Scholarship

2013 Assessment Report

Design and Visual Communication (DVC)

COMMENTARY

There is no examination paper for this subject – rather students submit a portfolio which is assessed externally.

A generic assessment schedule that has been used previously for Scholarship Graphics is employed, and the amendments to the 2012 schedule have been appropriately applied in line with the changes associated with the new Design and Visual Communication (DVC) Scholarship Performance Standard.

The view of the marking panel was generally very favourable that the 2013 schedule did match well with Scholarship DVC and also catered well for some of the changes in evidence submitted as a result of the new Level 3 DVC standards, especially with regards to the new *Initiating Ideas* external standard.

The panel were very happy with the overall intent of each of the three strands and the use of the 'and/or' structure in the schedule that allows a more inclusive acknowledgement to different approaches in the evidence submitted.
A review of the schedule by the panel at the conclusion of the marking cycle, noted only some minor amendments to be recommended for 2014.

As for Scholarship Graphics previously, and now Scholarship DVC, the assessment conditions remain relatively consistent year to year with a portfolio submission of a major design project and a relatively consistent assessment schedule that has small incremental edits each year.

For this year there was the subject name change from 'Graphics' to 'Design and Visual Communication', and with this some quite significant changes in the standards at all levels, particularly at Level 3 – this did have some impact in changing the nature of the evidence submitted. The schedule had anticipated this, so had been adjusted accordingly, with the expectations increased particularly around Design Ideation.

The subject name change did see a significant drop in the cohort which resulted in the 3% allocation dropping from 48 (in 2012) to 42.

The net result of the reduced number of scholarships awarded and the changes associated with the new DVC standards certainly meant that the quality of evidence required has improved significantly, and like 2012, the cut-off was again 14 out of a total of 24. Big improvements around the cut-off clearly indicate that the quality of scholarship work is improving nationally.

The 2012 Panel Leader Report also noted this observation with the following comment: "This clear raising of standard is seen in part to the impact of the new DVC standards on the student evidence being produced by many of the leading schools, and there is an expectation that this tracking up may continue with the introduction of DVC at Level 3 and Scholarship in 2013."

SCHOLARSHIP WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- employed effectively experimental studies in design ideation, purposefully using creative approaches (drawing from experiences, themes, overlays with mock-ups, 3-D printed prototypes to test thinking, creative play to spark design discoveries)
- demonstrated iterative and purposeful design strategies, exploring some diverse themes that resulted in either a stunning conceptual statement or highly refined outcome
- synthesised design ideas; pushed the boundaries; revisited design thoughts with rigour and solved problems
- produced unique and innovative ideas, often with a new perspective to the brief, engaging with the design problem in a deeply personal way that resulted in a unique designer outcome
- developed ideas that integrated a range of thinking and layers of meaning that were cohesively explored and unified - abstraction of ideas, and in some cases, also used as a method to progress ideas
- demonstrated design thinking that was inspired and had coherent elements of creativity and ingenuity, challenging ideals of invention, this perception stemming from original and highly refined ideation - they showed that they could think differently and cleverly
- integrated their ideas, design thinking processes and visual communication skills to explore ideas and develop outcomes beyond the predictable - they showed distinct and innovative ideation derived from a range of sources; both designedly and inspirational
- used visual communication techniques with a high level of fluency and sophistication to convey a perceptive and compelling design narrative
- articulated design ideas and thinking convincingly, with proficient visual communication skills that were highly assured and purposeful in progressing thinking from ideation to conclusion
- employed strong visual presentation techniques, working to their own personal strengths with a visual impact that was convincing and left a lasting impression, evoking the spirit of the design as well as its physical features.

SCHOLARSHIP

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship but not Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- produced ideation that clearly informed the design process as a mode to generate and explore ideas of form or function
- used ideation techniques to generate and discover ideas that were worth pursuing further
- employed research material in a focused and informative manner that integrated effectively with design thinking
- generated design ideas effectively using creative initiating approaches (drawing from nature, word association, designers for inspiration, redrawing to simplify)
- demonstrated the exploration and evolution of ideas that were managed and completed in a skilful and wide-ranging manner incorporating and blending thoughts and influences, inspiration and ideas
- applied a cohesive and holistic design process which allowed the creative development of ideas, leading to a well-considered design outcome

- investigated and explored alternative design ideas, considering the details within a whole idea and in relation to each other, interrogating these as design possibilities
- articulated the clear communication of ideas using sketching, model-making and/or formal drawing (digital and/or manual) techniques as suitable to the strengths of the candidate
- used visuals that showed a variety of angles, that explained product function, or that related scale through referencing the human element, for the effective communicating of ideas or thinking without the need to read supporting annotation.

OTHER CANDIDATES

Candidates who were not awarded Scholarship typically:

- lacked the demonstration of innovation, with many candidates disadvantaged by the scale of the design brief they undertook, by a lack of design ideation strategies, or by strictly conforming to a prescribed technological practice approach
- did not show the engagement and/or the visual articulation required for their design context – the work was not in-depth or did not show quality ideation and development of an outcome
- did not evolve ideas with purpose – lacked the ongoing aspect of design development that draws on design considerations and explores ideas with depth and/or detail
- generated a range of ideas using set creative exercises or techniques but did not develop their own motivation or point of view as a designer throughout their project
- showed ideas relevant to an identified design brief or problem but overlooked major issues or aspects of the brief
- produced ideation through sketching, sketch models, inspired forms from nature, but did not take the ideas any further (i.e. candidate initiated ideas creatively, but did not use these in a purposeful manner into the development phase)
- generated interesting starting points and expressed a promising beginning but were unable to conclude their project in a convincing manner
- showed minimal or no reference to the human body in architectural or product design ideas
- showed details of the design explored independently without considering how they may affect the overall design
- used development to explain how the design idea functioned rather than exploring the idea further for the purposes of improving the final outcome
- lacked a well-considered or resolved design solution, often ending up with a predetermined solution without sufficient consideration or influence 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
- showed an over reliance on notes to the detriment of effective visual communication that made it difficult to ascertain the actual visual qualities of their ideas
- showed a distinct lack of understanding demonstrated with regards to the principles associated with composition, layout and visual communication
- lacked drawing skills and were not able to use these to effectively advance their design thinking
- lacked the presentation skills and did not professionally promote their solutions
- submitted incomplete or unresolved work.

OTHER COMMENTS

The most significant factors that impacted the 2013 NZ Scholarship was the subject name change from ‘Graphics’ to ‘Design and Visual Communication’ (DVC). This name change bought with it significant changes to the associated standards, particularly at level three, and this did influence the nature of evidence being submitted for Scholarship in a favourable manner.

The name change also saw a significant drop in the overall level three cohort which saw the number of recommended Scholarships to be awarded drop from 48 to 42.

The net result of these two factors did mean that the standard of evidence required to gain a Scholarship award was at the highest level ever, continuing a clear trend of significant improvement over recent years. As indicated by the exemplars from previous years, there are portfolios that would have gained a scholarship award in previous years that are not up to the level that was required for 2013.

A continuing area of improvement was seen in terms of the effective use of ideation strategies used for the generation of diverse and creative ideas. The more successful submissions not only used these strategies well in the initial stages of the project, but also successfully ran this approach throughout the ongoing exploration and refinement of design ideas. These approaches seem to be indicative of the evolving practice occurring as a result of the emergence of the new Design and Visual Communication standards particular at levels two and three.

At the top end, the quality of Outstanding Scholarship submissions continued to match the highest levels of a select number of exceptional submissions that have been received in past years. There was the continuing featuring of both spatial design and product design coming to the fore at the top end, with an equal balance of both product and spatial based projects reaching up to and near the Outstanding Scholarship level. For the top ranking submissions, their varied approach and strengths reminded again that there is no single approach in attaining outstanding success.

The use of digitally based evidence continues to increase and improve as ready access to software becomes more prevalent. When used effectively, this evidence can articulate design ideas in a refined and convincing manner. However, candidates do 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.

Even though there were more digitally based projects emerging, there was still a very strong core of successful submissions that continue to maintain a significant emphasis on manual visual communication modes, primarily freehand sketching and mock-ups, supplemented by instrumental drawings (traditional and/or digital based). The depth and detail of visual communication remains paramount to effective candidate evidence. The need for extensive design drawings as well as the more polished, finished drawings has been shown to be the basis for a successful submission. The comprehensive use of design drawings (whether done by hand or digitally) best expresses the design intent of a candidate in the depth and detail required.

The number of submissions that have an excessive use of annotation and/or collected research material continues to decline as many candidates are more appropriately coming to terms to communicating their own thinking visually. The more extensive use of visuals, whether it be original manual drawing, photographic evidence of mock-ups, models or large

format work, or digital evidence submitted as either print outs or using the appropriate file formats, is being seen and generally meeting with a greater degree of success. In fact the increased use of freely accessible digital modelling software is liberating many candidates in terms of the effective visual communication of their design ideas and thinking.

Candidates need to continue to recognise that visual communication is not just limited to refined presentation aspects such as the polished rendering or presentation of a final solution or use of advanced drawing systems (such as detailed technical drawings). But rather as the ability to use the visual tools available in a highly literate way, reflexively: to initiate viewpoints, new perspectives and inform, and initiate thinking. This means that candidates are using their suited modes and media to become the fluent visual communicators of their design thinking.

In terms of refined presentation, most candidates are evidencing this in a more selective manner that largely tends to be best suited for the presenting of the final outcome in an exhibition context. This more targeted approach allows the candidates to best utilise presentation skills to maximum effect, rather than take on the burden of presenting the entire project, which can be quite time-intensive and repetitive with little additional benefit.

In keeping with the growing strength of the submissions, the assessment schedule has evolved, in line with this improving practice, and as a result of the changes instigated by the introduction of Design and Visual Communication. The three strands for Scholarship Design and Visual Communication also provide apt descriptors for what is required in a successful submission.

The Design Ideation strand acknowledges the quality of ideas that are being generated and selected throughout a candidate's body of design work. The initiating strategies employed for the new level three Design and Visual Communication standard can have significant benefits in this area when used well.

The Graphics Practice strand acknowledges the quality of a design process that allows a candidate to fully respond to the conditions of the brief, integrate the various aesthetic and functional considerations of a design, and the effective amalgamation of visual communication with design thinking, that signals sophisticated spatial and/or design practice. Candidates that have progressed through a DVC rich programme of standards through all three levels have gained the most appropriate learning experiences that best suit this area.

The Visual Communication strand acknowledges the quality of visual techniques and/or strategies used to express design thinking and the quality of presentation principles and skills used to visually promote a design idea or outcome. While the Exhibition standard at level three can provide a good opportunity for generating successful material for this area, this evidence (irrespective of its quality) by itself will not warrant automatic success, and candidates will still benefit significantly from a DVC rich experience through all three levels to achieve successfully in this area.

Exemplar and assessment resources are to be found on the NZQA website and the developments auger well for a dynamic area with a growing level of credibility. Any students achieving well should be exceptionally pleased with their efforts and the evidence of work they have produced stands them well in terms of the pursuit of further career pathways in the creative industries and any such related fields.