

DESIGN AND TEXTILES

Paper 9631/01

Fibres, Fabrics and Design (AS written)

Key messages

Candidates need to make sure that they are responding to the key word in the question, for example 'discuss', 'assess', 'describe' or 'evaluate'.

Candidates demonstrated awareness of environmental considerations in the textile industry. Candidates would benefit from building a greater understanding of new developments including environmentally friendly fibres, electronic textiles, medical textiles, microencapsulation and nanotechnology.

Candidates need to gain a better understanding of pile fabrics, including cut-pile and loop-pile, and how they are constructed.

Candidates could look at a variety of fabric samples – their weaves, construction and performance characteristics – as a classroom exercise. This could help strengthen their understanding of fabric analysis and help them prepare for the exam.

General comments

Responses generally covered the range of items on the paper, and there were only a few areas where a minority of candidates were unable to respond. **Question 3**, which tends to focus more on designing, is usually more popular with the candidates. However, this year, **Question 4** was more popular.

Candidates need to make sure that they are able to give examples of fabrics and garments if the question asks for this. Some responses included examples that were not fully relevant to the question. It is important to encourage candidates to read questions carefully and focus closely on the exact wording to ensure they respond to the key points.

Candidates would benefit from answering past paper questions, and looking at the mark schemes for these, prior to the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) and (b) Candidates' knowledge of the origins and performance characteristics of fibres was not always strong. Some performance properties were also misidentified.
- (b) Many candidates were able to identify some regenerated cellulose fabrics and their suitability in the manufacture of fashion garments. They understood that they were cheaper, easier to care for and better for the environment.
- (c) For new fibre technology, some responses were strong, while others referred to older or unrelated materials such as Kevlar or reflective fabrics. Knowledge of nano-fibres and microencapsulation was often limited.

Question 2

- (a) Descriptions of cut-pile and loop-pile structures often focused on the surface appearance (e.g. '3D effect') rather than explaining the role of the third yarn system. When describing the construction of cut-pile and loop-pile fabrics, some answers lacked detail. Labelled diagrams often helped clarify understanding, especially for candidates who found technical vocabulary challenging.
- (b) Candidates generally demonstrated sound knowledge of the performance qualities of elastane fibres, and many answered **Question 2b** particularly well by identifying key characteristics and appropriate applications.
- (c) There were misconceptions about warp and weft knitting. These included thinking warp knitting can be done by hand, that warp knits are lightweight and less durable, or that weft knits are inherently heavy. Some candidates also assumed absorbency is determined by knit type, rather than fibre content. Candidates need to strengthen their understanding about how warp and weft knitted fabrics differ in the way that they perform. Analysing fabric samples could help candidates to consolidate their understanding, by discussing how their end uses differ.
- (d) On the whole, candidates answered this question well and understood the advantages of using CAD in designing. CAD and CAM were occasionally used interchangeably, and it is important that candidates understand the difference.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) A few candidates misunderstood **Question 3a**, responding with 'natural' instead of 'man-made' sources. It may be helpful for centres to explore 'sources' and 'themes' more explicitly in class so that candidates can distinguish between natural and man-made inspiration.
- (b) (i) Candidates' designs of tops showed real flair and creativity. However, many candidates lost the mark for the design taking inspiration from a man-made source. Those that did achieve a mark here produced some really inspirational ideas.
 - (ii) Candidates were aware of a number of different closures that could be used for the top they designed in **3(b)(i)**.
- (c) There was some confusion between the idea of a fashion fad and broader fashion trends, with a number of responses describing longer-term trends instead of short-lived fads. However, several candidates used diagrams and line graphs effectively to illustrate the rapid rise and decline of a fad, which strengthened their explanations.
- (d) Candidates found this question challenging. Many responses focused on one specific shop and did not consider a range of textile outlets for consumers.

Question 4

- (a) Candidates had some knowledge of pre-sewing processes including marking the fabric. Tacking was a popular answer, however this is a process which is carried out throughout the manufacture of a garment, rather than before.
- (b) This question was answered well by the candidates. Many were able to describe the different parts of a garment that could be hand sewn in one-off manufacture. A range of examples were given.
- (c) Candidates generally had a good knowledge of what interfacing is used for in garments and were able to discuss the choice including weight, colour, type etc.
- (d) Candidates were aware of some seams used in clothing manufacture and some were able to include examples of fabrics and garments that different seams would be suitable for. However, some candidates mixed seam types with seam finishes — for example, identifying a seam as if it were a fabric type.

DESIGN AND TEXTILES

<p>Paper 9631/02 Practical Test (AS)</p>

Key messages

- Centres should continue to focus on the skill of evaluation and how to evaluate correctly.
- Centres should also focus on the skill of analysis within the written part of this paper.
- In their analysis, candidates need to show which lay plan they have used and the changes they have made.
- Some working notes for the practical exam were annotated fully and in detail. This was helpful for the examiners when marking.
- Centres should ensure that the working notes are filled in using enough detail to support the evaluation of the practical exam.

General comments

- Unused fabric should not be sent with the candidates' garments – this makes it more difficult to find the correct pieces of the garment.
- There is no need to send in unused pattern pieces, such as instructions and additional pieces not needed for the garment.
- Adjusted / adapted patterns should be stuck within the candidates' written paper, within **Section B**.
- It is good practice for candidates to write their name and candidate number on the top of the paper envelope of the pattern, as they did for this exam.

Comments on specific questions

Task Analysis and Planning

- (a) Most candidates fully stated the fabrics and accessories needed to make their garment. Some candidates also stated which equipment was needed to make their garment.
- (b) Candidates need to state reasons to justify the choices made in fabric selection, including reference to the occasion when the garment will be worn. Reference should be made to the fabric's specific properties and why this makes the fabric suitable (e.g. fibre, durability, comfort, and care).
- (c) Candidates need to ensure they state which equipment they need and why. The list of equipment should be specific to the task that they are being asked to complete.
- (d) Candidates should show which lay plan they are going to use for their garment.
- (e) Most candidates completed a time plan for their planning / implementation sections. When candidates completed this in detail it supported them well in the construction of their garment. Candidates are encouraged to refer to this plan to help them explain the solutions they used to overcome any problems they had with timing and planning.
- (f) Candidates should also use the time plan as a working document. As they complete each stage they should make notes on their time plan (e.g. were any problems encountered? How did they solve these problems? Why did they have these problems?).

Preparation

- (a) Most candidates cut the largest size on the pattern when cutting out the pattern pieces. This was evident when looking at the pattern pieces for the evidence of pattern adjustment. Candidates need to ensure that they measure themselves according to the pattern measurements, and then cut out the correct size.
- (b) Most candidates submitted the paper patterns used. Some of these pattern pieces did not have any evidence of the alterations that the candidate had made. Candidates should ensure that they adjust the pattern and show evidence of pattern alteration. This can be done through sketches on working paper or physical adjustments on the paper pattern. These patterns should be stapled or stuck within the candidates' working notes. Candidates should explain how they have adapted the paper patterns to achieve the alterations needed.
- (c) Very few candidates showed the lay plan that they were going to use in their working notes. Candidates need to show which lay plan they are going to use and the adjustments they will need to make on the lay plan to show that they fully understand this process.
- (d) Some of the working notes for the practical exam had been annotated regarding the testing and fit of the garment. It is good practice to include this information.
- (e) Completing the working notes for this practical exam is very important to the marking process. Centres are encouraged to ensure that the working notes are completed in detail.

Implementation

- (a) Centres provided helpful comments for the testing and fit of the garments.
- (b) The garment candidates were asked to make was:
 - a jacket with long sleeves and turned-back cuff with the following pattern adaptations:
 - remove left in-seam pocket
 - shorten right sleeve by 10 cm.

Jacket – Front and Back Bodice

Preparation of the front and back bodice: most candidates did this successfully.

Stitching and top stitching of the pleat on the back bodice was done correctly overall. Some candidates struggled to ensure that the pleat was lined up correctly in place, which could be due to not using the correct process to hold the pleat in place by a diagonal tacking stitch. Also, there were a range of different top stitch measurements for the dart. Finishing of the right shoulder seams were mainly successfully completed. Some of the seams were finished with a zig zag stitch. When using a zig zag stitch, the stitching was, at times, too far away from the raw edges of the seam allowance leaving the edges to fray.

Jacket – Sleeve

Most candidates attempted to put in a sleeve, and all but a few adapted the pattern correctly. Some candidates found it difficult to insert the sleeve correctly into the arm hole. Some of the sleeves were pleated as they were stitched into the jacket. Candidates should be encouraged to tack in the sleeve before stitching. When neatening the arm hole, candidates need to remember to trim the excess fabric off before overlocking and or zigzagging neatly. Candidates found it challenging to complete the cuff correctly. This is an area of improvement for the future: candidates need to understand how to complete an invisible slip stitch to secure

the cuff.

Jacket – Right in-seam Pocket

This proved to be one of the most difficult parts of the exam. Most candidates attempted to insert the pocket, but many of them found this challenging. Candidates should be encouraged to read the paper pattern instructions; this will support them if they are unsure of how to complete sections. Most candidates put the pocket in the correct place and some stitched it in correctly. When completing a pocket, it is important to reinforce it. This includes trimming the pocket before overlocking or zig zag stitching the edges together to reinforce the pocket. Very few candidates did the trimming. Some candidates reinforced the pocket. Candidates should ensure that they read the paper pattern instructions as part of the planning process and also use their time plan to make sure that they have covered all areas.

Jacket – Facings

Most candidates cut out the facings and applied their interfacing correctly to the fabric. Some candidates did not use the correct weight of interfacing. Centres are encouraged to ensure that candidates are aware of the different weights available for certain purposes. Some candidates were successful in stitching the edge of the facing correctly. Some candidates were unable to stitch the edge under to 0.6 mm as the pattern instructed. Most candidates attached the facings to the edge of the jacket correctly, but they were not accurately stitched at 15 mm or trimmed correctly. Trimming is an important part of the process to ensure that all the bulk is removed and the facing and collar lie correctly when pressed. The weakest part of this section was top stitching. Most candidates stitched the lapels straight through all layers of the fabric or they just top-stitched the full length of the facings, and so did not refer to the instructions or the images provided.

Jacket – Finishings

Most candidates pressed the jacket successfully and this improved the overall quality of the finish. Most candidates pressed the lapels correctly, but none of the candidates completed the securing of the lapels in place. Possibly due to not having enough time, many candidates did not finish the hem at the bottom of the jacket.

Evaluation

Overall, the evaluation was the area of the exam that showed the greatest weakness. Candidates would benefit from further opportunity to practice writing an evaluation of completed work. Candidates need to plan their time carefully to ensure that they have enough time to write a detailed and comprehensive evaluation.

Very few candidates produced a summary of their experience during the examination. Most candidates did not refer to their planning sheet to explain the problems they encountered and how they overcame them.

Some candidates discussed the achievements and difficulties that they experienced. Many candidates realised where they had made mistakes and had to make adjustments.

Overall, candidates explained the strong points in the process and where they had experienced problems. However, it is good practice to explain what caused these problems and to explain how candidates could improve their product.

DESIGN AND TEXTILES

Paper 9631/03
Textile Applications and Technology
(A/L written)

Key messages

Candidates were successful in relating their answers back to specific question themes, for example, evening jackets in **Question 1**.

Analysing a variety of fabrics and textile garments prior to the exam would support candidates in building their understanding of fabric care labels.

Candidates' knowledge of vanishing fabrics was limited. Candidates might benefit from a practical session to deepen their understanding and knowledge of the area.

Candidates must ensure that they understand how decorating the surface of a fabric differs from adding colour to it by dyeing.

General comments

Responses generally covered the range of items on the paper and there were only a few areas where a minority of candidates were unable to respond. **Question 4** was the least popular question in the exam.

Many candidates included a short introduction in their answers which is good practice. However, candidates should remember to keep this brief, as it does not gain them any marks.

Many candidates had clear discussion in their answers, rather than just summarising in bullet points.

Candidates would benefit from answering past paper questions prior to the examination. They could also look at the mark scheme to see what was expected from their answers.

Candidates would benefit from learning more about the aesthetic and technological requirements, for example by carrying out a product analysis as a group classroom activity or as an activity to complete at home.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Candidates answered this question well, and many candidates achieved full marks. The majority of candidates described three factors related to fashionable jackets.
- (b) Some candidates answered this question exceptionally well and had a strong understanding of how fabric finishes can alter the appearance of a fabric. However, some candidates wrote about chemical fabric finishes. These fabric finishes use chemical treatments to add or enhance properties such as water repellency and flame retardancy, but do not alter the fabric appearance.
- (c) The majority of candidates had some knowledge of the care labelling system and some included drawings of the symbols used internationally.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates' knowledge of how vanishing fabrics can be used in creative machine embroidery was limited. Some candidates did not know what a vanishing fabric was and did not attempt the question.
- (b) This question offered candidates an opportunity to discuss ways to recycle textile products. There were some strong answers to this question.
- (c) Candidates would benefit from understanding the difference between craft printing processes and industrial printing processes. Many candidates discussed roller printing which is an industrial printing process.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) Candidates answered this question well and had a sound understanding of the aesthetic requirements of a school bag. However, their understanding of technological requirements was not as strong.
- (b) Some answers given for this question were exceptional, with candidates demonstrating a number of different surface decoration processes used to enhance a bag suitable for a special occasion. However, some candidates wrote about ways to add colour to fabrics and dyeing techniques such as tie dye and batik, which did not gain them any marks.

Question 4

- (a) Only a few candidates opted to answer this question. Their knowledge of the importance of handling and disposing of dyestuffs and mordants safely was limited. Marks were generally awarded in the low-medium bands.
- (b) Very few candidates answered this question. Answers showed limited knowledge of methods used to prepare fibres, yarns and fabrics for dyeing.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates' knowledge of environmental factors was good, and they were able to successfully relate it to designers.
- (b) Many candidates understood the importance for a manufacturer to accurately estimate the quantities of materials and components needed to make fashion garments. Some candidates included examples to support their answers.

DESIGN & TEXTILES

<p>Paper 9631/04 A Level Coursework</p>

Key messages

- It is important to manage the presentation and organisation of coursework carefully, in order to maximise both efficiency and the quality of final outcomes. Presenting a separate A3 or A4 folder for each product is unnecessary; this approach can result in inefficient use of time and, in several cases, restrict the development and final responses for the third product. Instead, a more streamlined approach is recommended to allow candidates to focus on creativity and detail by utilising one folder for all three products.
- Selecting one theme for the coursework further aids time management. By focusing research efforts on a single theme, candidates can undertake in-depth research just once, setting a solid foundation before progressing with the design process.
- Presentation of folders is an important part of the process which is marked within the evaluation section. Therefore, use of space and content is encouraged. Busy, creative and detailed pages are preferred over sparse ones.

General comments

- The candidates produced a selection of products that were notable for their quality and creativity. In many cases, the products reflected a significant degree of care and skill with particular emphasis on the fine detailing. The execution of these products was not only technically proficient, but also displayed originality and thoughtful design.
- The utilisation of a table or a Gantt chart is encouraged. This presents information in a clear and organised manner which also shows connections between tasks. This approach mirrors the practices commonly found in industrial settings, where such tools are standard for project planning and management.

Administration

- It is helpful to capture photographic evidence throughout the various stages of the making process. These images should clearly document each step, providing a visual record of how the work was developed.
- Photographic evidence helps to show there is a clear record of the finished work, alongside the practical work. It is also useful when reviewing and reading the evaluations.
- Centres are encouraged to continue to consider the packaging and how many bags and pieces of tape are used.
- Centres should ensure that each piece of work is labelled clearly with centre number, candidate number and full name.

Research, aims and analysis

- Research needs to be directly relevant to the project. It is important to collate information and visuals that contribute to the design process; this supports the overall advancement of the design process.
- Creative and effective mood boards demonstrated a clear foundation and direction to build design ideas and decisions upon.
- Combining focused research with a well-developed theme significantly enhances the overall quality of the project. This approach demonstrates a comprehensive and thoughtful engagement with the subject matter, but also enables access to higher marks.

Planning and development

- All design ideas must be accompanied by clear annotations. These focused annotations provide a full picture of the thought process and reasoning behind each decision.
- It is important to reference worked samples, both physical and photographic. Doing so allows for the demonstration of logical development within the design process.
- Exploring combinations of colour can be helpful before deciding on a colour palette.

Process – carrying out the coursework tasks

- Some products stood out as particularly impressive, displaying intricate detail in both the selection of fabrics and the execution of techniques. These outcomes were especially strong, reflecting a high level of skill and creativity.
- The use of acrylic paint to apply colour and pattern was still evident in some cases. This created a fabric that had little or no flexibility or drape. It is important to log which techniques would be employed if the product were to be put into batch production (e.g. screen printing). This would show understanding of the methods used in industrial practice.
- In a number of cases, the third product had not received sufficient time for completion (in terms of finish and detail). This highlights the necessity of careful planning in both the design and production stages. It is essential to remain mindful of the time and resources available, as each product carries equal importance and weighting within the project.
- It is helpful to include photographic evidence documenting the making of products. Accompanying these photographs with clear annotations helps to clarify the making process and supports a comprehensive understanding of the work undertaken.

Realisation – quality of the outcome

- The cohort demonstrated some well-executed final products. This was supported by strong technical and embellishment skills culminating in some very creative and detailed products that were extremely marketable.
- The originality and attention to detail was clear in many cases. This supported the learning based around the Assessment Criteria of creativity and aesthetic awareness.

Evaluation

- Evaluation is crucial and serves as a reflective tool, but it needs to be detailed in order to be effective.
- It is important to regularly review and refine folder work to help to build up information for the final evaluation.
- Candidates are encouraged to assess strengths and weaknesses and consider what they would do differently if they repeated the project.
- Candidates should ensure they allow enough time to write a clear and thorough evaluation.
- Presentation and organisation of the folder impact evaluation weighting, so it is important to ensure that the work is well-collated.