

Assessment Report

Scholarship, 2008

Graphics

COMMENTARY

The assessment of Scholarship for 2008 was focused around the three strands introduced in 2006. The three key strands are Design Thinking, Synthesis and Visual Communication. The strands accommodated the key dimensions of Graphics (referred to in the assessment specifications) deemed necessary to achieve Scholarship and Scholarship with Outstanding Performance, recognising that these are still seen as inter-related within a coherent body of work.

The Design Thinking strand was primarily assessed on the quality of ideas in terms of the appropriateness to the brief and the design context, the generation of creative possibilities and innovative outcomes, and the valid reasoning associated with effective decision-making. The quality of the ideas generated and the solution produced was deemed as essential indicators of effective design thinking.

The Visual Communication strand was primarily assessed on the quality of communication in terms of appropriateness to the brief and the design context, the effectiveness of expressing design thinking and the visual features of design ideas, as well as the clear evidence of high quality presentation techniques and skills.

The Synthesis strand was primarily assessed on how all the evidence associated with both Design Thinking and Visual Communication was integrated into a coherent design process. Essentially, candidates were required to produce a coherent body of work that showed a clear and effective progression from a design brief towards an effective outcome. The appropriate application of research that informed design ideas and thinking, along with the generation of ideas that had been critically explored, developed and refined, were considered integral components of the effective application of a design process.

The challenge for candidates entering Scholarship is being able to attain a good level across all three strands. Candidates could not perform poorly in two strands and expect to achieve a Scholarship result. Candidates who had obviously made an effort to analyse the Scholarship criteria and to understand the level of critical interaction associated with producing evidence to meet the requirements at this level clearly provided a solid foundation for their success.

There were quality submissions, particularly the increasing number of submissions that achieved around and just below the cut-off for Scholarship. The best submissions showed an improvement from the previous year, though did not quite reach the standard that a small number of the very best submissions attained prior to that. The top ranking submissions were varied in their approach and demonstrated strengths in a number of different ways to reinforce that there is no single approach in attaining outstanding success.

The Nature of Submissions

It was pleasing to see a continuation of the diverse array of projects being submitted at this level, encouraged by the negotiated brief for 90734. This approach allowed for the greater expression of candidates' interests and strengths.

There was an increase in the amount of digitally based evidence submitted. However, candidates need to be aware that well-presented work in itself does not automatically ensure success in Scholarship. The clear evidence of high level thinking remains paramount at this level, while the use of advanced graphic and presentation skills can be beneficial in aiding the effective communication of such thinking.

In terms of presentation, candidates needed to ensure that digital material was submitted in a readable format. Many submissions did not adhere to the assessment specifications with regard to acceptable digital formats. The aspects concerned with drawing conventions and qualities associated with formal drawing also apply in digital media. The resolution of images and the communication and presentation of ideas is still important in ensuring success. There were examples of poor quality computer generated drawings or of inappropriate software being employed.

Candidates needed to be aware of the pitfalls that occur when choosing to use computer software throughout the design process. Design work that had been produced digitally showed the constraint and restrictive flow of ideas, lacking the exploratory possibilities that can occur in the rapid visualisation approach of quick sketching.

Likewise, there were instances of the employment of A3 presentation sheets to display design work suffering because it did not demonstrate fully-articulated and well-detailed design thinking. This is due to the tendency for work of this nature to edit out thinking and ideas from a design process that should show a coherent and in-depth process. Projects of this type also were prone to the excessive use of typed annotation at the expense of the suitable visual communication of ideas. What resulted was evidence that may have looked polished, but that lacked the detail and full consideration that candidates may have given to their projects. Candidates who effectively employed visual diaries tended to meet with greater success in terms of visually expressing a fuller range of ideas and more in-depth and coherent design thinking.

The key to success remains with candidates engaging with manageable problems that were well-defined, not too large scale, yet open enough to allow the freedom to explore and generate ideas creatively and thoroughly. Projects that were of a substantial scale or complexity tended to suffer from a lack of depth in design thinking, as candidates were led to addressing a broad range of aspects in a superficial and basic level rather than addressing any particular aspects in an in-depth manner. This also meant that solutions tended to be not adequately resolved. Projects that were too tightly defined tended to follow a restricted and predictable fashion, making it quite difficult for candidates to explore their own ideas and thinking in an imaginative fashion.

Candidates who attained Scholarship demonstrated a clear understanding of the design brief and were able to generate and graphically articulate their thinking in a relevant and integrative manner. Their submissions proved compelling and convincing in their articulation, showing a confidence and assurance in their demonstration of skills and principles, and a clear understanding of the problem, its associated design considerations, and the skills and knowledge required to develop a well-defined solution.

The best performing candidates most commonly demonstrated the following skills and/or knowledge:

- ability to work with an appropriate brief incorporating in-depth, independent, relevant research, ideation, negotiation, and pertinent questioning; without exception, they showed quality reasoning, thoroughly understood and identified with the nature, context and the parameters of the brief, generally met with success; they also understood the scope of their task, articulating their thoughts and findings clearly and in some depth through a coherent and easy to follow design process
- ability to apply an effective design process demonstrating a coherent and integrative approach which allowed the full grasp of the nature of the problem and the considered evolution and refinement of ideas (a cohesive design process tends to explore a range of ideas and allows the creative and innovative development of ideas and the appropriate selection of well-considered

design outcomes which indicates the candidate's in-depth exploration and understanding of the brief)

- ability to employ research material in a focused and informative manner that integrated effectively with the generation and refinement of ideas (candidates who used research and inspirational models to underpin their design process were able to formulate a personal and unique solution as a result; the study of other practitioners' work also encouraged the greater success in candidates' own submissions; candidates who used an existing designer/architect to help with initial thinking and to guide their thinking throughout the design process tended to encourage better understanding of design principles that led to the demonstration of a more effective design process)
- ability to articulate ideas and design thinking confidently and emphatically and to work to their strengths and interests, exploring appropriate and alternative ideas, demonstrating effective and well considered decision making that supported the on-going development of a resolved and innovative outcome, innovation being regarded as something unique or new in terms of either aesthetics or function (it was evident that no single method or approach necessarily ensured success)
- ability to confidently articulate and communicate ideas clearly using suitable sketching, formal drawing (digital and/or manual) and supporting annotation (the use of advanced drawing skills needs to be regarded as a thinking tool as well as a communicating tool, best shown through the use of exploratory design sketching; strong drawing skills that explored design ideas from a variety of angles with sketches that, at times, communicated design development in an in-depth and detailed fashion, in fact required little or no written annotation to communicate the full intention of the design idea or thinking)
- ability to utilise presentation skills and techniques appropriately and with a high degree of proficiency and quality of execution as well as the deliberate employment of design principles associated with composition, layout and the effective conveying of visual information to an intended audience.

Candidates who did NOT achieve Scholarship lacked some or all of the skills and knowledge above and in addition they:

- lacked the depth required at this level, commonly submitting up to three units of work that were all comparable and lacking any indication of which is the primary unit for Scholarship (in order to optimise their opportunities for attaining success in Scholarship, candidates should focus their efforts in one area rather than spreading themselves across many areas; success in Scholarship is based on a greater depth of knowledge and skills rather than breadth that may be relatively superficial)
- lacked a suitable brief (the nature of the brief, whether negotiated or given, remains an important ingredient to ensure success; a brief that is either too limiting or too broad can prove to be unsuitable for candidates to achieve to a Scholarship level; furthermore, the selection and understanding of the issues and design considerations associated with the brief is pivotal to setting up the problem and going about working through to a solution; when the brief has significant limitations, either excessively prescriptive or too simple, candidates find it difficult to get the scope of exploration or the opportunities for innovation; when the brief is too complex or extensive, candidates find it difficult to manage all the design considerations to the necessary depth of detail, and hence, can run into serious workload issues)
- produced a design process that was lacking depth or that was difficult to follow (there were many examples of a basic design process that had been worked through in a linear progression but that did not show a necessary depth of thinking; there were also examples of design thinking and processes that were disjointed and did not visually communicate effectively; it was hard to

follow and understand candidates' ideas, exploration and justifications towards the development of a final outcome)

- lacked the ability to research effectively (there was frequently a distinct lack of purposeful connection between research and the development of a suitable outcome that met the requirements of the brief; these submissions tended to be pre-occupied with showing an extensive array of gathered material that may have been comprehensive in terms of the parameters of the brief, but this was frequently done at the expense of actually addressing the requirements of the brief to any depth with their own ideas and outcomes)
- lacked any degree of design development towards a refined solution through a lack of detail consideration, idea selection and refinement, or directed exploration and experimentation (in these instances, the development tended to be limited to the reiteration and detailing of a selected idea rather than the continuing improvement and refinement towards a well-resolved solution; there were also many of instances of the development phase lacking in the depth of design thinking; a typical response in an architectural context was to do lots of research on windows, doors, roof shapes, etc, then to select just one with no reference to the aesthetic or functional requirements of the brief and with the development lacking any refinement)
- produced computer-generated work across the entire submission that provided little variety in terms of graphic modes (at times there would be outstanding elements but no real evidence of the thinking that must have occurred behind the submitted material to signify a flow or teasing out of ideas that visual diary jottings or rough sketches would provide)
- lacked in a well-considered or resolved design solution (design solutions were often being presented with a predetermined solution without in-depth consideration or any acknowledgement of the influences of alternatives)
- lacked skills in visual communication as a key element in describing design ideas, showing design development, and in the production of refined outcomes (the ability to confidently and clearly articulate ideas using sketching, formal drawing and annotation appropriate to the nature of the brief is the key to effective visual communication; there were numerous examples of candidates providing evidence that was limited to largely two-dimensional drawing systems for projects of a spatial nature; furthermore, there were candidates who were overly reliant on notes to the detriment of effective visual communication that made it difficult to ascertain the actual visual qualities of their ideas; in terms of the communication of a final outcome, the effective use of modes and media was not evident and therefore gave the impression that the design was not resolved – e.g. did not show materials chosen)
- lacked skills in presentation as required for the effective communication of design ideas and solutions (there were many examples of a distinct lack of understanding of the principles associated with composition, layout and visual communication, as well as a clear lack of high level skills shown through the weak application of graphic modes and media techniques).