

# **Art and Design: Constructing a Design Brief**

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# Introduction

The design brief exemplars included in this pack have been designed for use with the NQ Design Activity Units.

It is intended that these briefs and the accompanying information may provide useful ideas and guidelines to the teacher on how to construct a good design brief.

There is evidence that many candidates perform well in Design Activity where the design brief has been well-constructed and focused and guides the candidate through the challenging problem-solving processes of the Design Activity Unit.

The enclosed design briefs may provide the following:

- ◆ reassurance that good teaching and learning approaches already exist within the centre
- ◆ a bank of alternative design briefs
- ◆ teaching and learning approaches on the construction and content of a good design brief

The design briefs are not intended to be prescriptive and may be adapted or customised by the teacher if required.

However, a good design brief should:

- ◆ identify the client
- ◆ identify the design area/context
- ◆ identify possible themes\*
- ◆ differentiate between 2-D and 3-D Design Activity
- ◆ set requirements
- ◆ set constraints

*\* Many centres choose not to identify or specify a 'theme' in the brief, preferring that candidates investigate sources of inspiration, stimuli or reference on a more non-specific or open-ended way. This is a perfectly acceptable way of working, allowing for more spontaneous enquiry.*

Across centres, the construction and provision of a design brief can vary widely.

The candidate:

- ◆ might work from a real-life scenario with an actual business or individual in the client role, issuing a brief that either dictates or negotiates requirements and constraints
- ◆ might be solely responsible for drafting the brief with minimum staff input and therefore states a client and self-imposes any requirements or constraints
- ◆ and the teacher might construct the brief together, perhaps with the teacher in the client role and negotiating requirements and constraints with the candidate
- ◆ might work from a given, centre-issued brief without any alteration or deviation where any requirements or constraints are pre-determined and set
- ◆ might work from a given, centre-issued brief that gives an outline structure yet allows for personalised alteration and deviation in terms of fleshing out or customising any requirements and constraints

Whether there is a degree of license or autonomy with an open brief, or however tight and restrictive a closed brief, it should guide and equip the candidate to:

- ◆ investigate and research
- ◆ consider and develop
- ◆ communicate a solution
- ◆ evaluate

There should be some breadth and depth as well as focus, rigour, creativity and enthusiasm throughout all stages of the Design Activity Unit. The brief should give both guidance and direction and also the opportunity to engage in a personal response.

## **Two-Dimensional and Three-Dimensional Design Activity**

Four of the exemplar briefs in this pack (two in the Graphic Design area and two in the Textile Design area) highlight the distinct differences between two and three-dimensional Design Activity.

### **Graphic Design**

Graphic Design can be an area of some confusion or misunderstanding. For example, the design of a logo (two-dimensional Graphic Design) as opposed to packaging design (three-dimensional Graphic Design) is clearly distinct.

When designing a logo, the candidate need not engage with 3-D processes or considerations as folio work can be based on flatly applied graphic design in two-dimensions during the consideration stages.

However, in designing the packaging for a product, the candidate should consider the implications, in 3-D terms, of not only how the graphics will be applied to a net or template but also how:

- ◆ the net or template will be designed and constructed
- ◆ both the 3-D form and the graphics applied to it will work in terms of effective visual impact when combined
- ◆ fit for purpose the packaging is, when both elements are combined

The above main issues should be stated in the requirements and constraints for the brief. Their omission may not lead to proper consideration of the importance of design issues such as functionality, durability and practicality. The sole focus should not therefore simply be on the execution of flat, decorative imagery.

### **Stamp or Poster Design**

Occasionally this can be an area of confusion for candidates. Care should be taken that stamp or poster design activities under the banner of Graphic Design do not take the form of Expressive work. In many cases the entire Design Activity can be based upon illustrative picture-making with nothing to distinguish it from an Expressive Activity except the last minute addition of some lettering.

Due consideration should be given to:

- ◆ possible lettering styles that are sympathetic and appropriate
- ◆ possible layout arrangements of lettering and imagery combined
- ◆ clarity of overall graphic communication and fitness for intended purpose

For candidates to adequately address these issues, they should ideally be stated in the requirements and constraints of the brief. The Investigation and Research stage should also include appropriate references to relevant graphics and not feature only pictorial or illustrative imagery.

## **Textile Design**

Textiles can also be an area of some confusion or misunderstanding. For example, printed textiles (two-dimensional Textile Design) as opposed to textiles and fashion (three-dimensional Textile Design) are also quite distinct.

Textiles cover the areas of Textile Design, Fashion Design and Costume Design and again, there are clear 2-D and 3-D distinctions involved.

When designing a length or swatch of printed, knitted, woven or embroidered textile the candidate need not engage with 3-D processes or considerations as folio work can be based wholly on flat, decorative designs and techniques in two-dimensions during both the consideration and solution stages.

However, when designing a wearable item such as a fashion or costume garment or accessory, the candidate must also consider the implications, in 3-D terms, of how this article will relate to the human form as a wearable piece. This must be addressed whether the textile is given or has been designed from scratch before the construction and assembly.

It is not sufficient for the candidate to produce some samples as considerations then suddenly a completed article as a solution with no considerations enroute as to how this relates to the human body in terms of scale, proportion, durability, or fitness for purpose.

For candidates to adequately address these issues they should ideally be stated in the requirements and constraints of the brief. Their omission may not lead to proper consideration of the importance of design problems like function, durability, comfort, practicality or wearability — all of which are valid as visual aesthetics.

## Framework

The following framework may be useful in the outline of the construction of the brief.

- Client:** Is it a person, business, agency etc (real or imagined), who sets the brief and commissions the design?
- Background:** Is there basic information about the client's situation (real or imagined), for setting the scenario?
- Requirements:** The need, demand or wishes of the client should be identified and specified yet not be too restrictive.
- Look:** Identify styling or visual appearance. Often this consideration is linked to either or both requirements and constraints. Some teachers may prefer not to choose this heading or make any reference to styling options, preferring candidates to explore other unspecified areas. However, please bear in mind that this heading may be helpful as a directive to candidates or even to use as an option for distinct headings.
- Constraints:** In order to guide the design process it is important to identify the requirements that should be adhered to. Requirements and key design issues can be closely linked or even overlap on some points. However, such requirements should not curtail or inhibit creative and personal responses.

The above headings provide anchors and skeletal guidance and can be fleshed out with as much information as the candidate will need to work through the investigation, consideration, solution and evaluation stages of Design Activity.

Collectively, the above points in this framework embrace the key factors of:

Who? What? Why? Where? When? How?

The above headings underpins the problem-solving process of Design Activity by outlining the necessary guidelines for the candidate to use. They should also encourage creativity and personal engagement and act as an aid to the candidate in developing personal enquiry and responses.

# Jewellery Design

## Design Brief

**Client:** Topshop/Topman.

**Background:** These popular high street fashion stores with branches nationwide sell cheap and cheerful fashions to the male and female market, appealing mainly to the 15 to 30 year old age-group who are looking for good value items in current styles. New lines and ranges arrive at the stores each season and some major branches also stock 'vintage' selections of classic, second-hand items.

**Requirements:** Design a piece of jewellery eg a necklace, brooch, bangle, buckle, hairpiece, clasp, or earrings for Topshop/Topman's new range of accessories. It may be aimed at either male or female customers or have unisex appeal, and should be based on one of the following themes:

**Look:** Theme 1  
Marina — sealife, aquatic, beach themes.  
Suggested colour-scheme: warm pinks, reds, oranges or cool blues, greens and purples.

Theme 2  
Moto — automobiles, bikes, mechanisms, geometry.  
Suggested colour-scheme: blacks, greys, silvers or neutrals, bronzes and golds.

**Constraints:** The jewellery piece should be durable and wearable.  
It should relate to one of the above themes.  
It should have strong visual impact for the target market.  
It should be economical to make from suitable materials.  
The prototype should lend itself to reproduction.  
It must, along with all support work, be completed by a specific deadline.

# Product Design

## Design Brief

**Client:** IKEA.

**Background:** This Swedish-based, European-wide company sells well-designed yet economical household goods. The stores are huge hangers situated in retail parks outside city centres. Their flat-pack kit-form furniture and the home accessories, gadgetry and toys appeal to a wide range of people because of their good design and affordable prices.

**Requirements:** Design a household product for Ikea's next season's range: a box, vessel, frame, lamp, clock or item of furniture. It should be based on one of the following themes:

**Look:** Theme 1  
Micro — cell structures, minute details, things magnified.  
Suggested colour-scheme: blacks and whites with metallic colour accents.

Theme 2  
Carnival — fireworks, streamers and masks.  
Suggested colour-scheme: bright, contrasting or complementary mixes.

**Constraints:** The product should be based on one of the above themes. It should be durable, practical, functional and safe. It should have wide customer appeal. It should, along with all support work, be completed by a specific deadline.

## Textile Design (2-D, Fabric Design)

### Design Brief

- Client:** Habitat.
- Background:** Habitat has a chain of smart, upmarket stores situated in most European cities which sell contemporary household items. Their design-conscious designs are aimed at a target market of singles or couples aged mostly 25 to 50 who like stylish, decorative and functional items for the home.
- Requirements:** Design a sample, swatch or length of fabric for Habitat's new range of soft furnishings for household textiles (e.g. cushions, towels, bedding, rugs, curtains).  
This may be printed, woven, embroidered or knitted.  
An illustration or prototype of how your textile design might look in some or all of the above forms should be included. The design should be based on one of the following themes:
- Look:**
- Theme 1  
Metropolis — architecture, mechanisms, geometry, industry.  
Suggested colour-scheme: blacks, greys, whites with a bright primary accent.
- Theme 2  
Flora — botanical forms, buds, seedheads, foliage, petals, and pods.  
Suggested colour-scheme: strong, multi-brights or delicate, soft pastels.
- Constraints:** The textile design should be based on one of the above themes. It should look good for potential application to some or all of these items in their context, with illustrations to show examples of this.  
A prototype may be made up to exemplify this eg a cushion cover, towel and so forth.  
It must, along with all support work, be completed by a specific deadline.

## Textile Design (3-D, Costume Design)

### Design Brief

- Client:** The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC).
- Background:** The Royal Shakespeare Company is based in Stratford-upon-Avon, where it has three theatres. The art department is currently working on designs for next season's productions of 'The Tempest' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.  
The costume design team must work closely with the artistic directors who are in overall charge of all aspects of scenery, sets, costumes and props.
- Requirements:** Design either a full costume garment or a costume accessory (eg cape, head-dress, collar-panel, girdle-sash) for one of the above plays. There will be matinee and evening performances of both productions, to sell-out audiences, and the costume designs will feature highly. The item you design must be based on one of the following themes:
- Look:**
- Theme 1  
The Tempest — character of Ariel or Calaban.  
eg shipwrecks, sea-monsters, shells and so forth.  
Suggested colour-scheme: strong, deep blues and greys.
- Theme 2  
A Midsummer Night's Dream — character of Oberon or Titania.  
eg forestry, botanical forms, insects, magic, mythology.  
Suggested colour-scheme: rich, verdant greens with iridescent accents.
- Constraints:** The costume design should be based on one of the above plays and themes.  
It should have strong visual impact when seen from the stage.  
It should be economical to make, yet look good.  
It must be durable and wearable for the character actor.  
Fabric swatches and design sketches must, at some stage, be shown in relation to the human body.  
If not the full size garment or accessory, a scaled mock up must be made.  
It must, along with all support work, be completed by a specific deadline.

## Textile Design (3-D, Fashion Design)

### Design Brief

**Client:** Urban Outfitters.

**Background:** Urban Outfitters are a cutting edge fashion retailer gradually expanding its branches nationwide. It stocks trendy, creatively designed garments and accessories with more character and individuality than other high street fashions. The target market is 16 to 30 year old male and female customers who are interested in more edgy, distinctive clothes and accessories at affordable prices.

**Requirements:** Design a garment or accessory eg an item of clothing, a belt, bag, or hat for their next season's range which should be based on one of the following themes:

**Look:** Theme 1  
Grunge-Adelia — decayed, distressed or withered forms.  
Suggested colour-scheme: earth tones and neutrals with complementary bright accents.

Theme 2  
Insectomania — insect forms, either soft and delicate elements or their harsher, more hostile and aggressive aspects.  
Suggested colour-scheme: exotic, bright day-gloves with metal accents.

**Constraints:** The design should be based on one of the above themes.  
It should be economical to make yet look good.  
It should be durable and wearable.  
Fabric swatches and designs must, at some stage, be shown in relation to the human body.  
If not the full size garment or accessory, a scaled mock up must be made.  
It must, along with all support work, be completed by a specific deadline.

# Interior Design

## Design Brief

**Client:** The Managing Director, The Atlas Hotel, Edinburgh.

**Background:** The Atlas Hotel will feature comfortable and novel accommodation with its basement bedrooms having an ethnic themed décor. The management require the design of each bedroom to have a distinctive atmosphere that echoes the global theme of the hotel furnishings.

**Requirements:** You are invited to submit design proposals for a double bedroom that measures: 4.5metres x 4.5metres x 3metres high. The room has no windows and has two identical doors on opposite walls. One of the doors is in the centre of the wall and the other is 1metre from the end of the wall. Each door is 0.75metres wide and 2metres high.

The room should contain:

- ◆ one double bed that measures 1.5metres by 2metres
- ◆ two bedside tables
- ◆ one wardrobe that measure 1metre wide
- ◆ one 4-drawer chest that measures 0.75metres wide
- ◆ four lights that should be appropriately located and that should relate to the theme of the room
- ◆ one desk/table with chair
- ◆ one 'comfortable' chair

Your design proposals should be based on one of the following themes:

**Look:** Theme 1  
Iceberg — transparent or white forms, crystals, jagged shapes.  
Suggested colour-scheme: fresh, clear, icy blues and whites.

Theme 2  
Sahara — African elements, rough clay or woven surfaces.  
Suggested colour-scheme: warm or hot colours, earthtones, natural fibres.

**Constraints:** The décor, style and mood should reflect one of the stated themes. All items of furniture should be included in the design proposals. The design proposals should include samples, swatches that clearly show intentions for surface pattern, soft furnishings etc. All work must be submitted by the required deadline.

## Graphic Design (2-D, Applied Design)

### Design Brief

- Client:** Flying Fish (seafood producer and restaurant).
- Background:** This thriving business in a coastal town processes, packs and transports a wide variety of top quality fresh and smoked seafood and now wishes to update its image and to raise its profile. Attached to the processing and packaging shed is their popular seafood restaurant of the same name, offering a wide menu at mid-range prices.
- Requirements:** Design one single, corporate logo or mast-head for overall application to all aspects of this business, ie the processing and packaging shed, the sticker labels for food, all business stationary, staff uniforms, the vans' livery, as well as the restaurant sign, menus and napkins. Your design should be based either on one of, or a combination of, the following:
- Look:**
- Theme 1  
Nautical — fishing, angling, boats and shipping, netting.  
Colour-scheme: naturalistic, aquatic or smoky colours.
- Theme 2  
Aquarium — fish, seafood, shellfish.  
Suggested colour-scheme as above.
- Constraints:** Imagery should capture the ethos of the business. Flying Fish (seafood producer and restaurant) must feature alongside any imagery on the logo in clear and appropriate lettering. Consideration should be given to the wide application of the graphics, with examples of some of them shown alongside the final 2-D design. It must, along with all support work, be completed by a specific date.

## Graphic Design (3-D, Packaging Design)

### Design Brief

**Client:** Calvin Klein, toiletries.

**Background:** This American fashion designer successfully expanded into toiletries and fragrances some years ago and now markets a wide range of these products as well as clothing. Certain fragrances such as 'C. K. One' and 'C. K. Be' have both had wide unisex appeal for the 16 to 30 year old male and female market.

**Requirements:** Design the outer packaging only for Calvin Klein's new unisex fragrance called VENOM.  
The inner bottle will be a plain, aluminium cylinder, 11 cm long x 3 cm wide in diameter, with a soft top to depress the built in spray diffuser, so the container for the liquid is a sleek tube.  
Your outer packaging, therefore, should accommodate such a form.  
Unlike the very plain, neutral graphics of previous fragrances, VENOM is to be highly decorative and thus eye-catching, different from its fellow products.  
Imagery should be based on the following theme:

**Look:** Theme 1  
Reptilian — snakes, serpents, scales, fangs.  
Suggested colour-scheme: blacks, greens and purples.

**Constraints:** The outer packaging, in constructed form, should contain, protect, transport and promote the product.  
The lettering 'C. K. VENOM fragrance' should feature in the graphics in a style appropriate to the imagery.  
The net or template, with the applied graphics, should then be shown as a 3-D form, rather than rendered flat.  
It must, along with all support work, be completed by the specific deadline.

# Architectural Design

## Design Brief

**Client:** Local Authority Nursery School.

**Background:** A local authority nursery school has bought a piece of ground 30 x 35metres adjoining their premises and want to develop this into a safe, secure play area for a small number of pre-school children where they can interact with a variety of sculptures placed in the space. These sculptures should not be merely decorative but functional forms to encourage interactive play.

**Requirements:** Design a range of architectural forms to be securely sited in the playground which will provide scope for creative games and interactive play. Each piece should have potential for climbing, crawling, hiding or sitting. Scope for shelter is also desirable. These forms need not repeat or physically connect, but should have visual unity as a group. Designs should be based on one of the following themes:

**Look:** Theme 1  
Organic — natural forms, bones, pods.  
Suggested colour-scheme: the three secondaries; orange, green and purple.

Theme 2  
Robotics — clockwork, mechanisms, geometry.  
Suggested colour-scheme: the three primaries; red, blue and yellow.

**Constraints:** The playground architecture should be fit for purpose and safe for intended use with regard to protruding shapes and so forth. The suggested materials should be robust and weatherproof. Plans should be to scale and some 3-D models should feature. All structures should be based on one of the given themes and should have an overall group identity. Designs must, along with all support work, be completed by a specific deadline.