result of testing and evaluation carried out against earlier iterations of the prototype.

- Students with fictional clients did not meet this criterion, which limited their overall achievement. They were unable to engage with their client on a first-hand basis and therefore missed the opportunity to gain credit for this.
- The most successful students actively sought feedback from their clients at all stages of development and used this to iterate on their designs.
- Students awarded the highest marks made significant changes and provided clear explanations for these modifications, documenting the amendments in a detailed and articulate manner.

Criterion - Quality assurance is evident throughout and it is clear where planned quality control checks have been applied throughout the process to ensure consistency and safety.

- The most successful students incorporated quality control into their original specifications and consistently reflected on these points throughout the manufacturing process.
- Lower ability students often made only superficial quality control comments. Generic comments do not qualify as bespoke acknowledgments for quality control.
- References to finished dimensions, tolerances, and seam and finishing types in the manufacturing specification were recognised as contributing to quality assurance planning. Detailed flow charts with appropriate feedback loops were also considered relevant.

Criterion – Clear evidence throughout the manufacturing process that appropriate health and safety processes have been both considered and employed.

- The very best work included a risk assessment relevant to the equipment and processes being used to make the prototype. The assessed risks were bespoke to the process, material, component, and equipment being used simultaneously.

- The less able students mentioned 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 evaluating (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.

- Section E was the weakest area of the majority of NEA submissions. Students appear to be less familiar with the assessment criteria for this section and are therefore not presenting work that has the potential for good attainment.
- A large majority of students dedicated this section to reflecting on their own personal experience of the NEA, referring to the skills they had learned and whether they enjoyed the processes overall.
- Some students neglected to carry out cohesive user trials and instead presented images of the final prototypes on a mannequin.
- The most successful students recognised that evaluation needed to be integrated throughout the NEA, not just after prototype development. They consistently demonstrated analysis, reflection, and evaluation to guide their next steps.
- As in Section D, students working with a fictional or celebrity client could not achieve marks for this criterion.

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.

- Testing was generally weak across the work of most students. Testing the prototype in the ergonomic setting it was designed for is essential for effective testing overall.
- Those who achieved lower marks within this section commented on the aesthetics of the final prototype as opposed to its functionality and ability to meet the needs of the client/intended user.
- Students awarded the highest marks demonstrated continuous testing of methods, processes, fabrics, and functionality throughout their work.
- For this criterion, it was crucial that students utilised the feedback received and clearly explained the modifications made through drawings, annotations, and detailed explanations. An active response to user feedback is essential for meeting this criterion

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

- Detailed commentary on how well specification points were met was crucial for achieving the highest marks.

- Students did not address the brief in many cases, comparing with the specification points only.
- This criterion relied on students producing a brief and design specification with measurable criteria that could be used for evaluation.

Criterion – A comprehensive critical evaluation of their final prototype, 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 could be developed for different production methods.

- In some instances, students reflected on the manufacturing process itself rather than evaluating the final prototype.
- There was a lack of practical development within section E this year in comparison to last year.
- Suggested proposals for modification and development were often quite basic, eg reduced hemlines, additional pockets.
- The latter part of this criterion was often neglected. Many students failed to explain how their prototype could be adapted for different production methods. Instead, some made general comments about the implications of various production scales without detailing how their product could be modified and produced.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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