

28 June 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

As part of your child's GCSE in Design & Technology, students carry out a combination of written and practical assessments. These are called Non-Examined Assessments (NEA). This means that they are primarily assessed here in school by the subject teachers and then of course sampled and moderated by the AQA exam board. The NEA is worth 50% of their overall final grade in D&T. There is also (in normal years!) the written theory exam as well, which accounts for the other 50% of their overall final D&T grade.

Last week we handed out the three Context Titles that the AQA exam board have just recently published to all schools:

- Preparing for Emergencies
- Outdoor Living
- Keeping Fit & Active

Your child is currently exploring all three of these Context Titles, in order to identify a specific 'design problem/challenge' that they would like to pursue through their NEA. Their final choice will be from just one of the three Context Titles above.

The NEA coursework component will progress through the stages of Initial Ideas, Product Research, Client/User Interviews, Design, Modelling/Making, Testing and Evaluation. The accumulated portfolio of their work will be approximately 20 sides of A3 paper. It is usually due to be submitted just before Easter in their Year 11.

In order for you to be able to fully support your child with their NEA, we thought it would be helpful to share the above background and also to share these other key strategies and reference points with you:

- If you possibly can, please could you take the opportunity to discuss the NEA titles with your child and see what their thoughts are? We ask this because although we will be doing likewise in class, the students do need to identify a 'client' for the product they will designing and making in due course. Family members often make great clients as they are easy to talk to and often readily accessible. It isn't an onerous role, but is a vital one and if students feel you are bought in they can often become much more highly motivated in this aspect of the course.
- All students are expected to engage fully with all classroom and Home Learning tasks that will be set. HL tasks will be on the Show My Homework app, so do please monitor these through your access route. Please get in touch if you have any issues in this regard.
- If/when students fall a little behind with the tasks set, we will place them into a 'catch-up' intervention session, to help them get back on track ASAP. This might simply mean staying in class at Break or Lunch to finish a task on that day or very soon thereafter. We prefer not to use the 'C' detention system for this initially, but we will do if they refuse to stay without a good reason (like a prior C1 detention with another teacher).
If they do fall significantly behind for any reason, then we will of course alert you and ramp up the level of intervention. This may well only be possible to deliver outside of normal school hours; i.e. before or after school for say an hour. We know from many years of teaching NEA that it is definitely best to intervene in this way early on in the course, otherwise the problem accumulates and students can lose enthusiasm and thus motivation to get back on track.



Finally, we need to alert you to the sadly persistent and very serious issue of plagiarism. The Joint Council for Qualifications (which sits above all individual exam boards) defines plagiarism as: “*The failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of another person’s work as if it were the candidate’s own.*”. This is the weblink to their full document on the subject: <https://ccea.org.uk/document/3080#:~:text=The%20Joint%20Council's%20Guidelines%20for,WJEC%20Page%202%20%207.>

The key points I would like to draw your attention to are:

- To be vigilant please of any work your child is doing where you see or believe that they are or maybe copying information from the internet and pasting it into their own portfolio pages. They can take research information from the internet but it must only be images and small amounts of supporting text and in all cases clearly identified where it has come from; i.e. the web address must be listed clearly on the relevant portfolio page.
- The bulk of written text in their portfolios must be in their own words, representing their unique thoughts, ideas and justified opinions. It is therefore advisable that your child does not overshare their own work with their peers, as doing this can extend accusations of plagiarism to them too; aiding it to happen. We fully encourage students to discuss ideas between themselves both in and out of class time, but plagiarism does not usually occur from verbal discussions. ‘Lending’ a friend an electronic or paper copy of their portfolio ‘just to look at’ is definitely a bad idea and where most plagiarism stems from.
- In terms of any input you may have as a Client for them, they should be doing all of the writing and making it clear that they are quoting your views where appropriate.
- Please can you also reinforce these points at home and if you are concerned that any of this may have happened please alert us. It could save your child and/or their peers from being removed from the course and ‘ungraded’ by the exam board, as that can be the worst-case consequence for plagiarism.

So to conclude on a more positive note, we feel that the three Context Titles for this year offer plenty of exciting potential for your child to explore, be creative with and from which they can achieve some great outcomes. As with most endeavours in life, regularly invested effort will pay dividends and also boost their wellbeing, as the progress with the NEA from week to week is very tangible and satisfying.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the NEA or the wider course, please do get in touch with your child’s specific DT teacher or with me.

Yours sincerely

Roger Newman

Mr R Newman
Key Stage 4 Co-ordinator for DT