The following report is focussed on the Level 1 standards that were introduced this year. It gives feedback to assist Assessors with general issues and trends, that have been identified during external moderation of the internally assessed standards in 2024. It also provides further insights from moderation material viewed throughout the year and outlines the Assessor Support available for Design and Visual Communication.

Insights

92000: Generate product or spatial design ideas using visual communication techniques in response to design influences

This is a new Level 1 standard to New Zealand schools; it derives its provenance from the previous standards of 91067 'Use the work of an influential designer to inform design ideas' and 91068 'Undertake development of design ideas through graphics practice'. It requires students to select design influences from two sources, one from te ao Māori and another, then identify the design characteristics and use these to inform the generation of their own design ideas, using visual communication skills and techniques.

The standard provides an assessment tool to support teaching and learning of the subject's visual communication skills. Requiring the selection of design influences supports teaching and learning of design heritage including New Zealand's indigenous cultural heritage. The requirement to generate their own design ideas introduces students to design thinking and the production of original ideas.

Performance overview:

"*Generate product or spatial design ideas using visual communication techniques in response to design influences*" involves using visual communication techniques to generate own design ideas that relate to characteristics of source materials.

The evidence seen for this standard includes research in the form of photographs and web images of an appropriate te ao Māori design influence(s) along with another design influence. As part of the evidence provided, students *must* include a rationale for both design influences used in the context of product or spatial design. The rationale can be a written description or a collated set of images.

From these photographs and web images, students must use visual communication techniques (sketching, modelling, and digital modelling) to identify the characteristics of the design influences. The identified characteristics then inform the students generating product or spatial design ideas using visual communication techniques.

For Merit, the student generated product or spatial ideas must be progressed through further experimentation of both aesthetics and function.

For Excellence, the student generated product or spatial ideas must evidence divergent thinking to regenerate new design ideas, beyond an idea generated in the earlier design phases.

In each of the achievement criteria, the generation of ideas is open ended and does not require resolution.

This new standard incorporates different learning and practices than previous standards. Successful learning came from thoughtful research into both design influences. For te ao Māori design influences, engagement with local kaumatua and/or visits to local marae or museums and with a detailed rationale of the significance of the influence, led to well informed, respectful, and authentic design ideas. Other design influences, when well researched and illustrated, led to the identification of design characteristics that informed student experimentation with their own design ideas.

Practices that need strengthening:

In some teaching and learning practice, research into design influences was sparse and did not enable students to identify characteristics of the design influences that would subsequently inform and inspire the student's own ideas. The characteristics are also known as design elements, such as shapes and forms (e.g. circular, cylindrical, rectangular, spherical) and symmetry, balance, proportion, repetition, pattern, rhythm, contrast, texture.

In the 2025 NCEA Unpacking the Standard, The Ministry of Education has published this support: "*A design influence may include multiple design elements that are characteristic of either a design movement, a designer's body of work, or a design*".

When identifying the characteristics from te ao Māori, some students were not well enough informed and used the characteristics superficially. It is important to consider tikanga Māori to ensure authentic, respectful, and responsible use of design ideas from te ao Māori. When selecting a design influence from te ao Māori, it is recommended that a tangible source such as a specific spatial or product design or a Māori designer's body of work is chosen, then research the te ao Māori significance, whakapapa, and the pūrākau that the work represents or links to.

The term 'develop' in the Merit criteria refers to continued exploration and experimentation. Some teaching and learning practices misunderstood this as refining and resolving a design outcome. To achieve Merit, both aesthetics and function must be developed. Submissions that were solely aesthetic or functional were limited to Achieved. Functionality was effectively communicated by showing how people would use the design idea.

For Excellence, divergent thinking is required to regenerate new design ideas beyond their initial ideas. This does not require high quality presentation drawings.

Insights

92001: Use representation techniques to visually communicate own product or spatial design outcome

While this is a new Level 1 standard to New Zealand schools, it is closely aligned to the previous standard 91066 'Use rendering techniques to communicate the form of design ideas'. The new standard extends the communication of form, features, and materiality through rendering to include purpose and context, for example what the design idea is for and for whom.

To achieve this, students use representation techniques and skills to give the viewer detailed information of the form, features, and materiality of the product or spatial design outcome, through the consistent use of a light source to show tonal change.

Performance overview:

"*Use representation techniques to visually communicate own product or spatial design outcome*" involves applying techniques to visually communicate the three-dimensional form, features, and materiality of own design outcome. The students will utilise a representation mode and its associated representation techniques; these can include hand-rendered presentation drawings, physical models (such as hand built, 3D printed, laser cut), rendered digital models (such as CAD packages), and animations (such as fly-throughs).

The evidence seen for this standard includes 3D sketches, instrumental drawings, models (digital and traditional), and animations that have been rendered to show form with tone variation across the surfaces relative to a light source, cast shadows, and highlights. Features within the product and spatial design should be rendered with localised shadows and highlights to differentiate them from the overall form. Representing materiality also requires the application of tone, colour, localised shadows, and highlights to indicate authentic texture associated with the material.

The use of CAD as a representation mode is growing, both for modelling and animation. There are issues regarding generic application of tone, not recognising an appropriate light source, or rendering of materials.

Because physical models cannot be submitted for moderation, knowledge of photography and lighting is required to communicate the model's form and materiality.

Purpose was communicated with images of people pasted into the representation. Context was well demonstrated when the render or model was placed in a lifelike setting, such as a park or being used by people. Multiple views supported the communication of the design idea.

For Merit, the students are required to use representation techniques to clarify the visual communication of the design idea by refining their techniques to visually communicate the three-dimensional form, features, and materiality of their own design outcome.

For Excellence, the students are required to use representation techniques to enhance the visual communication of the student's own product or spatial design outcome by integrating techniques with precision to visually communicate the three-dimensional form, features, and materiality of the own design outcome with visual impact.

Practices that need strengthening:

In some teaching and learning practice, a better understanding of rendering is required. There should be an identified light source that generates different tone values on 3D forms; for example a light, medium, and darker tone on rectilinear forms and tonal gradation across cylindrical and spherical forms. Applying a gradated tone on a flat surface is not appropriate. Highlights should be used perpendicular to the light source, and cast shadows should be used to indicate the design's siting on the ground and areas on the object that are blocked from the light source.

Materiality requires the application of tone, colour, localised shadows, and highlights to indicate authentic texture associated with the material. Cutting and pasting images of textured materials onto drawings is often not consistent with the identified light source, and can appear flat.

Photographs of physical models that are constructed from modelling materials without attempting to communicate finishes such as bricks, glass, painted surfaces, corrugated and tiled roofing, limit the communication of materiality.

The use of proprietary materials such as Lego and Minecraft are not appropriate media for this standard.

Assessor Support

NZQA offers online support for teachers as assessors of NZC achievement standards. These include:

- Exemplars of student work for most standards*
- National Moderator Reports*
- Online learning modules (generic and subject-specific)**
- Clarifications for some standards*
- Assessor Practice Tool for many standards**
- Webcasts*

*hosted on the NZC Subject pages on the NZQA website.

**hosted on Pūtake, NZQA's learning management system. Accessed via Education Sector Login.

We also may provide a speaker to present at national conferences on requests from national subject associations. At the regional or local level, we may be able to provide online support.

Please contact workshops@nzqa.govt.nz for more information or to lodge a request for support.

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