

Design and Technology: Product Design

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J305**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J045**

OCR Report to Centres

January 2012

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, OCR Nationals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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Overview

General Comments

Work presented in the controlled assessment units (A551 and A553) was in line with previous series standards. Some good practice was evident in candidate's portfolios presented for moderation.. The standard applied to all units shows an improvement in meeting assessment criteria.

Candidate responses in the examinations for Units A552 and A554 indicated that the specification content for these units had been generally well covered by most centres. The general understanding for A554 was much improved this series showing a significant increase in application by candidates.

A551 Developing and Applying Design Skills

Administration

In general, Centre administration was effective; moderators received the required documentation and sample candidate materials on time.

Some problems with entry codes, some centres incorrectly used A551/01 (repository) for postal entries instead of using A551/02. Centres must take care to use the correct entry codes for this unit. When using electronic folios centres should ensure that the work of candidates is presented in one cohesive format. Producing individual documents for each page of a candidate folio is not an acceptable format.

Centres using the OCR Repository should be aware of the file size limit of 20MB. If file sizes exceed this limit it is possible to load separate files for an individual candidate but these should be clearly labelled. Each individual file should not exceed 20MB.

Many centres made use of the Controlled Assessment Cover Sheet making helpful comments to assist the moderation process. It was helpful where centres also supplied a copy of the CSF form which is available via the OCR website.

The majority of entries were A551/02 (postal) with most centres using the option of producing e-folios in a PowerPoint format. This enabled candidates to use sound and video within their folios. Centres are reminded that they can provide one CD containing the entire sample of candidate's folios.

Internal Assessment Objective 1

Most candidates chose manageable and appropriate design activities. Some centres encouraged candidates to undertake problems which were too challenging for the permitted 20 hour CA limit.

It is essential candidates identify a definite problem to solve with a specific user or user group and in addition, summarise the direction of their design activity at the start of their folio. This enables candidates to identify and access appropriate research opportunities as well as the creation of designs which reflect the needs of their identified user group.

Work such as planning and "what I will do and where I will look for evidence" does not meet the assessment criteria and should not be submitted.

Internal Assessment Objective 2

Two aspects to the research activity are:

Product analysis of similar or associated products (strand 1)

Other research, such as user requirements, ergonomic considerations and location (strand 2).

When analysing existing products, primary research provided greater depth of information compared to secondary research methods. Primary product analysis should be the preferred underpinning activities of the GCSE Product Design Course. The research of two or three products 'in depth' should be sufficient to inform the future design activity and satisfy the assessment criteria. Some centres used a writing frame approach for the product analysis activity. It should be noted that this approach or the use of pre-determined headings can be restrictive for higher achieving candidates. Each product has its own intrinsic set of features that may not neatly fit into a predetermined list or set of headings.

Ideally, candidates should start their analysis of a product by identifying and possibly sketching the key features of the product. An explanation of the purpose of these features will provide the candidate with the information required to both inform the writing of their design specification and aid the formulation of design ideas.

When researching the user requirements for the product to be designed, many candidates use either questionnaires or interviews. The design of these methods of obtaining 'User' data requires careful consideration. Often, the questions asked are either irrelevant or provide insufficient information to aid the design of the product and do little more than present evidence of the existence of the design problem. Specific ergonomic data and other size information should also be researched and presented by candidates.

Many candidate specifications contained vague or generic points which could be applied to any product. High performing candidates produced a summary of the research findings, being able to identify key features of the product to be designed. They were able to produce a series of justified specification points.

Internal Assessment Objective 3

Some examples of excellent design activity with very creative thinking were evidenced. Centres should note that there is not an expectation for "creative thinking and risk taking" to gain marks in the third box of stand one in IAO3 (marks 14 – 19).

Development was limited in some work, candidates should understand that development means 'improving and moving forward' rather than just redrawing what has already been generated. Modelling should be used to test the feasibility of aspects of the design work. This modelling activity should then contribute to design development. Centres should note that a model of the final proposal is not required. Modelling is regarded as a design tool rather than a presentation tool.

The evaluation of design ideas against the design specification is an area where candidate performance could be improved. Often candidates produce little more than a tick box grid with limited meaningful analysis. To be awarded high marks in strand 3 of IOA3 candidates should show an analytical evaluation of their design ideas.

Communication skills varied widely between candidates. More successful candidates presented their ideas in a 'free flowing' format using sketching to show different views or parts of their product. They used annotation to communicate their design thinking and used modelling and enhancement techniques such as rendering to fully communicate their ideas. When producing electronic portfolios candidate's performance is seen to be higher when all the design work is completed on paper including annotation. The whole design page is then scanned into the folio. Centres are reminded that the use of CAD or Other Computer Applications (OCA) is rewarded for work in IAO3 only. To be rewarded higher marks CAD should be used as a design tool rather than just to produce an image of the final design.

A552 Design and Making Innovation Challenge

General Comments

The 2012 theme 'Summer Holiday Entertainment' is accessible to all candidates and work has been seen for each of the four set challenges.

Candidates clearly enjoy the work they have carried out during the 'challenge' with many reflecting positively on their experience.

Administration

Examiners have reported few centre administration errors in this session. It is important for teachers to make examination officers aware the examination takes place in three separate stages and that workbooks should not be sent to examiners until all of the three stages are complete. To avoid delays it is important that examination workbooks are posted to examiners as soon as the 'Time to Reflect' activity has been completed.

Examination scripts must be posted to examiners using approved secure postage.

Centres are reminded of the requirement to submit details of the dates of the Innovation Challenge to OCR using the VAF form. Copies of the form are available on the OCR website – www.ocr.org.uk.

The Innovation Challenge is designed to take place within a time window of the 10th January to the 25th January. Centres must not run the Challenge outside of this window.

All materials relating to examinations sent from OCR to centres will be despatched to the examinations officer. It is very important that centres only use the workbook and teacher script provided for Unit A552.

Examination notices must be displayed in the area where the examination is to take place and an invigilator should be present. Candidates should work in silence unless otherwise instructed by the teacher script.

Running the Challenge

Centres are reminded that the role of the teaching colleague is a facilitator and not classroom teacher. They are there to provide access to materials, monitor health and safety issues and read the teacher script to candidates, elaborating and explaining where this is indicated within the script.

Teaching colleagues and support staff must not give advice to candidates about the design/manufacture of their prototype product or cut materials to correct shape or size. It must be made clear to candidates this is an examination to assess individual candidate's designing and modelling capability.

Photographs

The quality and size of photographs supplied by most centres is appropriate for this examination. Photographs must be good quality colour images of appropriate size to fit into the space provided on the work book which form an essential part of the assessment process. Centres should refrain from inserting large images that are folded to fit the available space in the workbook.

Centres are reminded that four 'teacher' photographs is the minimum required. Additional photos can be added to the workbook when it is necessary to show other parts or views of an artefact to fully illustrate the final outcome.

It is recommended that if candidates wish to annotate photographs that a second print is produced and stuck into either the appropriate section of the workbook or into the 'additional space' and clearly labelled and then annotated. Where overlay paper is used on the four 'scripted' photographs examiners have reported difficulty in viewing the photos due to the application of excessive glue.

Candidates should be encouraged to stick photos into the workbook as they are printed.

Completion of the workbook

Examiners have again reported difficulty in understanding candidate's work where blunt pencil, highlight pens or gel pens have been used for written work. Please advise candidates of the need for all of their work to be legible. Work should be completed in standard English. 'Text messaging' abbreviations are not acceptable.

Security of Workbooks

Centres are reminded of the importance of appropriate security of all workbooks between the three sessions of the Innovation Challenge. Workbooks must be returned to the examinations officer and should be stored in secure conditions.

Development of design. Evolution through making.

Initial Thoughts

Candidates used a mix of text and drawings to explore the selected challenge. The majority of candidates produce a range of initial concept ideas and think creatively about the challenge that they have selected.

Candidates should be encouraged to take risks and think creatively about the design task.

Briefs

Design Briefs identified by candidates are often poorly written. Design Briefs are often too prescriptive with many candidates confusing the design brief with the specification. Candidates should be encouraged to write clear and precise design briefs that offer scope for creativity.

User/Clients

The majority of candidates identified appropriate user groups for their products. Higher performing candidates gave clear consideration of their user group whilst undertaking the design activity making clear reference to the target user and user needs.

Specifications

Specifications from many candidates are clear and precise allowing candidates to achieve full marks for this area. However, examiners have raised concerns that some candidates are producing vague, often generic specification points that could apply to any product. The specification must be 'specific' to the product that is being designed. Vague points such as 'it must be the right size', 'it must be ergonomic' and 'it must not cost too much' should be avoided. Presenting the specification in a bullet pointed format rather than in an essay style would be of benefit to candidates.

Ideas

The majority of candidates used a mix of drawings, text, annotation and occasionally modelling/photographs to show their ideas.

Higher performing candidates produced a range of creative ideas that clearly relate to their design brief, specification and potential users. Drawings of both full designs and parts of designs were provided along with detailed annotation relating to materials and construction methods. Development of the design from the 'initial thoughts' was clearly evident. Designs were 'rendered' to enhance communication. Lower scoring candidates reproduced the initial thoughts from box 1 of the challenge activity or only produced a single design idea. Very often these candidates disregarded both the design brief and specification from boxes 3 and 4. Some candidates produced ideas based upon production using modelling materials. The design ideas should be based around the future manufacture of the product. Examiners reported a lack of material knowledge amongst candidates. The majority of candidates failed to identify specific materials for product manufacture.

Communicating information through sketches, writing and photographs

The standard of design communication was generally good. Candidates presented their ideas using a range of annotated drawings and text. Higher performing candidates gave different views of objects or parts of objects and clearly communicated their design thinking through the use of annotation. Examiners felt that the work of many candidates could have been enhanced with the use of rendering techniques and that centres should encourage candidates to be more adventurous in their forms of communication.

Written communication is generally good but many candidates fail to use technical vocabulary when this is appropriate.

Materials, Components, Processes, Techniques and Industrial Practice

Examiners have reported that the majority of centres have prepared their candidates well for this part of the examination. Candidates from these centres clearly understood that they were making a prototype model rather than the 'final' product. Appropriate materials were supplied by these centres for candidates use. These materials included foam, foam board, card, balsa, clay, modelling clay, mechanism kits, polymorph, etc.

It is essential that during the product design course candidates undertake modelling activity in order to develop their manufacturing skills and knowledge of modelling materials.

Some candidates whose design work was of a good standard were limited by the materials supplied by their centres. Sheet materials such as MDF and Plywood are often unsuitable for modelling. These materials can limit the candidate's ability to model designs appropriately and/or impact upon the candidates design work. Where these materials were used, the candidates' work was often incomplete because candidates were trying to manufacture 'final outcomes' rather than 'prototype products'. Some candidates highlight the availability of materials as a problem within the evaluation activity.

Models must be an appropriate size for the candidate to be able to successfully manipulate materials and demonstrate the features of the product.

Higher achieving candidates considered the choice of materials and components available and identified the most appropriate materials for the manufacture of their product demonstrating adept use of these materials. They completed their models to a high standard, showing all features of their design.

Analysis of ideas, models and prototypes

Peer Evaluation

The majority of candidates planned for the presentation and recorded the outcome. Clear evidence was seen of candidates using the feedback to further develop ideas. Occasionally, candidates failed to record the feedback or planning for this activity.

Development of ideas

Design development was generally good. Higher achieving candidates show clear development of their ideas between box 1 'initial thoughts' and box 5 'initial ideas'. They also show development between box 5 'initial ideas' and box 9 'developing your idea'.

It is important that candidates use notes or annotations to show how they are developing their design towards an optimum solution that satisfies the design brief, specification and needs of the user.

Producing a model of the initial idea or redrawing the initial idea does not show development of the design and therefore will gain no marks for design development.

Evaluation

Many candidates produced detailed evaluations of their prototype product. Higher performing candidates clearly considered each element of the evaluation section of the workbook and also provided detailed analysis of their design in relation to the design specification.

Reflection

To score highly candidates should focus on the product design rather than the modelling activity. It is essential that candidates use the 30 minutes available to read through their workbook and reflect upon the product design. They should identify strengths and weaknesses in the design and suggest detailed alterations/improvements. Where design alterations are proposed these should be drawn and clearly communicated. cursory written comments will not attract high marks.

A553 Making, Testing & Marketing Products

Administration

It is encouraging to observe more centres are now opting to enter candidates work electronically (via the repository) over the paper-based (postal) approach. Centres should ensure that files are packaged properly within the presentation to give candidates full credit for their efforts. Moderators have experienced difficulties when accessing files that have not been correctly uploaded.

In centres where there are more than one staff teaching candidates, it is essential that internal standardisation is completed in order to ensure that standards are maintained and the correct rank order is applied. All work should be carried out in the presence of a teacher at the Centre. To save delays in the moderation process, form CCS160 (which needs to be signed by all staff teaching the specification), should be enclosed with the selected sample of work sent to the moderator (paper or electronic format).

Candidates are free to present the work in any appropriate medium, both on paper format or in electronic format on CD, but not a combination of the two. CD seems to be the favoured format for this unit and the use of photographs, sound and video is becoming popular. The use of the OCR repository has worked very well where Centres have uploaded work to the system.

OCR would prefer candidates' work is submitted on individual CDs for this unit. Centres should be aware that electronic folders are not returned, so ensure a copy is kept at the Centre.

Internal assessment Objective 4

This is all about creating a single, functioning, quality product. All evidence in the portfolio should be through photographs and annotation and the final outcome should be a working product not a model.

A good range of products were presented for moderation varying considerably in size and complexity. If centres are making similar products with all candidates it is important that candidates show ownership of the work and folio - photographs should show the individuals approach to the product and be commented on accordingly.

The recording of the manufacture is very important. In general, candidates submitting work on paper are including good photographic evidence and accompanying annotation which is leading to them achieving higher marks. Candidates using CD format are slightly weaker in this area, centres may wish to emphasise the importance of a making diary. The submitted evidence should be a diary explaining what has been achieved and how problems have been solved and must include evidence of how candidates have used economy in their approach, how they have worked safely and how they have worked with precision. A plan, time lines or similar are not required.

The use of CAD/CAM should be encouraged; however this is just one skill. Centres must ensure candidates have used a range of skills in producing the practical work to achieve the higher marks. If CAD/CAM is used, candidates should produce evidence they understand the process by using screen shots and appropriate annotation.

The quantity and quality of photographs enclosed in the portfolio is important, centres should ensure sufficient photographic evidence of a good quality is available to justify the awarded marks.

Internal assessment Objective 5

This objective is all about taking the product forward and needs to contain no reference to the making process.

Evaluations were well done with reference to the specification and appropriate photographic evidence of realistic user testing. Good video evidence of testing and user views is now a strength of this unit.

Modifications and improvements to the product should be seen as a product development opportunity, candidates should sketch possible improvements that could be made to their product with appropriate annotation. Candidates may wish to alter or draw on original images of the finished product or use overlays in an innovative design way.

Quantity production is an area where candidates/centres could improve marks. Candidates researching how their product could be made in a Real World situation and then applying the knowledge gained to parts of the candidate's product, providing the necessary evidence to generate additional marks.

Centres are encouraging candidates to explain the reasoning behind the type of marketing presentation used. If the product was to be taken to full production, where and how would the candidate want to advertise/promote the product in order to maximize its market potential? In answering this question candidates will hopefully produce a much more meaningful and pertinent marketing presentation.

A554 Designing Influences

The Examination Paper provided a wide range of opportunities for candidates to reveal both their breadth of knowledge of Product Design and their ability to apply it.

The paper proved to be both rewarding to those who were well prepared for the task and discriminating across the whole ability range.

Question 1. The Pogo Stick

Most candidates were well able to identify features of the pogo stick, such as the handles, the footrest, the rubber foot and the adjustment collar.

With this kind of question, candidates need to firstly look carefully at the illustration, get an overall impression, think about similar products that they have seen, and then visually check through all of the features of the illustration, considering their specific purpose, ease of use, safety, function and ergonomic issues. This will help to set the illustration in context before considering the questions.

Reading and attempting to answer the question before spending sufficient time to analyse the illustration can lead candidates to produce poorly considered responses. Candidates who go on to score highly on later questions often give inaccurate responses to this first one, possibly because they mistakenly see the question as too easy, or they are in a rush to get started on the paper.

Three features are all that is required for full marks. Lengthy descriptions and explanations use up time better spent on higher value questions.

Most candidates were able to identify component A as a spring.

There were a variety of answers given for the force acting on component A when the pogo stick is in use, ranging from the technical such as compression, to the descriptive such as pushing, and even the more generic such as gravity.

The description of a design modification to the pogo stick to make it safer to use, usually involved providing a cover for the spring, better grip on the handles, or non-slip rubber on the footrests. However, lack of consideration of how the pogo stick would be used, led some candidates to suggest the addition of straps on the foot rest to secure the feet which would make using the pogo stick less safe.

As this was a 2-mark question, candidates were required to suggest a viable modification and then explain why it would improve the safety.

Question 2. The Sunglasses

Candidates involved in Product Design must fully understand technical terms such as anthropometrics, ergonomics, aesthetics, and function, and, through product analysis, be able to apply these terms to a wide range of manufactured items. Anthropometrics (measurements of parts of the human body) data is presented in tables of figures and referred to by designers to ensure a product comfortably fits and is able to be used by a majority of the target user population.

Most candidates were able to identify appropriate measurements of different facial features (nose, ears, eyes, etc.) that would have to be considered when designing the sunglasses. Many candidates incorrectly identified sizes of parts of the sunglasses, rather than measurements of a human face.

The reasons for the increased popularity of sunglasses in recent years was well understood, with answers relating to trendsetting, more choice, better understanding of the need for protection, availability of foreign holidays, and the need for safer driving.

This aspect of Product Design, relating to why some products become more popular and others go into decline, is a key thread in understanding the relationship between technological developments, changing consumer needs, and cultural changes in society.

To score well in this type of question, candidates must provide two well-explained reasons, using examples, justifications and qualifications.

The protection of designs from illegal copying usually involves the use of copyrights, trademarks and patenting, most candidates were able to mention at least one of these. The question was looking for a comprehensive explanation covering issues of granting permission, payment of fees, and litigation.

Question 3 The Modern Camera

This was very well attempted, showing an impressively competent understanding of the workings of the modern digital camera. However, candidates have to be careful not to see this as just a 'spot the difference' task. The illustration of the 1920's camera is provided for context, but this question is only about the modern camera. Any references to the disadvantages of the 1920's camera would attract no credit.

As with Q1 (a), candidates need to analyse the illustration of the modern camera, identify features, think about modern cameras that they have seen, and consider function, ease of use, and ergonomics. Then it would be appropriate to read the question and consider the answers. Without this initial analysis of the product, the questions do not easily slip into context, so candidates then give answers such as, the camera from the 1920's is harder to clean, or the modern camera is easier to manufacture.

Candidates need to ensure that their writing on the spray diagram is clear and legible. The question was asking for features of the modern camera so only one or two words are required for each feature. Explanation and justification of the feature attract no credit in (a) and should be 'saved' for answering part (b). For example the word 'flash' is sufficient to attract a mark.

Explanations of why the identified features make the modern camera successful were generally well attempted with most candidates scoring 3 or 4 marks. So, for example, the ease of holding and using is achieved by a more ergonomically shaped, lightweight shape, with well-positioned buttons. And as another example, the use of memory cards and a USB port enables the user to take more pictures and transfer to hard drive or laptop for editing or selection/deletion.

The effects of the introduction of computerised devices on designers and makers was a very wide ranging question where candidates could refer to the use of CAD for designing, the impact of miniaturised components, on the new technology of such products as the ipad, Compatibility issues with 'new' products and existing hardware, and the use of CAM for manufacture, with its improved productivity and subsequent loss of jobs. The question was looking for reference to the effects of the introduction of a specific example of a computerised device together with a comprehensive explanation of the outcomes.

Question 4 Trendsetter and Iconic product.

Memphis Group, Abba, and Confectionery Packaging had been well researched and were well represented in many of the answers to this question. The Laser and the Ice Cream were equally well researched but less popular.

In preparing for this question, candidates need to understand that marks will be awarded in 4(a) for information about the Trendsetter and that marks will be awarded in 4(b) for information about their Iconic product. Knowledge about the Carlton Room Divider, Lycra and Kit Kat gain credit in 4(b). Knowledge of the important influences (other than the given Iconic product) and the long-term legacy of the Trendsetter have to be explained in 4(a).

Candidates have to be especially careful to avoid repeating the same information in 4(a) and 4(b), and to ensure that they give information in 4(a) that focuses on the Trendsetter rather than their Iconic Product.

A number of candidates incorrectly identified Kit Kat as the Trendsetter in 4(a).

In 4(a), candidates need to be encouraged to write about three paragraphs for their answer; within each paragraph to identify one specific issue, and using specialist terms, accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, and a balanced argument, to exemplify the issue explaining the importance of the trendsetter in the context of modern design.

Question 5. Design.

The formulation of the four specification points at the beginning of this question continues to be of concern to the examiners. Many candidates score no more than one or two marks.

For full credit, candidates must provide four discrete points that have not already been given in the question paper, so references to the Trendsetter (in the style of Memphis) or the Iconic Product (like the Kit Kat logo) will gain no credit. References to the requirements outlined in the need (it must incorporate a laser) also cannot gain credit.

Candidates have to use their knowledge of the Trendsetter and the Iconic Product, together with their analysis of the requirements of the need to formulate 'new' points.

For example:

The design must be large enough to hold at least 8 coffee mugs.

The design must have red white and blue colours.

The package must be easy to open and close.

The tester must fit comfortably in one hand.

Generic points (eg. strong, bold comfortable) and negative points (eg. no sharp edges, not too heavy, no loose bits, not too high), gain no credit.

The purpose of the specification points is to help the candidate focus their thoughts on viable design ideas. Time spent 'thinking before writing' the specification points, will improve their score in section (a) and help the candidate improve their performance in all other sections of this question. Candidates may benefit from classroom exercises requiring the writing of four discreet specification points for particular needs. For example, list four specification points for a Memphis style holder for two toilet rolls for a school toilet.

To score well for the design ideas part of the question, candidates must provide a range of different ideas, each with explanatory notes (rather than just labels), and with some indication that some aspects, of some of the ideas, address at least two of their specification points.

Typically, candidates score 3 or 4 of the available marks for design ideas. Pictorial sketches with appropriate colour or shading should be encouraged, as it tends to communicate the thinking of the candidate more fully.

In order to move beyond two marks in the development of ideas part of this question, candidates must provide clear evidence, in the form of sketches and notes, of developmental activity and decision making rather than just a single drawing.

Development of ideas is seen as a key part of the development of designing skills of a candidate and it requires much more than just redrawing a previous design idea, making the drawing neater or bigger, or just adding colour.

For the final part of question 5, it is important for candidates to provide confirmed details of their final solution including references to specific materials (oak rather than just wood, high impact polystyrene rather than just plastic), ingredients or components, with sizes, dimensions or quantities, together with joining or mixing techniques, and indications of tools and equipment. The notes and explanations of how the final solution meets each of the specification points are not generally well attempted. Candidates will often just say, for example, that their idea meets specification point 2. For the award of a mark, it is necessary for the candidate to explain how the solution meets a particular specification point. For example, the package is perforated along the top so that it can be easily opened with one finger, or the coffee table is 800 long and 300 wide so there is plenty of room for the eight coffee mugs.

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