

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT



BOTSWANA
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

BSSE INNOVATIVE DESIGN & AESTHETICS

2025



PAPER 1: WRITTEN PAPER

General Comments

Candidates' work was neat and legible, with clear handwriting and minimal cancellations. Most attempted all questions appropriately, and blank responses were rare. Scanned scripts were of excellent quality. Some candidates wrote outside the designated sections, which could make marking less accurate and risk portions of their work being overlooked.

Observations

Generally, candidates demonstrated basic knowledge of design, materials, and safety, with strength in naming tools and identifying concepts. However, many struggled with **application and explanation**, offering superficial or off-topic responses. Weaknesses were evident in explaining design principles (Q1–Q2), confusing tools and materials (Q3), inaccurate technical drawing (Q4), and shallow evaluation of packaging (Q5). A lack of depth in reasoning—especially around safety, material choice, and user needs—shows a need to move beyond recall.

Recommendations

- Centres should **teach for understanding, not memorisation**, using “explain why” and “give an example” in every lesson.
- Focus on **justifying choices, accurate technical drawing**, and **real-world contexts** (e.g., “Why use glass in packaging?”).
- Use past papers to practise structured answers (What? How? Why?) and reinforce key command terms.
- Prioritise **material properties, safety, sustainability**, and **design purpose** across all topics to build stronger, more thoughtful responses.

Comments on Individual Items

Section A

- 1 (a) (i) Most candidates correctly identified causes of land and water pollution, such as litter and industrial chemicals. However, some gave irrelevant answers like “transportation” or “agricultural activities” without linking them to pollution.
- (ii) Responses lacked depth, a considerable number of candidates listed safety measures (e.g., wear gloves, label containers) but failed to explain *why*. Some suggested inappropriate gear (e.g., surgical gloves). Justification was key and often missing.
- (b) (i) Many understood material conservation, citing accurate measurement, combining scraps, or reducing size. A few oversimplified with “recycle” or “reduce”. Reuse examples like turning buckets into flowerpots were acceptable and well given.
- (ii) The candidates poorly answered this area. Many missed the link between deforestation and visual/land pollution. Correct responses noted tree removal for construction materials leads to environmental degradation; others gave vague or incomplete answers.



- (c) (i) Most defined *biodegradable waste* correctly, as waste broken down by microorganisms. A few omitted the agent (bacteria). *Hazardous waste* was well understood.
- (ii) Many clearly explained how housing needs cause pollution, through construction waste, brick firing (air pollution), and improper disposal of materials. Some responses were incomplete, stating only “construction causes pollution” without specific examples.
- 2 (a) (i) Most candidates correctly listed stages of product development: idea generation, screening, concept development, testing, and evaluation. Some confused the process by listing “prototype” or “planning” out of sequence.
- (ii) This was poorly answered. While a few mentioned rhythm techniques like repetition or contrast, most failed to explain them. Many left it blank, indicating limited understanding of design principles.
- (b) (i) Most struggled to explain colour’s role in design. Incorrect answers included “light colours make rooms darker.” Only a few noted that colour enhances visual appeal or conveys mood and emotion.
- (ii) Many did not understand “tactile.” Responses like “smooth,” “batik,” or “patchwork” showed confusion. Few explained valid methods, using texture, embossing, or varied materials to engage touch.
- (c) (i) Most listed relevant factors such as durability, efficiency, safety, cost, and ease of use. A few oversimplified with “costing” instead of “cost.”
- (ii) Safety measures were often missed. Some gave care instructions instead (e.g., dust protection). Correct answers such as avoid overloading sockets, overheating motors, or using wet hands were rare. Clarity on *use* vs. *storage* is needed.
- 3 (a) (i) Most candidates named craft classes correctly, e.g., textile, paper craft, beadwork. However, some listed techniques (knitting, macramé) or unrelated terms like “mass media” instead of categories.
- (ii) Many gave practical ways to save electricity like switching off unused lights and appliances. But some missed the context, suggesting “solar panels” or “low-voltage devices” not direct user actions during production.
- (b) (i) Most struggled to name crocheting tools. Hooks, scissors, and stitch markers were correct. Most incorrectly listed *materials* like yarn or wool instead of *equipment*.
- (ii) Candidates poorly attempted this, most left it blank. Few candidates described embroidery or loom beading instead of **embroidery beading application**. A few numbers mentioned steps like “transfer pattern” but did not complete the process.



- (c) (i) Most correctly identified *pottery* as made from clay and *thatching* from grass, reeds, or straw. Incorrect answers included “moulding clay” or “wood,” showing confusion between material and product.
- (ii) Most candidates poorly understood preparation of leather. While a few mentioned soaking, curing, or unhairing, most could not explain *how* e.g., “washing to remove dirt.” Some gave incorrect methods like “soaking in salty water” or “wash and dry,” lacking technical accuracy.
- 4 (a) (i) Most candidates stated window treatment functions privacy, light control, aesthetics but failed to *outline* as required. For example, instead of just “adds beauty,” they needed to explain how treatments enhance a room through colour, texture, and design. “Prevent soil erosion” was incorrect and unrelated.
- (b) (i) The candidates responded well to this question. They correctly named wall treatments (paint, wallpaper, tiles, panelling) and ceiling materials (gypsum, gamazine, PVC, rhino board, paint), showing good knowledge of interior finishes.
- (ii) Majority listed factors like mood, theme, and functionality but did not *outline* them. One-word answers were insufficient. For full marks, they needed to briefly explain e.g., “mood: use colour and lighting to create a calming or energetic atmosphere.”
- (c) (i) Most identified ground cover functions such as preventing erosion, reducing weeds, or enhancing curb appeal but explanations were often incomplete. Few elaborated on how ground cover supports landscape design and maintenance.
- (ii) The drawing section had mixed results. Candidates well drew windows, double sinks acceptable, but a sizeable number of candidates drew a double bed as two single beds side by side missing the unified frame and headboard. Accuracy in proportion and detail needs improvement.
- 5 (a) Most candidates correctly identified packaging elements like logo, brand name, company address, and safety information. However, a few candidates gave irrelevant answers such as “cushion,” “table mat,” or “lifestyle,” showing confusion between product and packaging details.
- (b) Majority of the candidates poorly answered this question. Most of them could not explain how **safety** (e.g., child-resistant seals, clear warnings) and **affordability** (e.g., cost-effective materials, production efficiency) influence packaging design. A considerable number left it blank, indicating a knowledge gap.
- (c) Few understood the advantages of glass. Instead of correct points like recyclability, non-reactivity, or clarity a substantial number incorrectly said, “it is cheap” (often false) or “it is fragile” (a disadvantage). Candidates need a clearer understanding of material properties, particularly when evaluating packaging choices like glass.



PAPER 2: PRACTICAL EXAMINATION

General Comments

Introduction

This is a practical examination in which centres administer a planning test set by the Botswana Examinations Council. Candidates respond to a given task by completing forms IDA 1, 2, and 3 in duplicate. During the planning phase, they select an item, justify their choice, sketch the required skill and final product, complete a plan of work, and list all necessary materials, tools, and equipment. This is followed by a 2-hour practical session where candidates create the item, applying at least two skills from the IDA syllabus. The finished product must be clearly labelled. The exercise was marked by external examiners.

Observations

Centres must ensure timely communication and confirmation of all schedule changes, SPED requirements, and exam instructions well in advance to avoid disruptions. IDA documentation, especially IDA 1, must be fully completed, duplicated, and verified before the exam, missing pages must be prevented to avoid unfair penalties.

Recommendations

- **Safety compliance is non-negotiable:** all centres must have up-to-date fire extinguishers, fire blankets, and fully stocked first aid kits.
- PPE, including gloves, masks, and aprons must be provided to every candidate to meet health and safety standards and ensure a safe, fair, and professional examination environment.

Section 1

Readiness of Centres

Most centres were well-prepared, with Deputy School Heads or Chief Invigilators readily available to support examiners. However, two centres experienced delays: Swaneng SSS began on Day 2 of the schedule, leading to three sessions in one day, while Shoshong SSS started significantly late. Both cited missed schedule updates, though it should be noted that BEC had sent the schedules on time, and the oversight was on the centres' part.

Almost all centres submitted complete documentation, including signed sitting plans and attendance registers for planning sessions. Original and duplicate copies of IDA 1, 2, and 3 were properly sealed and labelled. Duplicated copies of **IDA 1** and **IDA 2** were submitted as required. The original **IDA 3** was retained by the Centre Senior Teacher, who is responsible for issuing practical materials to candidates. This ensures controlled and accurate distribution of resources during assessment. All documentation actions have been completed in accordance with guidelines. All planning sheets were arranged in ascending order, matching the register.

Some centres anticipated two examiners and prepared two labs accordingly. The examiner conducted sessions in one lab and later moved to the second, which was already set up and ready. At St Joseph's



College, one candidate lacked IDA 1 and had to reconstruct it using a continuation form, resulting in a missed section on skill identification costing 2 marks.

Lab Cleanliness:

Most laboratories were clean, organised, and conducive for practical work.

2 Challenges

Several logistical and administrative issues affected exam delivery.

- Delayed exams start in some centres due to lack of awareness of the revised timetable, requiring rescheduling to 3 sessions on Day 1 and 2 on Day 2.
- 25-minute power outage during the exam disrupted candidates; lost time was recovered.
- Missing PPE gloves and masks not provided, raising health and safety concerns.
- Expired fire extinguisher and incomplete first aid kit observed; a fire blanket was used as a temporary safety measure.
- Limited working sewing machines caused delays and affected workflow.
- Overcrowded scheduling centres ran 3 sessions in one day to accommodate all candidates, increasing pressure and reducing supervision.
- One candidate lost 2 marks due to missing the first page of IDA 1 (original and duplicate), affecting planning.

3 Functional Equipment & Resources

Conduct pre-exam checks to ensure sewing machines, power supply, and tools are operational. Replace or repair faulty equipment ahead of time.

4 Exam Session Planning

Avoid overloading sessions. Where scheduling constraints exist, plan balanced session loads, and ensure time lost is compensated.

5 SPED Readiness

Centres must receive official BEC guidance on SPED candidate support **before** exams begin. Establish clear communication with BEC to avoid last-minute delays.

6 Staff Training & Coordination

Train invigilators and senior teachers on exam protocols, documentation, safety, and emergency procedures to ensure smooth, compliant delivery.



PAPER 3: COURSEWORK

General Comments

Innovative Design and Aesthetics Paper 3 is a coursework paper consisting of two integrated components: the functional product with design sketches and the mood board with its accompanying report. As this is a relatively new syllabus requiring candidates to complete two substantial projects, each with a written component, within a single examination paper, credit is due to centres for their resilience, dedication, and effective guidance in supporting candidates to meet these demands on time and to a generally high standard.

Despite the complexity and workload, most centres performed well. Functional products demonstrated convincing evidence of creativity, innovation, thoughtful planning, imagination, and practical problem-solving. Some mood boards also reflected elevated levels of originality and aesthetic understanding. These outcomes speak to the commitment of both teachers and learners.

However, candidates faced challenges in articulating their ideas clearly, especially in sections requiring detailed explanations, full descriptions, and step-by-step reasoning (the “how” aspects of their work). This may indicate either a gap in subject-specific vocabulary or a limited grasp of task requirements. Areas that demand higher-order thinking and expression require more focused teaching, extended practice, and repeated review to ensure alignment with marking rubric expectations. Spelling and grammatical errors were observed in several submissions, which at times distorted meaning and affected clarity during moderation. This highlights the need for stronger language support within the subject to improve communication of ideas.

Most projects were clean and well-presented. However, minor issues such as hanging threads, glue or paint smudges, wrinkles (due to lack of pressing), dust, pencil/pen marks, water stains, or signs of overhandling were noted in some cases. While not widespread, these details can impact overall impression and should be addressed during final preparation.

Design sketches were generally of a high standard, clear, well-drawn, and effectively communicating the final product. Most accurately reflected the items produced and supported the design process. Most centres opted for sewn items as the functional product and 2D mood boards. Only a few centres chose to produce 3D mood boards, suggesting a need for greater exposure to and encouragement of three-dimensional presentation techniques.

Readiness of Centres

Centres were generally well-prepared for moderation, with most having completed candidate assessments and organised required documentation. Summary mark sheets, orders of merit, attendance registers, and individual mark sheets were readily available and collected from Deputy School Heads or Chief Invigilators. A high level of attention to detail was observed, with required signatures mostly in place and only minor errors noted, these were corrected promptly. Attendance registers were fully signed, though a few required follow-ups to ensure all candidates had signed. In one centre, moderation was delayed due to miscommunication about the moderation dates, which affected timely submission of BEC documentation and left some teachers still marking during the process. Despite this, many centres demonstrated excellent organisation, particularly those that grouped and stapled each candidate’s mark sheets for both the



functional task and mood board, enabling a smooth and holistic review. Overall, readiness was commendable and contributed to an efficient moderation exercise

Display

Display areas in most centres were clean, well-ventilated, and conducive for assessment. However, a few labs felt cramped due to limited space, especially where multiple exams were running simultaneously. In some cases, candidates were required to share canvas boards, and mood boards were placed on the floor or shared chairs with functional items, leading to congestion and difficulty in identifying individual projects. Despite these challenges, most projects were neatly arranged with clear candidate numbers, aiding identification and evaluation.

Nearly all candidates completed their work, though a few projects were missing components such as folios, mood boards, or reports, only identified during moderator inquiry. While most functional items demonstrated good craftsmanship, safety, and usability, many mood boards failed to clearly reflect the intended living space solution. Additionally, mood board reports were often weak and did not serve as an effective guide for the design, falling short of expectations.

Adherence to Standards

In some centres, all Innovative Design and Aesthetics (IDA) teachers marked every component of the candidates' projects, including both the mood board and functional product, along with their respective folios and reports. In others, a division of marking responsibilities was implemented within the same centre with some teachers assessing functional items and folios, while others focused on the mood board and its report. When applied consistently, this approach has the potential to support more reliable and balanced assessment. Teachers generally attempted to follow the marking rubrics; however, observations during moderation revealed that some awarded significantly higher marks than the quality of work warranted. This was particularly evident in sections such as the problem statement, idea screening, and the application of design elements and principles, where marks were often inflated despite unclear or underdeveloped explanations.

There were frequent inconsistencies between the comments provided and the marks awarded. In several cases, high scores were given even when the project did not demonstrate corresponding quality. Additionally, marks were not sufficiently differentiated to reflect the range of candidate abilities. This lack of spread disproportionately affected top and bottom performers with high-achieving candidates sometimes receiving undue advantage, while lower-performing candidates were assessed more harshly.

Notably, in some instances, candidates were recorded as having failed to submit their final projects, yet upon moderation, completed work was found to be present and fully executed. This raises concerns about accuracy in initial recording and reporting.

Marking of the mood board and its report was inconsistent across many centres. Projects where the design problem was not clearly defined or aligned with syllabus requirements were occasionally awarded high marks. Key areas such as mood, decorative style, and the correct application of elements and principles of design were often not properly addressed in the work or the report yet still received favourable scoring. Furthermore, the overall appearance and craftsmanship of mood boards were frequently below expected standards, and the design principles outlined in the report were not reflected in the final product despite being awarded high marks.



Observations

While candidates showed basic knowledge of design terms and visual style, many struggled to apply concepts purposefully. Strengths in naming elements like colour, balance, and contemporary style were evident, but mood boards often lacked problem-solution alignment, logical reasoning, and visual cohesion. Too many were aesthetically pleasing but shallow prioritising style over substance. Weaknesses in creativity, strategic thinking, and integration of design principles revealed a need for deeper, more intentional design education focused on purpose, not just presentation.

Recommendations

- To improve performance, teaching must shift from decoration to **design thinking**. Candidates should focus on **problem-solving**, ensuring every choice colour, texture, style clearly addresses the user's need
- Train students to define a **single mood, space, and problem**, and to justify each element with specific, logical explanations. Strengthen understanding of **approved styles as systems**, not labels, and ensure **visual and written components support each other**.
- Prioritise **craftsmanship, neat presentation, and originality**, moving beyond templates to encourage creative, functional solutions.
- Use checklists to build **integrated thinking** linking problem, concept, visuals, and justification so candidates don't just create mood boards, but **think and communicate like designers**.

Comments on Individual Questions

Design Sketches and Functional Item

Problem Identification

Problem Statement

Most candidates provided problem statements that were partially clear or underdeveloped. Many described surface-level issues such as *"the table has scratches"* without explaining how these flaws affected functionality, usability, or user experience. As a result, the problems lacked depth and did not fully meet the criteria of a well-defined design challenge.

A strong problem statement should highlight a functional need and its impact on the user. However, several candidates failed to establish this connection. Some presented multiple unrelated issues, while others focused on decorative concerns rather than practical shortcomings. In a few cases, problems were too vague or general to justify a meaningful design response.

Names of Functional Products

Most candidates correctly identified their functional products, including items such as:

- Babies play mats.
- Lumbar support cushions



- Back support cushions
- Placemats, tablecloths, fitted table covers.
- Chair pads, seat cushions, curtains.

However, some candidates used **redundant or synonymous terms** such as *throw pillow* and *scatter cushion*, or *seat cushion* and *chair pad* suggesting limited variation in product understanding. While these items may differ slightly in context, their functional overlap raises questions about originality and clarity.

In some cases, the named product did not logically solve the stated problem. For example, a *table runner* was proposed to protect a table from hot dishes, despite its typical placement in the center of the table far from where hot dishes are usually placed (near the edges). This disconnect indicates a need for stronger alignment between problem and solution.

Additionally, some candidates used non-specific terms like *cushion*, which could refer to either decorative or functional items. Without clarification, such terms risk ambiguity in assessment. A few candidates failed to state the product name under the correct heading, instead embedding it within unlabelled explanations. While the item may have been correct, missing headings hinder clarity and fairness in marking.

Although the syllabus focuses on home-based functional items, a small number of candidates proposed products for office use (e.g., cushion pads) or travel (e.g., neck collars). While creativity is encouraged, candidates should ensure their choices align with the intended context of use.

Reasons / Justifications

Most candidates provided two justifications, as required; however, many of these did **not fully address the** stated problem. Some responses were only partially relevant, while others were entirely unrelated to the design challenge. A recurring issue was the lack of detailed explanation on how the proposed functional product solves the identified problem.

In several cases, candidates grouped justifications for multiple items instead of addressing each product individually. For example, one response stated: *“Using both a tablecloth and placemats will protect the furniture and provide a clean barrier that conceals scratches,”* or *“These items will prevent visibility into the room at night, offering seclusion.”* While these ideas show some thought, combining justifications undermines the requirement to evaluate each product’s specific function.

Additionally, some candidates resorted to defining the product rather than justifying its use. For instance, a candidate wrote: *“An ergonomic lumbar support pillow is a small, contoured pillow designed to support the lower back curve.”* While accurate, this is a description, not a justification it fails to explain how the pillow improves comfort, posture, or daily function in the user’s context.

Overall, justifications often lacked depth, specificity, and logical connection to the problem. Candidates need more guidance in constructing clear, purposeful reasoning that demonstrates functional relevance and user-centred thinking.



Idea Screening

Suitable Idea Selection

Almost all candidates successfully brainstormed multiple ideas and selected one appropriate functional product. However, many struggled to clearly justify why that item was chosen. Explanations often failed to link the product to the stated problem or lacked depth in showing how it would effectively address the user's need.

Some candidates described the appearance, materials, skills, shape, or decorative elements of the product instead of explaining its functional relevance. Others compared two products based on general qualities (e.g., durability or attractiveness) but did not tie these to the problem context. In a few cases, the selected idea had no explanation at all, missing the opportunity to demonstrate reasoning.

While idea generation was strong, candidates need more support in developing purposeful, problem-driven justifications that go beyond description to show design intent and user-centred thinking.

Ergonomic Features

Ergonomic features posed a challenge for many candidates. While most correctly named features such as *ease of use*, *comfort*, and *safety*, they often failed to describe how these would be incorporated into the product or connect them to the problem.

Some candidates included features not in the syllabus such as *durability* or *functionality* which resulted in lost marks. A few did not name two required ergonomic features, instead offering general descriptions of their product without identifying associated ergonomics. Others gave explanations that *implied* an ergonomic feature but did not name it explicitly, weakening their response. Clearer understanding is needed: ergonomic features must be named, defined in context, and linked directly to how the product supports the user physically or functionally.

Aesthetic Features

Most candidates correctly identified aesthetic features such as *colour*, *texture*, *line*, *form/shape*, *mass*, and *space*. A few incorrectly listed the *light* as an aesthetic feature, which is not part of the syllabus for this component.

Colour was the most frequently cited feature. However, many candidates did not fully describe the qualities or attributes of the features they named. Instead, responses often defaulted to product descriptions such as "*patchwork design*," "*orange fasco fabric adds brightness*," "*tassels enhance beauty*," or "*warm and cozy feel*" rather than analysing how specific aesthetic elements contribute to the overall design.

To improve, candidates should be guided to name, describe, and apply aesthetic features using appropriate terminology, and explain how each contributes to the mood, function, or user experience not just visual appeal.



Planning

Labelled Sketches of Major Materials and Quantities

This area was generally managed. Most candidates produced clear, relevant sketches of the major materials required such as fabric rolls, thread, paint, or filling and correctly labelled them with material type and quantity.

Many illustrated a section of fabric being cut from a roll, complete with measurements (e.g., 50 cm × 40 cm), while others showed measured lengths of thread or paint portions, indicating thoughtful planning. These visual details demonstrated a practical understanding of material use. However, a few candidates only listed materials without indicating quantities or measurements, weakening the completeness of their planning.

Labelled Sketches of the Finished Product

Nearly all candidates provided sketches showing both front and back views of the final product, which were mostly well drawn and clearly labelled. Labels typically included parts, materials used, and fabric types (e.g., “cotton,” “fasco,” “padding”).

Some candidates, however, did not use arrows for labelling instead writing names directly on the sketch like headings, which reduced clarity. A few included labels but omitted dimensions, while others gave measurements but missed material or part labels.

Although most candidates included diagrams, a small number did not provide any finished product sketch at all, and a handful had no labelling whatsoever, which limited the assessor’s ability to evaluate design clarity and completeness.

Execution

Good Use of Techniques

Most candidates successfully completed their functional items, demonstrating a sound understanding of construction processes and appropriate material selection. Commonly made products included garden aprons, cushions, tablecloths, placemats, table runners, and curtains many of which were well-executed and aligned with the original design sketches.

Most sewn items were neatly constructed, with stitches properly started and finished, resulting in clean finishes and minimal to no hanging threads. A variety of techniques were applied, including appliqué, embroidery, patchwork, framing, collage, and tie-dye, with appliqué being the most widely used. However, some technical inconsistencies were observed. In stitching, issues such as uneven tension, skipped stitches, and misaligned seams were common particularly in placemats and tablecloths where joins were not always secure or straight. Embroidery work showed uneven stitch length and incorrect tension, affecting overall finish. Lacing, piping, and binding were generally well inserted, though some samples showed puckering or uneven distribution. Printing techniques produced clear and durable designs, but in some cases lacked balance, with ink smudges or overflows reducing precision.

Appliqué shapes were mostly neatly cut, interfaced, and securely attached, resulting in flat, firm finishes. However, a few had frayed edges, indicating incomplete finishing. Patchwork pieces were generally well cut and creatively arranged into cohesive patterns, with clean stitching and no loose threads though some had



crooked or misaligned seams at the joints. Tie-dye designs were clearly defined, but in some cases, dye absorption was uneven, suggesting that ties were not tight enough during the process. Quilting involved the correct number of fabric layers, but stitching was often inconsistent in straightness and tension. Additionally, framed fabric in some projects was not smooth, indicating that the material was not properly stretched or secured during framing.

Despite these technical flaws, most centres produced neat, well-realised items that reflected the intended design. A few products, however, had paint or stain marks even when paint was not part of the construction suggesting a need for greater care during handling and finishing.

Mastery of Skill

All candidates successfully produced the final item as planned. Overall, the products demonstrated a strong level of skill, with only minor technical errors in execution. Most items were completed with care and reflected thoughtful craftsmanship.

Good Use of Materials

Candidates generally selected materials appropriate to the function of their products. Fabric choices, padding, and structural elements were well-matched to the intended use showing awareness of durability, comfort, and practicality.

Completed and Original Work

Most projects were complete, original, and inventive. Materials were used appropriately, and most items showed clear individuality. However, in some centres, multiple candidates produced remarkably comparable items, suggesting limited originality or shared templates. Greater diversity in product design not only supports creativity but also reduces the risk of widespread marking errors across a centre. Encouraging unique, personalised solutions helps candidates fully express their design thinking.

ERGONOMIC FEATURES

Product Functionality and Problem-Solving

Almost all candidates created items that were functional and effectively addressed the stated problem. A few exceptions occurred where the chosen product was not suitable for the identified issue for example, selecting a decorative item to solve a structural or usability problem.

Ease of Use and Comfort

Most candidates incorporated features that enhanced ease of use and user comfort. Examples included padded handles for easy carrying (e.g., in toy storage boxes) or straps on chair pads and back cushions to keep them securely in place. Comfort was achieved by soft, lightweight, breathable, and tactilely pleasing materials. Many items featured padding, smooth textures, and natural fabric feels. Some products were also designed to be durable, supporting long-term, frequent use with minimal wear.

Safety in Material Choice and Finish

Products were generally made from non-toxic materials with safe, polished finishes. Edges of metal or wood components were smooth, and fabrics were securely attached avoiding loose threads or peeling layers that could shed lint. Only a few items had a strong paint smell, likely due to recent touch-ups or insufficient drying time before moderation. This can be avoided by completing all painting tasks well in advance.



Efficiency and Productivity

The products were designed to work effectively in their intended context. For example, well-padded supports improved sitting comfort and posture, while appropriately sized tablecloths and runners covered their intended surfaces fully enhancing both function and presentation.

Versatility

All candidates well addressed this aspect. Most products demonstrated versatility through features such as:

- **Clean, attractive designs** that enhance a space.
- **Multi-functional forms** (e.g., cushion doubling as storage)
- **Aesthetic appeal** that supports decorative use
- **Practical design** suggesting use in multiple settings.

This shows strong awareness of how functional items can serve more than one purpose a key strength in design thinking.

AESTHETIC FEATURES

Materials That Enhance the Product

Most candidates selected materials that effectively enhanced their product's overall quality. Choices reflected an understanding of aesthetics, durability, comfort, functionality, and ease of use. Well-chosen fabrics and finishes contributed positively to both appearance and performance.

Texture as a Design Element

Textures were used thoughtfully either for contrast or harmony enhancing the visual and tactile appeal of the products. Many candidates selected materials with pleasant tactile qualities that also improved usability, such as non-slip surfaces or grip-enhancing finishes. In addition, certain textures helped maintain cleanliness and longevity by resisting scratches, dust, creasing, and general wear showing awareness of both form and function.

Use of Colour

Colour choices were diverse, intentional, and well-coordinated. Candidates effectively used complementary or contrasting palettes to create visual interest and elevate the product's appearance. The thoughtful use of colour contributed significantly to the overall aesthetic impact and user appeal.

Shape and Form

Many products featured distinct, well-defined shapes including pyramids, hearts, and geometric form which added visual uniqueness and beauty. In several cases, the shape directly communicated the product's function, reflecting intuitive, user-centred design.

Presentation and Finish

While most products were neatly produced, presentation was occasionally compromised by:

- Pencil or pen marks
- Hanging threads



- Improperly inserted or uneven binding, lacing, or piping.
- Skipped or unravelled stitches
- Over-handling, dust, or paint stains
- Poor pressing or wrinkled fabrics.

These issues, though minor, affected the final impression. Candidates should be reminded to inspect and refine their work thoroughly before submission.

Note:

The functional product component requires candidates to **clearly distinguish** between **basic function** and **ergonomic features** such as **comfort, ease of use, and safety**. While many understood how their product worked, deeper understanding is needed in **describing and applying** ergonomic principles with precision and relevance.

MOODBOARD REPORT

Problem / Situation

This section was generally weak across many candidates. While most identified a problem related to interior or exterior living spaces such as *a room that is too cold, too dark, too noisy, too small, or too sunny, or flooding in outdoor areas, large/unusable yards, or poor lighting* many failed to state the problem clearly or completely.

Some candidates formulated issues not aligned with the syllabus, such as *“my excessively cold room”* or *“a room that is too big”*, which lack specificity and design relevance. Others described vague or personal situations like *“my small, cluttered space”* without framing them as generalisable design challenges.

A common issue was incomplete or ambiguous problem statements. Many lacked a clear cause-and-effect relationship, failing to explain how the problem impacts the user’s comfort, functionality, or well-being. In several cases, multiple unrelated problems were listed without focus, weakening the design intent.

On a positive note, most candidates correctly named specific interior spaces such as *living room, bedroom, kitchen, dining room, or bathroom* and exterior areas like *patio, veranda, garden, or yard*. However, a few used the generic term *“room”* without specifying which space, which reduces clarity and limits design precision.

MOOD

Mood of the Living Space

Most candidates were able to correctly identify an appropriate mood for the living space, such as *intimate, welcoming, cozy, calm, warm, fresh, private, or refuge-like*. These choices generally aligned with design best practices for enhancing comfort and atmosphere. However, a common issue was naming multiple moods (e.g., *“calm, cozy, and inviting”*) instead of focusing on one dominant mood, as required. This diluted clarity and made it difficult to develop a cohesive design direction.



In some cases, mood was confused with physical conditions for example, stating “*warm*” (a temperature) instead of “*warmth*” (a sensory or emotional quality). This shows a need for clearer understanding of mood as a perceptual and psychological experience, not a literal environmental state.

How the Mood is Created

This area was generally weak. While many candidates could name features that contribute to a mood such as *warm colours (red, orange, yellow)* for creating warmth they often failed to explain how, where, or why these elements would be applied.

For example, few described which parts of the room would feature these colours (e.g., walls, textiles, accent pieces) or how their placement would influence perception. Even fewer explained the psychological or visual effect such as how warm hues create a sense of enclosure and comfort, countering the feeling of a cold room.

Candidates who listed multiple moods struggled further often focusing on one aspect (e.g., *coziness*) while neglecting others (e.g., *inviting*). This revealed a lack of integration between mood, function, and design strategy. A strong response requires clear, specific, and spatially grounded explanations — not just a list of features.

Relevance of the Mood to the Problem

Many candidates did not clearly link the chosen mood to the stated problem. For instance, in a *too cold room*, the mood of *warmth* should be used to create a visual and emotional illusion of warmth through colour, texture, lighting, and material choice.

Instead, most treated mood as a separate idea, not as a design solution. Few explained how warm-toned colours absorb light and radiate energy, or how soft textures and layered fabrics can make a space feel more enclosed and comforting.

This shows a need for deeper understanding: mood is not just an aesthetic choice it is a functional tool to transform how a user experiences a space.

Decorative Style / Ways of Enhancing the Exterior

Clearly Named Decorative Style

This area was generally poorly addressed. While some candidates correctly named interior styles from the syllabus such as *Contemporary, Scandinavian, Modern, Sophisticated, and Rustic* many struggled with exterior contexts.

Candidates working on exterior problems often confused landscaping features (like *paving, rockeries, lawns, or trees*) with decorative styles. These are elements, not styles. The correct approach is to identify a cohesive design style such as *Traditionalist, Minimalist, Contemporary, Modernist, Classical, or Rustic* and then show how features support it.

A few candidates either failed to name a style at all or chose vague or incorrect terms, reducing the clarity and validity of their design response.



Explanation of How the Style is Achieved

Most candidates listed features rather than explaining how the style is created. For example, stating “use of stone walls and wooden beams” is not enough they needed to describe how these choices reflect a rustic or traditional style, and how the style influences material, form, and layout.

Strong responses should connect design decisions to stylistic principles e.g., *minimalist style uses clean lines, neutral colours, and uncluttered spaces to create simplicity and order.*

Relevance to the Problem

Many candidates did not link the chosen decorative style or method of enhancing the exterior to the original problem. For instance, if the issue is *a noisy outdoor area*, a *sound-absorbing landscape design* within a *rustic or naturalistic style* should be explained as a solution, not just a look.

Too often, the style was treated as purely aesthetic, with no functional or problem-solving role. Examiners expected candidates to show how the style supports comfort, usability, or sensory improvement making it a strategic design choice, not just decoration.

Design Elements

Most candidates were able to correctly identify three design elements commonly line, colour, space, texture, and shape which shows a solid grasp of foundational design vocabulary. However, many struggled to explain how these elements were applied to solve the stated problem. Explanations were often partial, vague, or missing. For example, while candidates might note that “colour was used,” they rarely described how specific hues affect perception or function such as using warm colours to create visual warmth in a cold room. A recurring issue was poor articulation of *space* both in planning and in explanation. In practice, space was often not used effectively, leading to unbalanced compositions or cluttered layouts that weakened the design’s impact.

In some cases, candidates discussed design elements only in relation to mood (e.g., “texture creates coziness”) rather than tying them directly to the functional problem. While mood is important, the focus should be on how elements solve real spatial or environmental challenges. A few candidates did not state any design elements at all, which significantly weakened their design justification.

Principles of Design

Like the design elements, most candidates were able to correctly name three principles of design, commonly: balance, emphasis, rhythm, and proportion. This indicates a basic understanding of core design theory. However, the application and explanation of these principles was generally weak. Candidates often failed to explain *where* and *how* each principle would be used to directly address the problem. For example, stating “I used balance” is not enough they needed to describe *how* symmetrical or asymmetrical balance improves visual comfort in a cluttered or uneven space.

Explanations were frequently vague, incomplete, or partially correct. Some responses were off-topic or misapplied such as linking *rhythm* to music instead of visual repetition in design. A small number of candidates did not state any principles at all, which significantly weakened their design rationale. Crucially, the mood board report required candidates to connect all components mood, decorative style, design elements, and principles directly to the problem. They were expected to explain not just *what* they chose, but *why* showing how each choice contributes to a cohesive, functional solution. Additionally, candidates



should have reinforced approved syllabus styles (e.g., *Scandinavian, Contemporary, Rustic*) and provided clear examples of how these styles are reflected in their choices. Too often, this integrated thinking was missing resulting in fragmented rather than unified design justifications.

MOOD BOARD RUBRIC

General Appearance of the Mood Board

Mood boards were accepted in 2D, or 3D format, and most candidates submitted complete, well-finished boards. Visually, many were expressive and engaging, using images, textures, and materials to convey ideas. However, a critical weakness was the lack of clear connection between the mood board content and the stated problem. For many, there was little evidence of conceptual thinking or intentional design reasoning.

In several cases, visuals were irrelevant to the problem or space being addressed for example, including images of bedrooms or kitchens when the problem was in the living room. This suggests a lack of focus and misunderstanding of how a mood board should support a specific design solution.

A strong mood board should **clearly communicate** the **design direction, user need, and problem-solving strategy** not just aesthetic preference. Too often, candidates showed **style without purpose**.

Craftsmanship

Most mood boards showed some level of cohesion, with candidates arranging elements to reflect a room or space. However, craftsmanship varied significantly across submissions. While many candidates neatly cut and attached materials, others were messy or imprecise with poorly trimmed images, uneven edges, and unevenly applied glue or adhesive. In some cases, pieces were loosely attached or overlapping haphazardly, reducing visual clarity and professionalism.

Lack of cohesion was also evident when the physical layout of the board did not match the written design plan for example, showing a living room solution but including visuals for a bedroom or kitchen. Some boards attempted cohesion through composition, even without unified framing, but others felt disconnected or scattered. Several centres used Canvas to create digital mood boards. These were generally neater and more organised, with clean layouts and precise placement since no physical cutting or gluing was involved. However, these often lacked creativity in assembly and felt overly generic, missing the tactile, direct quality that physical boards can offer. In summary, while **most candidates demonstrated basic competence, diligence, precision, and alignment between visual and written content** need improvement to ensure the mood board functions as a **clear, unified design statement**.

Elements of Design (Mood Board Application)

Many candidates **planned to use key design elements** such as *colour, line, texture, shape, and space* but **failed to apply them effectively** in their mood boards. Only a few successfully translated their **initial design ideas** into visual form, resulting in boards that **did not clearly reflect** how these elements solve the problem.

Most mood boards showed **partial or limited application** illustrating **one or two elements** well, but neglecting others. A small number demonstrated **two elements** cohesively, though often with **minimal planning or integration**.



- ✓ **Colour** was the best-executed element used correctly and effectively by most candidates. Warm or cool palettes were generally appropriate to the intended mood and problem (e.g., warm tones for cold rooms).
- ✓ **Line** was also reasonably well applied in some cases for example, vertical lines to suggest height.
- ✓ However, **texture** was rarely achieved, and when used, often lacked intentionality. Few candidates incorporated tactile materials (like fabric swatches or wood samples) in a way that clearly supported comfort or function.

More concerning were **cases where design choices contradicted the problem**:

- **Horizontal lines** (via wide sofas or short curtains) were used in rooms with low ceilings, which can make the space feel even more compressed.
- **Black or dark-coloured curtains** which absorb heat were included in solutions for overheated **rooms**, worsening the issue instead of helping.

These examples indicate a **gap in applied understanding**: candidates may know the elements but **struggle to use them strategically** to solve spatial challenges.

Principles of Design (Mood Board Application)

Most mood boards did not clearly reflect the design principles candidates had initially planned. While a few candidates partially applied one or two principles, many failed to show how these principles contributed to solving the problem.

- ✓ **Rhythm** was the most poorly executed principle. Though some used colour to suggest rhythm, they did not apply it effectively for example, by repeating hues in intervals or using colour blocking, gradients, or accent elements to create visual flow. Instead, colours were often flat or uniform, lacking the repetition or variation needed to generate a sense of movement or continuity. True rhythm requires **deliberate pacing** a visual "beat" that guides the eye through the space. This was largely missing.
- ✓ **Emphasis** was also weak. In many boards, multiple elements competed to be the focal point such as bold colours, large textures, or dominant shapes resulting in visual confusion rather than a clear centre of interest. Few candidates successfully established or communicate a single, intentional focal point.
- ✓ **Balance** was another major challenge. Most arrangements felt visually uneven, with one side carrying more visual weight than the other yet no indication of whether symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial balance was intended.

Only a **small number** achieved **asymmetrical balance**, particularly in **exterior designs**, where careful placement of elements (like a large tree on one side balanced by a cluster of smaller plants on the other) can create harmony without mirroring. Overall, while candidates **named** the principles correctly, their **visual translation** on the mood board lacked **intentionality, structure, and problem-solving clarity**.

Creativity and Originality

While some candidates showed **glimpses of innovation**, overall **creativity and originality** were **limited** across most mood boards. Many ideas were conventional or repetitive, with minimal risk-taking in concept



or composition. Though candidates demonstrated basic understanding of their problem, few offered fresh, unexpected, or imaginative solutions.

Arrangements often lacked **intentional design thinking** with visuals placed **without strong creative rationale**. There was **little evidence of experimentation**, unique material use, or bold visual storytelling. True creativity involves **more than decoration** it's about **reimagining space, function, and experience**. In most cases, this level of **original thinking** was **not clearly demonstrated**. Only a **small number** of candidates stood out through **distinctive layouts, clever use of materials, or innovative combinations** of style and function.