**Guide to writing your Product/3D Personal Study Essay.**

It is assessed along with all of your design and practical work from Component 1 and the Moderator will read it first then look through the rest of your work.

It is intended to ‘pull together’ your different design activities from the lower sixth through to Christmas of your second year.

It should be a focussed piece of writing, fluent, reflective, and analytical of your work and how it has been influenced by other designers/movements/themes/approaches.

The aspects of the Assessment Objectives for the essay part of Component 1 are:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AO1 Develop Ideas** | **AO2 Explore & Select** | **AO3 Record Ideas** | **AO4 Present** |
| Informed contextual sources  Demonstrating analytical and critical understanding | Reviewing and refining ideas as work develops | Observations and insights relevant, reflecting critically on work and progress | Personal and meaningful response Makes connections |

**Some brief key points firstly:**

* It should be between 2500 and 3000 words
* It should contain illustrations (images of the designers’ work and of your own) which supports your practical work for Component 1
* It should be word processed
* Have a cover page with: a suitable title + your name and candidate number + Centre number (64395)
* Include a bibliography at the end showing sources and references used throughout the writing

A good essay:

Sets out a title as a question and then answers and illustrates the argument on both sides

Uses quotations from the designer and other experts

Selects a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 designers for the research (any more is too superficial)

Selects works to analyse which are not random but links to the central question in the tile and explain why you have chosen them i.e. one follows on from the previous.

Uses the Introduction well: explains the main approach/search and what you are looking for.

Uses discourse markers such as ‘However’, ‘On the one hand’, ‘Similarly’, ‘Likewise’, ‘Notwithstanding’

Uses the Conclusion well: evaluates what work/designer has been most important and where you would go next if you were to develop your essay more. The fifth designer could be useful here to signpost for reflection/further work that would be needed.

Bibliography is not all websites and Wikipedia (use the actual sources of information from the ‘external links’)

Paragraph structure throughout your essay:

1. Sentence giving basic bibliography (life dates, style, nationality, era, genre etc) which is made relevant by explaining why this designer appeals to you.

2. Selection of a key work and exploration (details and evaluation) of the formal features.

3. Evaluation of how/who/what has influenced this work in terms of context (both political, social and artistically)

4. Evaluation of how/why this designer/work has influenced/improved/shaped/affected your own work. Support this with a photograph of your own work in progress alongside that of the influencing work.

Then subsequent paragraphs can follow the same structure, but should be preceded by an initial sentence which explains how you found the new designer/work. What was the link to the previous? What were you looking for? More of the same kind of influence (subject matter/use of materials/technique etc) or were you deliberately looking for someone/a work which linked to your project portfolio in a different way?

So where to Start?

PLAN PLAN PLAN!!! Don’t first sit at your computer and write!!!!

Use your design projects research, your style sheets, and the notes you made throughout your Design Book. Then select the objects/designers who you think have influenced you the most and in your own work, then,

Identify a good essay tile which sets up a question (see below for some possible ones) then,

Organise and re-arrange your notes now to help you answer the essay question, then,

Search for some supporting quotations (from the designers’ website, newspaper, and museum links) then,

Draw up an essay plan (a tree diagram is a good approach) before you sit down to write the essay.

Some suggestions for essay titles BUT please talk to me for a more individual one:

**Nature/Bio Morph: Inspired by nature/Organic, evolving design……**

How have Design ideas been influenced by nature/Biomorphic approach to design ?

**Environmental: Communal living, Reducing waste/resources, sustainable Design, Green Design**

Garden city’s, communal living, hotels, over population, reducing resources and sustainable living.

How can a sense of community be created through architecture/ Design ?

**Design through Passage of time (Decade)**

Cultural, social, environmental, technological advancements on design…reference to Furniture, lighting, product and Architecture

How has design been influenced by the passage of time (Decades) ?

**Designing for the Future**:

New Technologies, new materials, Future culture/space/living/Hi Tec/Advancements

How has technology helped to advance design?

**How do Materials influence Design?**

Materials: Perception of materials, Impact, advancements, limitations, live cycle, effects over time.

How does the choice of materials influence design ?...Perception, environment,

**New and old…… in Design**

New from Old, Influencing the new, transforming an area, technological advancements, Changes/renovation/updating/merging/improving.

How can the new, be influenced by the old and visa versa ?

**Architecture/Design as a metaphor:**

Symbolism, Religion, cultural context  
How can design be used to symbolise something?

Specific structure to the word count:

**First Section: Introduction (200 words approx.)**

Outline what it is you want to explore with your personal study?

Is the essay exploring different approaches to a specific theme, genre or movement?

The essay has to have a clear focus and cannot just be a collection of written work on a variety of random artists.

You must explain your reasons for choosing your specific focus and outline how it relates to your current projects and ways of working.

For example: “I am choosing to focus on… (designer / movement) because…it astounds me how…/ I find it fascinating that…/ I’m curious to know why…/ I hope to show / share / highlight / discover…”

For example: “I’m particularly interested in how the use of CAD/CAM now dominates the design process and wanted explore how far I could develop my own skill and ability in this filed.Doing this will also help when it comes to writing a conclusion, planting markers to revisit.

**Second Section: Cultural and Historical Context (500 words approx.)**

It is important that you put the subject of your essay into context. You should have an overview of how it has evolved throughout history or in the context of the whole of the designer’s body of work. You should outline the various ways that different designers from a range of times and cultures have approached the same need. How did these different approaches evolve? Were they influenced by changes in society? How did different art/design/technology/manufacturing/materials influence the solutions?

Don’t get too bogged down with this section – it is just good to show that you have read around the subject and are not just focusing on individual in isolation.

**Third Section: Analysis of the design solutions (2000 words approx. – that is 500 on each aspect)**

Choose three or four major pieces by three to four different designers. These works should be carefully chosen to highlight three/four contrasting approaches to your subject and to illustrate and debate your title’s question. They do not have to be limited to the works you have copied in your Personal Study A4 books. Make sure you outline why you have focused on those particular designers otherwise the essay will not flow (also write about them in chronological or thematic order!).

When writing about the work you must refer to its title/purpose, date if possible and the main functional aspects. Use your summer notes and cover the following: function, use of materials/techniques and the use of the formal elements to create mood/atmosphere/finish/ease of production.

However, when analysing work you need to do more than just describe it! You need to show an understanding of the concepts and ideas that underpin the work. You must show that you have grasped the ethos or ideas of the designer’s solution(s). You need to explain what factors influenced the design, such as: their previous work, design movements, manifestos, politics, changes in society, personal circumstances, new materials, new manufacturing processes etc.

The examiner is interested in your opinions and personal perspective on the work. However, when writing personal opinions there is a danger that these can be too simplistic.

*Consider the progression in the points below:*

* **Your initial reaction** *– informed by instinct, taste, likes and dislikes, interest in / relevance of subject matter.*  
  This can offer valuable insights when justified E.g. *“I like this because…”.* However, just providing an opinion without explanation is not enough.
* **A basic / superficial understanding of wider contexts.** This might demonstrate growing understanding but is still not good enough: *“I’m interested in Deiter Ram’s principles because I like how clean and simple his designs are”; “I like Memphis Design work in the 1980’s because it uses bright colours and interesting patterns”*.
* **Based on a deeper understanding / complex grasp of wider contexts** – demonstrating a confident stance and justified, well-informed opinions: *“I’m interested in Deiter Ram’s principles of good design, particularly how they are still heavily influencing the work of current designers such as Jonathan Ives at Apple”; “I’m interested in how Memphis Design emerged as a response to the dull and monochrome world of the early 1980’s and how it has led to an acceptance and questioning of what a piece of furniture should represent.…”*
* **From an alternative perspective –** Perhaps more of an expectation at degree level, can you place yourself in somebody else’s shoes for example, can you argue or justify an alternative viewpoint e.g. use a quotation from the designer or a newspaper article and critically exam if it holds true.

You are allowed to use relevant quotes as long as they are attributed: you should use appropriate footnotes.

It is important that you link the topic and work back to the focus of your essay. It is also crucial that if you are comparing and contrasting the three/four works with each other that you make interesting connections and outline similarities and differences. It is really important that you also make connections with your own work and discuss how they have influenced your own development. Remember some works could link to your own work in terms of the subject matter and others through the use of materials and formal elements.

**Fourth Section: Connections with own work and Summing up**

Summarise your study and the key findings that have come from your research and analysis.

Revisit your introduction – specifically the aims or investigative questions set out at the start. (You do not need to have definitive answers though; reflective, new, unanswered questions can have value too).

Offer reflective, personal opinions on your research, and how this has shaped your own practical work. What are the similarities and differences between your work and the work of the designers you have studied? Describe how your own practical work has evolved. Outline how the designers and ideas you have studied has informed your approach to subject matter, style, scale, materials, concepts and ideas.

Share thoughts on potential opportunities for future exploration – themes / artists / experiments you might explore if given more time.Include a short reflection on the process of the study itself – the research and thinking skills that you have developed.[[1]](#endnote-1)

**Fifth section: Bibliography**

E.g. Elderfield, J, “Bonnard” Thames and Hudson, 1997

Also websites address: [www.bonnard.co.uk](http://www.bonnard.co.uk) accessed on **[date] and the external link used.**

**Sixth Section: Appendices**

Good quality printout of images studied clearly labelled: title, name of artist and date. Each image should be numbered, for example Fig.1 or Fig 2. Refer to this number when discussing the work in your essay

1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)