Scholarship

2014 Assessment Report

Design and Visual Communication (DVC)

COMMENTARY

Even though the standard required to attain scholarship remained high, the trend of steady improvement from previous years was not apparent in 2014.

The new Level 3 Design and Visual Communication (DVC) standard – “Initiating design ideas through exploration” seemed to aid some candidates in generating interesting starting points. Though some of the approaches to initiating design ideas were either generic class activities or were very much in a vacuum, some candidates found it difficult to then engage with the design context in a meaningful way that enabled the evolution of ideas. Submissions that were more successful used ideation to find potential ideas or threads to explore and evolve further.

At the top end, the quality of Outstanding Scholarship submissions didn't quite match those of recent years. Both spatial design and product design came to the fore at the top end, along with an equal balance of both product and spatial based projects 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. While primarily still images prevail, there is a growing trend of moving image and digital animation starting to emerge - though the need for purposeful editing and composition from a cinematographic sense will be key to the success of this format (i.e. be succinct and clearly communicative to be informative and interesting).

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). Candidates need to be aware that drawing is not just for the purposes of explaining their ideas, but is also a tool for thinking about design, hence, the visual narrative of creative thinking is paramount to not only the candidate working through the evolving and resolving of their design ideas for themselves, but also for effectively communicating evidence of this design thinking in their submission.

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 with 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 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 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.

There were instances of candidates who put on fantastic presentations but only evidenced it through small photographs. Where possible, any presentation panels should be re-printed up to a suitable size that fits within the Assessment Specifications given for Scholarship DVC, to give suitable reward to the presentation skills shown.

Exemplar and assessment resources are to be found on the NZQA website and the developments augur well for a dynamic area with a growing level of credibility. Any candidates 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.

SCHOLARSHIP WITH OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with Outstanding Performance typically:

- employed effective experimental studies in design ideation, using purposeful creative approaches (drawing from experiences, themes, 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
- produced innovative ideas, with a new perspective to the brief, engaging with the design problem in a deeply personal way
- 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 – they showed distinct and innovative ideation derived from a range of inspirational sources
- revisited ideation strategies at stages throughout the resolution of their design thinking
- 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 ideas that clearly informed their design thinking as a mode to generate and explore ideas of form or function
- employed research material in a focused and informative manner that integrated effectively with design thinking
- generated design ideas using creative initiating approaches (drawing from nature, word association, designers for inspiration, redrawing to simplify or to identify shapes and forms) to discover ideas that were worth pursuing further
- demonstrated the exploring 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 thinking which allowed the creative development of ideas, leading to well-considered design outcomes

- 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 instrumental drawing (digital and/or manual) techniques as suitable to the strengths of the candidate
- used visuals that considered a variety of angles, that explained product function, or that related scale through referencing the human element or demonstrated clear consideration of the environment, for the effective communicating of ideas or thinking without the need to read supporting annotation.

OTHER CANDIDATES

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

- produced ideation through sketching, sketch models, inspired forms from nature, but did not take the ideas any further (i.e. a candidate initiated ideas creatively, but did not use these in a purposeful manner into the development phase)
- lacked the demonstration of innovation, with many candidates disadvantaged by the scale of the design brief they undertook, by a lack of meaningful design ideation strategies, or by strictly conforming to a prescribed technological practice approach
- worked with a prescriptive brief so did not have the flexibility for ideas to evolve. Often had large quantities of work but the solution was already predetermined to some extent
- did not show the engagement and/or the visual articulation required for their design context – the work was not in-depth or showed quality ideation and development of an outcome
- did not evolve ideas with purpose – lacked the on-going aspect of design development that draws on design considerations and explores ideas with depth and/or detail
- showed ideas relevant to an identified design brief or problem but overlooked major issues or aspects of the brief
- generated interesting starting points and expressed a promising beginning but were unable to develop their own motivation or point of view as a designer or conclude their project in a convincing manner
- lacked relevant reference to the context (i.e. human body, environmental and social factors) 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. This often limited the candidate's ability to effectively advance their design thinking
- 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. This often led to a narrative that was hard to follow visually
- showed a distinct lack of understanding demonstrated with regards to the principles associated with composition, layout and visual communication
- lacked the presentation skills and did not purposefully promote their solutions.