basic education
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEARNER RESPONSES
AND
EVALUATION OF THE QUESTION PAPERS (PER PAPER)
NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE 2025
WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT	**DESIGN**		
QUESTION PAPER	**1**		
DURATION OF PAPER	**3 HOURS**		
INTERNAL MODERATOR	**MRS L PRINGLE**		
CHIEF MARKER	**MS S BOOCK**		
DATES OF MARKING	**FROM: 2 DECEMBER 2025**	**TO: 11 DECEMBER 2025**	
HEAD OF EXAMINATION	**MS LM BREDENKAMP**		

REPORT 2: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEARNER RESPONSES

SECTION 1: ***(GENERAL OVERVIEW OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN THE QUESTION PAPER AS A WHOLE)***

Learner performance in the Design Paper was mixed, with strong correlation between language proficiency and overall achievement. Centres with higher language ratings performed significantly better, while weaker language skills led to misinterpretation of questions and incomplete responses. Overall, the paper was fair, but success depended on both content knowledge and the ability to apply subject-specific terminology.

Strengths

Learners excelled in questions supported by clear visuals and structured criteria. For example, **Question 1.1** and **Question 3.1** were generally well answered because images made elements and functions easy to identify. Strong candidates produced well-organised essays where

movements and case studies had been thoroughly taught. Visual analysis and comparison tasks were generally successful when prompts were straightforward.

Challenges

Weaker learners struggled with questions requiring abstract reasoning and precise terminology, such as **Q1.2**, **Q2.2**, **Q4.2**, **Q5.2**, and **Q6**. Common issues included confusion between concepts like *form*, *ergonomics*, and *inspiration*, as well as difficulty linking aims and characteristics of movements. Many learners listed facts instead of analysing, and some left essay questions unanswered due to language complexity and fatigue. Cultural misalignment in visuals (e.g., Yoruba craft in Q5.2) and Afrikaans terminology (*fatsoen*, *vorm*) further reduced accessibility for second-language learners.

Language had a significant impact on learners' ability to answer the Design Paper questions. Centres with strong language proficiency generally performed well, while those with weaker language skills struggled to convey ideas and often left questions unanswered. Marker feedback repeatedly highlighted that limited vocabulary and poor understanding of design terminology prevented learners from engaging with higher-order tasks. Common issues included confusion around technical terms which led to vague responses or incorrect interpretations.

Questions requiring abstract reasoning and precise terminology—such as Q1.2, Q2.2, Q4.2, Q5.2, and Q6—were particularly challenging for learners with low language proficiency. These candidates often resorted to listing facts instead of providing structured analysis, and many failed to complete essay-based questions due to linguistic complexity. In contrast, questions supported by clear visuals and straightforward wording, like Q1.1 and Q3.1, were answered more successfully across centres. Overall, the evidence shows that language proficiency directly influenced learners' ability to demonstrate content knowledge and complete the paper effectively.

The following was noted in top performing centres:

1. Strong Visual Analysis Skills- Learners in high-performing centres demonstrated exceptional ability to interpret and analyse visual texts. They accurately identified elements and principles such as colour, texture, unity, and movement in unseen examples like Question 1.1. Their responses were clear, systematic, and supported by relevant examples, showing confidence in applying design literacy skills.

2. Mastery of Design Terminology and Vocabulary- Markers noted that these learners used subject-specific terminology correctly and consistently. Terms such as *form*, *ergonomics*, *balance*, and *inspiration* were applied accurately in comparative and analytical tasks. This linguistic competence allowed learners to meet higher-order demands and avoid the confusion seen in weaker centres.

3. Well-Structured and Logical Essays- Top-performing centres produced essays that were organised, coherent, and aligned with the question criteria. In sections like Question 4 (Design History) and Question 6 (Sustainability), learners linked aims, influences, and characteristics to studied movements and designers effectively. Their ability to structure arguments logically contributed to high scores in extended writing tasks.

4. Thorough Content Knowledge and Preparation- Learners showed in-depth understanding of design movements, case studies, and contemporary issues. They could recall factual details and integrate them into analysis and comparison tasks. This level of preparation reflected consistent teaching and exam readiness, enabling learners to tackle complex questions confidently.

5. Effective Comparative Reasoning

High-performing centres excelled in questions requiring comparison, such as architectural analysis in Question 3.1 and movement-based essays in Question 4. Learners synthesized similarities and differences rather than writing separate essays, demonstrating higher-order thinking and strong conceptual understanding.

General Observations and Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Language and Terminology Barriers- A recurring observation was that language proficiency significantly influenced learner performance. Many learners struggled with subject-specific terminology which led to misinterpretation of questions and incomplete answers. Teachers should integrate design language into classroom discussions and assessments to build familiarity. Include FLASH cards helping learners familiarise themselves with the design terminology in their everyday lives. Develop games using terminology to develop familiarity with the design terms.

2. Weak Comparative and Analytical Skills- Learners often listed facts instead of analysing or comparing, particularly in Questions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 4.2. Many wrote two separate essays rather than synthesizing similarities and differences. Teachers should provide structured practice in comparative writing and analysis from early grades. Class questions can include guiding prompts or sentence starters to scaffold responses and encourage learners to develop "comparison" language skills.

3. Extended Writing Challenges and Fatigue- essay-based questions in Sections B and C, especially Question 6, were sometimes left unanswered or poorly structured. Learners struggled to sustain focus and organise ideas under time pressure. Teachers need to teach learners throughout the year to write under time pressure and respond more concisely in essay questions. Using the marking guideline, learner's would have more understanding of how to respond to the question paper.

4. Inconsistent Content Knowledge- Markers noted gaps in learners' understanding of design movements, case studies, and sustainability concepts. This was evident in vague or repetitive answers and incorrect application of studied material. Strengthen curriculum alignment and

revision strategies. Encourage teachers to use visual aids, comparative charts, and real-world examples to deepen conceptual understanding and retention. Teachers should use the resources developed by the WCED and DBE to support learners in their preparation for the NSC Design Paper 1 examination.

SECTION 2: *COMMENT ON CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE IN INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS*
(It is expected that a comment will be provided for each question)

QUESTION 1

(a) General comment on the performance of learners in the specific question. Was the question well answered or poorly answered?

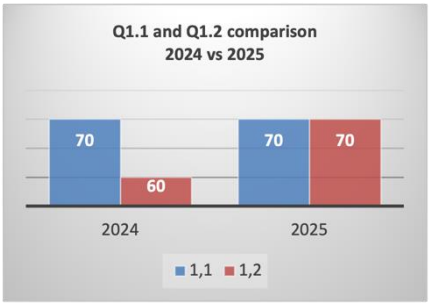
Question 1 was generally well answered, but performance varied between the two options. Most learners responded by completing Question 1.1. Analysis of 100 scripts shows that the average for **Question 1.1 and 1.2 was 7/10 (70%)**, indicating that most learners managed this section successfully. Many candidates demonstrated strong visual analysis skills in Question 1.1, accurately identifying and explaining elements such as colour, texture, unity, and movement. Marker feedback described these responses as "well answered," "excellent," and "clear," confirming that the visual example supported understanding.

However, Question 1.2 was more challenging. Afrikaans and English learners struggled with terminology (*fatsoen*, *shape*) with learners using the term 3d shape or 2dim shape in both English and Afrikaans. Furthermore, the AI-generated image, created uncertainty about whether the design was two- or three-dimensional. These language and visual issues led to vague or incomplete answers, and some learners avoided this option entirely. Despite these challenges, centres with strong language proficiency and thorough preparation still performed well in both options.

(b) Why was the question answered poorly? Also provide specific examples, indicate common errors committed by learners in this question, and any misconceptions.

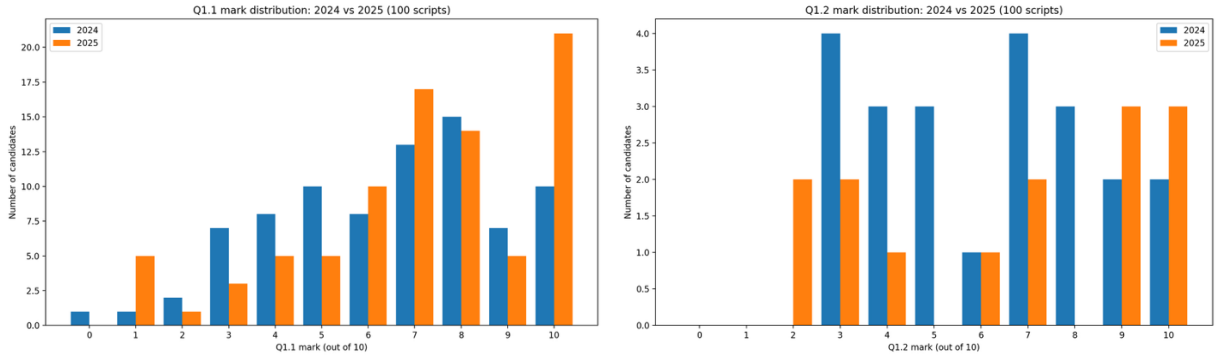
Question 1 was answered with mixed success. While Question 1.1 was generally well handled due to clear visuals and familiar terminology, Question 1.2 posed significant challenges for many learners. The main reasons for poor performance included language barriers. Additionally, the AI-generated image created uncertainty about whether the design was two- or three-dimensional, making interpretation difficult.

Common errors included listing elements and principles without explaining their application, failing to back to the design, and giving irrelevant or incomplete responses when asked to discuss principles. Misconceptions were also evident, such as misunderstanding balance by simply stating "the bag looks good" without explaining symmetrical or asymmetrical arrangement. Some learners assumed the image represented a flat 2D graphic rather than a functional 3D object, which led to incorrect analysis. Learners struggled to justify the use of "variety" in 1.2.1, instead they simply listed all the elements of design without referring to FIGURE B.



Statistically, learners have averaged 7/10 for both Q1.1 and Q1.2 compared to the 6/10 average for Q1.1

In 2024 only 10% of the learners achieved a 10/10 average. In 2025, 20% of the learners in the 100 script analysis have averaged 10/10 for this question which shows a possible increase in learner performance in this question overall. Few learners who chose to answer Q1.2 achieved below 3/10 average for the question.



(c) Provide suggestions for improvement in relation to Teaching and Learning.

1. Strengthen Visual Analysis Skills- Teachers should provide regular practice in analysing unseen visuals using design elements and principles. Learners need to move beyond listing features and learn to explain how these elements are applied in context. Classroom activities should include guided analysis exercises with clear criteria, encouraging learners to justify their observations with examples.

2. Reinforce Design Terminology Early- Language barriers were a major challenge, especially with terms like *fatsoen*, *vorm*, and concepts such as balance and unity. These should be introduced and reinforced from Grade 10 through consistent use in lessons, projects, and assessments. Providing bilingual glossaries and visual examples for each term will help second-language learners grasp meanings and apply them correctly.

3. Use Authentic and Clear Visuals- Teachers should expose learners to authentic, real-world design examples and train them to interpret different perspectives accurately. Practice should include identifying focal points and explaining how they are achieved as well as identifying influences on the design.

4. Develop Higher-Order Thinking- Many learners listed elements without explaining their application. Teachers should scaffold responses by using prompts such as "How does this element create unity?" or "Why is this the focal point?" Incorporating peer review and discussion can help learners articulate reasoning and build confidence in analytical writing.

5. Address Misconceptions Through Targeted Feedback- Common misconceptions—such as confusing shape with aesthetics or misunderstanding balance—should be corrected through targeted feedback and visual demonstrations. Teachers can use comparative examples to clarify differences and encourage learners to apply correct terminology in context.

(d) Describe any other specific observations relating to responses of learners and comments that are useful to teachers, subject advisors, teacher development etc.

Markers observed that many learners listed elements and principles without explaining their application or providing examples from the image. Misconceptions were common, such as confusing "shape" with aesthetics and misunderstanding "balance" as simply "looking good." Learners also struggled to identify focal points and explain how they were achieved. These issues highlight gaps in analytical skills and terminology understanding, as well as the need for exposure to authentic visuals.

For teachers and subject advisors, these observations suggest the importance of reinforcing design vocabulary from early grades, using bilingual glossaries, and providing structured practice in visual analysis. Lessons should focus on explaining how elements create specific effects, correcting misconceptions through practical demonstrations, and scaffolding responses with prompts that encourage deeper reasoning.

Learners should practice with DBE memos and marking guidelines from **AFTER** 2020. Comprehensive analysis will assist learners to correctly and thoroughly analyse a design. The included glossary in the DBE Study Guide will assist in defining and applying terms. Teachers should show learners the "Last Chance" videos to help them understand how to prepare for Q1 effectively.

QUESTION 2

(a) General comment on the performance of learners in the specific question. Was the question well answered or poorly answered?

The quantitative data from the moderator report indicates that the **average for Question 2 was 8/10 (80%)**, suggesting that many learners managed the basic requirements. However, qualitative

feedback from markers highlights that while Question 2.1 (poster analysis) was generally well answered, Question 2.2 (comparison of chairs) posed major challenges.

Most learners managed Question 2.1 successfully, identifying the main message in the poster and recognising stereotypes. However, responses were often brief and lacked explanation of how design elements conveyed the message, indicating limited ability to link visual features to meaning. Weaker learners struggled to identify any bias or stereotype of the poster itself. This indicated a lack of exposure to examples in their design education. As the design example chosen included a lot of visual text, 2nd language learners struggled to communicate "in their own words" without repeating the phrases in FIGURE C.

Question 2.2 was more challenging. Learners struggled with technical terms such as *form*, *ergonomics*, and *inspiration*. Many confused aesthetics with inspiration or described chairs as "3D" without explaining structural form. Ergonomics was frequently misinterpreted as style or materials rather than comfort and usability. Instead of writing a comparative paragraph, numerous learners listed features of each chair separately, showing weak comparative reasoning. Weaker learners struggled with comparative skills, often connecting form, aesthetics and ergonomics in one thought.

Language barriers further affected depth of responses, especially among second-language learners, who repeated question wording without elaboration. Misconceptions were common, such as assuming "form" refers to beauty and failing to understand ergonomics as a functional concept.

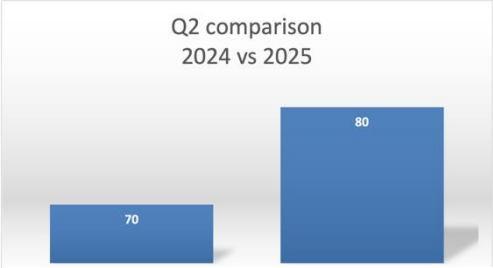
(b) Why was the question answered poorly? Also provide specific examples, indicate common errors committed by learners in this question, and any misconceptions.

Question 2 was poorly answered overall, particularly in Q2.2**,** despite Q2.1 being relatively successful. Learners could identify the main message in the poster and recognise stereotypes, but most responses lacked depth and failed to explain how design elements conveyed meaning. In Q2.2, learners struggled with technical terms such as *form*, *ergonomics*, and *inspiration*. Many confused aesthetics with inspiration or described chairs as "3D" without explaining structural form. Ergonomics was often misinterpreted as style rather than comfort and usability.

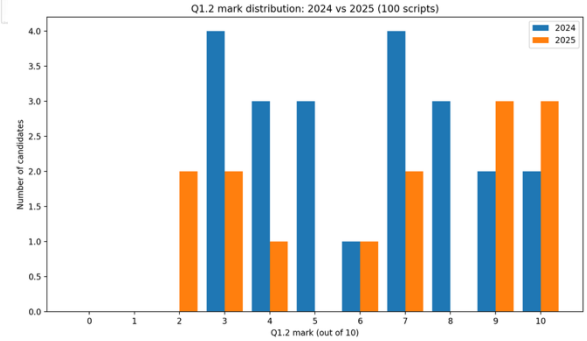
Common errors included listing features of each chair separately instead of writing a comparative paragraph, repeating question wording without elaboration, and failing to link observations to design examples. Misconceptions were frequent, such as assuming "form" refers to beauty and misunderstanding ergonomics as appearance. These issues indicate that learners relied on rote memorisation of terminology rather than understanding its application.

Upon reflection, Question 2 for some learners with weak analytical skills, limited vocabulary, and misconceptions about design principles had a direct impact on their results for this question. This highlights the need for targeted teaching strategies to strengthen terminology, comparative

writing, and interpretation of design concepts. However, in 2025 there was an improvement in top performing learners achieving 10/10 rather than 8/10.



Statistically, learners have averaged 7/10 for Q2 in 2024 compared the 8/10 for 2025.



In 2024 only 9,3% of the learners achieved a 10/10 average. In 2025, 19% of the learners in the 100 script analysis averaged 10/10. This which shows a possible increase in learner performance in this question overall.

(c) Provide suggestions for improvement in relation to Teaching and Learning.

Reinforce Design Terminology and Concepts- Learners struggled with terms such as *form*, *ergonomics*, and *inspiration*, often confusing them with aesthetics or style. Teachers should integrate terminology drills into lessons from Grade 10 onward, using real-life examples and bilingual glossaries to ensure understanding. Practical demonstrations—such as analysing actual chairs for comfort and structure—can help clarify these concepts.

Strengthen Comparative Writing Skills- Many learners listed features of each chair separately instead of synthesizing similarities and differences into a comparative paragraph. Teachers should model structured comparisons using sentence starters like "Both chairs show…" or "Unlike chair A, chair B…" and provide guided practice in writing comparative analyses.

Link Visual Features to Meaning- In Q2.1, learners identified messages but failed to explain how design elements conveyed them. Teachers should emphasise the connection between visual features and communication by asking learners to justify their answers with evidence from the design. Classroom activities could include analysing posters and discussing how colour, typography, and layout influence interpretation.

Address Language Barriers- Second-language learners often repeated question wording without elaboration. To overcome this, teachers should provide bilingual terminology lists and encourage learners to use design vocabulary in oral and written tasks. Regular low-stakes exercises can build confidence in applying technical language.

Correct Misconceptions Through Active Learning- Markers noted misconceptions such as assuming "form" refers to beauty and misunderstanding ergonomics as appearance. Teachers should use

interactive activities—like comparing two chairs for comfort and usability—to correct these misunderstandings. Visual aids and real-world examples will make abstract concepts more tangible.

(d) Describe any other specific observations relating to responses of learners and comments that are useful to teachers, subject advisors, teacher development etc.

Question 2 revealed several important observations that are useful for teachers and subject advisors. While most learners managed to identify the main message and stereotypes in Question 2.1, responses were often superficial and lacked explanation of how design elements conveyed meaning. This indicates that learners understand the basic idea but struggle to link visual features to communication.

In Question 2.2, learners faced greater challenges. Many confused technical terms often interpreting ergonomics as style rather than comfort and usability. Instead of writing a comparative paragraph, learners listed features of each chair separately, showing weak comparative reasoning. Language barriers also affected second-language learners, who repeated question wording without elaboration.

These observations highlight the need for targeted teaching strategies, including reinforcing terminology through practical examples, modelling comparative writing, and using authentic visuals to clarify concepts. Teachers should also provide scaffolding for analytical responses and address misconceptions through interactive activities that link design principles to real-world objects. Learners should practice with DBE memos and marking guidelines from **AFTER** 2020. Teachers should show learners the "Last Chance" videos to help them understand how to prepare for Q2 effectively.

QUESTION 3

(a) General comment on the performance of learners in the specific question. Was the question well answered or poorly answered?

Question 3 showed mixed results, with performance strongly influenced by the option chosen. Most learners answered 3.2. The few learners who attempted Question 3.1 generally performed well because the visuals were clear and supported comparison. These candidates successfully identified aspects such as function, materials, and technology, and many responses were described by markers as "good" or "well answered." The structured nature of the question and visible design features made it easier for learners to apply their knowledge.

In 3.1, although the question provided more visual information on the designs, some learners struggled to relate "technology" and "significance of site" to the sources used. Some learners were unable to determine the materials used in FIGURE G and assumed the observation tower was decorated with wood.

In contrast, Questions 3.2 and 3.3 were poorly answered by many learners**.** Instead of writing a comparative essay, some learners produced two separate essays, failing to synthesise similarities and differences. Responses lacked depth and showed weak understanding of design movements, with frequent factual gaps and misinterpretation of criteria. Some learners struggled to link function and significance of site to examples, and language barriers further limited analytical quality. Misconceptions were evident, such as confusing technological aspects with decorative features or omitting the significance of location entirely. Some learners did not follow the bullets as a guideline, rather discussing "plan" rather than adapting what their content knowledge to the essay bullets.

In some cases, the examples chosen for the comparison with a IKS structure in Q3.3 referred to a contemporary design example inspired by classical buildings rather than a classical building. There was a request from markers to include more examples in the marking guideline in the future for this question.

Statistically, Question 3.1 showed a slight decline in average performance from 2024 to 2025. Although the average remained 6, interestingly, the proportion of learners achieving perfect scores rose slightly from 3.2% to 4.8%. Question 3.2 demonstrated significant improvement in 2025 from 7/10 to 8/10 (+4.9 percentage points), and the percentage of learners scoring full marks jumped dramatically from 17.9% to 37.7%. These gains indicate stronger mastery of the skills assessed in this sub-question, with many learners moving into the top performance category. Question 3.3 presented a mixed picture. The average declined slightly by 3.5 percentage points but the percentage of learners achieving full marks more than doubled from 14.3% to 27.3%. Despite the small sample size, these figures suggest that while average performance dipped, high achievers improved.

(b) Why was the question answered poorly? Also provide specific examples, indicate common errors committed by learners in this question, and any misconceptions.

Here's a concise summary of five main reasons why Question 3 was poorly answered**:**

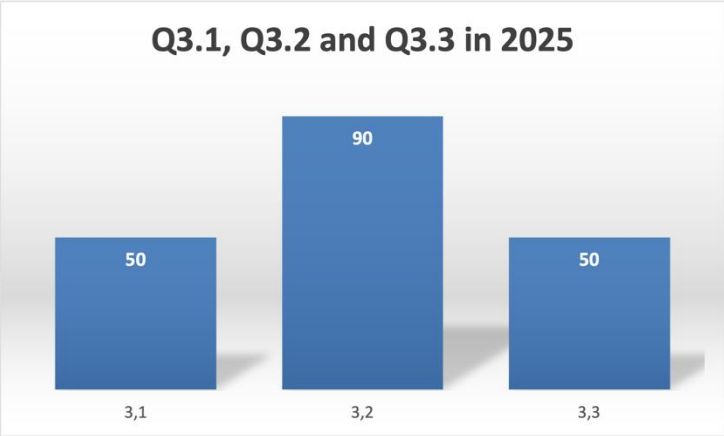
Failure to Compare- Many learners wrote two separate essays instead of synthesising similarities and differences into a comparative analysis. This shows a lack of understanding of the comparative writing requirement.

Omission of Key Criteria- Learners often ignored prompts such as "significance of location" or "technology," focusing only on visible features like decoration or materials. This resulted in incomplete answers.

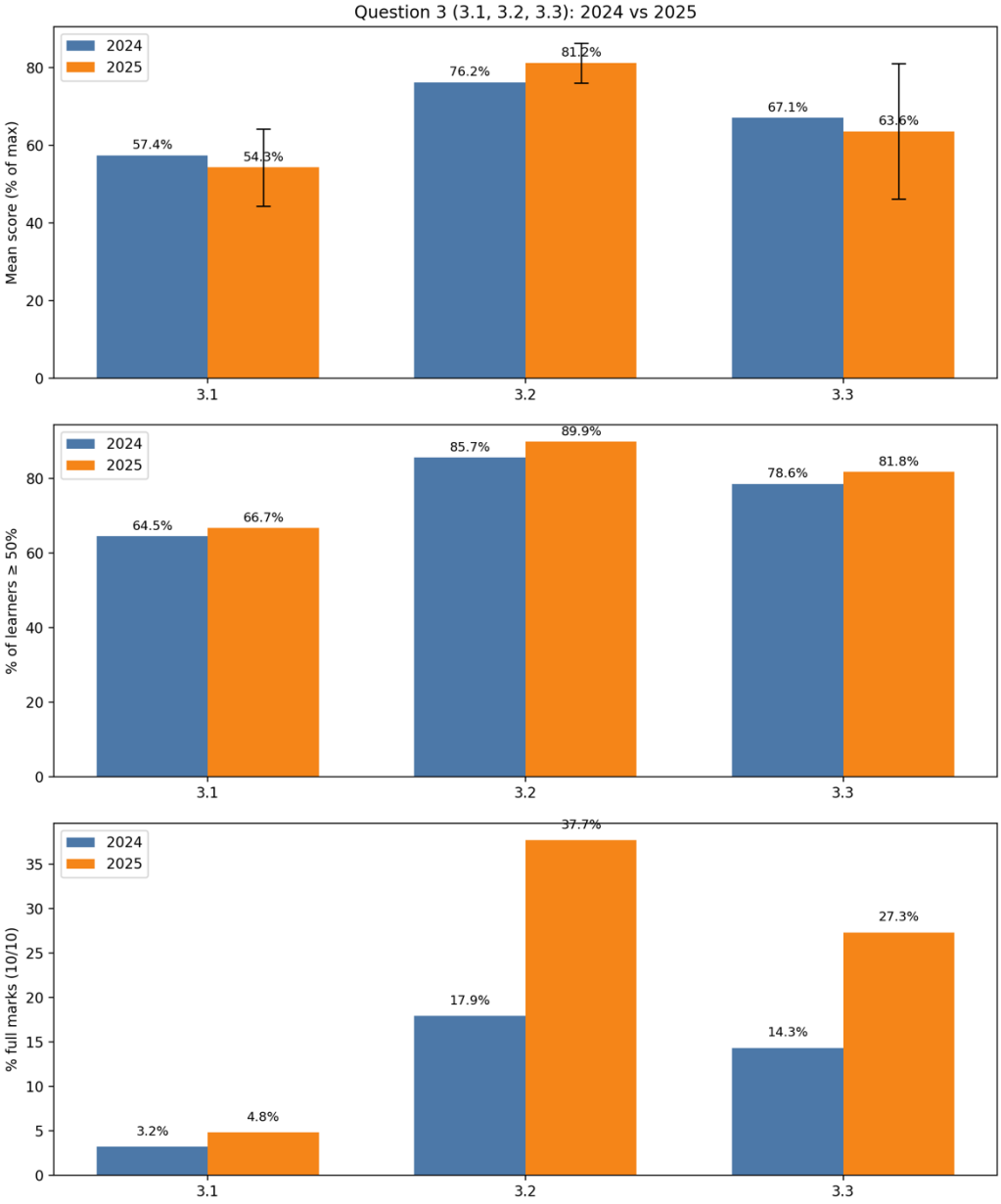
Terminology Confusion- Key terms such as *function* and *technology* were misinterpreted. For example, "function" was confused with decorative purpose, and "technology" was described as "modern look" rather than construction methods.

Weak Content Knowledge- Learners showed poor recall of design movements and frequently mixed up influences or gave irrelevant examples. This indicates inadequate preparation and understanding of studied content.

Language and Analytical Gaps- Second-language learners struggled to articulate ideas clearly, leading to vague, repetitive responses. Many relied on listing rather than explaining relationships between features.



Statistically, learners have averaged 7/10 for Q3 in 2024 compared the 6,3/10 for 2025.



(c) Provide suggestions for improvement in relation to Teaching and Learning.

Question 3 was poorly answered overall, except for learners who chose Question 3.1. This option was supported by clear visuals, enabling learners to identify function, materials, and technology

with relative ease. In contrast, Questions 3.2 and 3.3 were challenging because they required comparative essays based on studied examples. Many learners wrote two separate essays instead of synthesizing similarities and differences, showing weak comparative reasoning. As mentioned earlier, learners were further disadvantaged if the numbering in this question was incorrect.

(d) Describe any other specific observations relating to responses of learners and comments that are useful to teachers, subject advisors, teacher development etc.

See comments above.

The responses in this question have improved over the years. The greatest impact in the results is incorrect numbering of the choice question as well as an inability to compare. Learners need to be taught these skills using everyday conversation. Subject Advisors need to engage with weak centres and provide resource examples of HOW to answer this question. The marking guideline "language" is not accessible to 2nd and 3rd language learners. Teachers could also show learners the "Last Chance" videos which provide detailed instructions on how to answer these questions.

QUESTION 4

(a) General comment on the performance of learners in the specific question. Was the question well answered or poorly answered?

Question 4 showed mixed performance, with noticeable differences between Q4.1 and Q4.2. Learners who attempted Q4.1 generally managed to answer the question, but many responses lacked depth. While stronger candidates produced well-structured essays linking the quote to design movements, weaker learners struggled to explain aims, influences, and characteristics clearly. Most students attempted to answer the question, and the quote was more accessible for middle-order learners this year. While a few strong learners referred to the included images, most preferred to use examples from their design studies. There is a clear improvement in learners attempting this question than in years past. Weaker learners have some grasp of the designers even though they still struggle with the language of essay writing. The breakdown in the mark allocation was clearly helpful to learners, guiding the strong learners in how much to write for each section and providing the weaker learners with a breakdown on what to write where. Common issues included repetition of facts, vague statements, and failure to connect the quote meaningfully to the chosen movements.

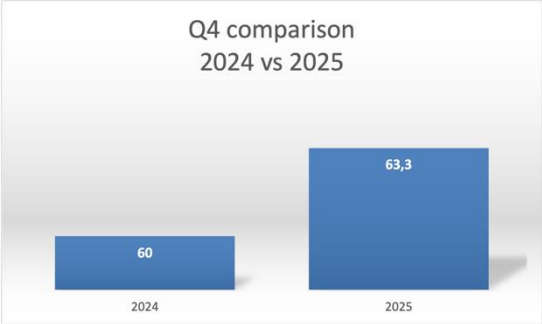
Q4.2 as a whole was more challenging. Although visuals were helpful, many learners did not fully address all required criteria such as inspiration, colour, balance, and fitness for purpose. Responses often focused on superficial descriptions rather than analysing how the bookcases reflected the aims of their respective movements. Misconceptions were frequent—for example, confusing "balance" with aesthetics or ignoring functional aspects entirely. Some learners wrote lengthy introductions but omitted key points, while others grouped aims and influences together without proper explanation. Some learners simply responded from memory on the movements without referring to the design examples in FIGURE H and FIGURE I.

(b) Why was the question answered poorly? Also provide specific examples, indicate common

errors committed by learners in this question, and any misconceptions.

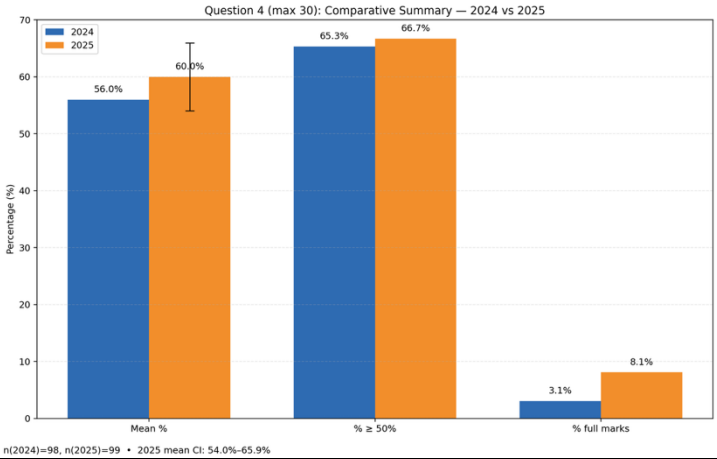
Five Main Reasons based on the markers comments:

1. **Limited Content Knowledge**- Learners lacked factual understanding of design movements, aims, influences, and characteristics. Many responses repeated generic statements without linking them to the chosen movement.
2. **Weak Essay Structure-** Instead of addressing all bullet points systematically, learners grouped aims, influences, and characteristics together or wrote lengthy introductions without covering required details.
3. **Language Barriers-** Second-language learners struggled to articulate ideas clearly, leading to vague, repetitive answers and incorrect use of terminology.
4. **Superficial Analysis of Visuals-** In Q4.2, learners focused on describing the images in the paper with reference to colour and shape rather than analysing how these reflected movement principles. Functional aspects were often ignored.
5. **Misconceptions About Key Terms-** Common misconceptions included confusing "movement" with the principle "movement" discussed in Q1. Learners were unfamiliar with the phrase "fitness for purpose" and struggled to respond effectively.



Statistically, learners have averaged 60% for Q4 in 2024 compared to the 63% for 2025. As this question is 30 marks, this slight improvement will have a positive overall impact on the learners results.

As seen below, there has been an improvement in both 4.1 and 4.2 in 2025.



(c) Provide suggestions for improvement in relation to Teaching and Learning.

Practice with DBE marking guidelines. Use excellent model answers from learners who wrote essays in a more accessible language. Learners should be writing and practicing these questions more regularly and not only in an examination. Teachers should create opportunities for learners to do comparisons in groups in class and then turn around and teach another group about the

examples you discussed. Eg. Fishbowl discussion

(d) Describe any other specific observations relating to responses of learners and comments that are useful to teachers, subject advisors, teacher development etc.

See comments above.

QUESTION 5

(a) General comment on the performance of learners in the specific question. Was the question well answered or poorly answered?

Question 5 showed mixed results, with Q5.1 generally better answered than Q5.2. Learners who attempted Q5.1 were able to identify sociocultural benefits and provide examples of design solutions, and many wrote essays on designers addressing social issues. However, responses often lacked depth, with some learners giving vague explanations or failing to fully link design features to sociocultural impact. Strong candidates demonstrated good structure and factual knowledge, but weaker learners tended to waffle or repeat information without clear reasoning.

In 5.1, weaker learners struggled to explain how the design had social benefits for people. Eg. easier to carry (lightweight). Learners would simple repeat the caption without rephrasing into their own words and responding critically.

Q5.2 was poorly answered overall. Learners struggled with identifying indigenous craft influences and explaining adaptation in contemporary designs. Marker feedback highlighted confusion caused by the visual reference (Yoruba craft instead of South African), which created anxiety and led to irrelevant answers. Many learners omitted key criteria such as materials, processes, and social value, or provided generic statements without supporting examples. Misconceptions were common, such as assuming any handmade item qualifies as indigenous craft. Language barriers further compounded these issues, resulting in incomplete or superficial essays.

(b) Why was the question answered poorly? Also provide specific examples, indicate common errors committed by learners in this question, and any misconceptions.

Learners that struggled, responded poorly in 5.1, lacked an understanding of the term "sociocultural". Most learners were able to answer 5.1.1 and 5.1.2. In the essays, learners wrote unnecessary information they had studied rather than reading the question and responding to the bullets. With the focus on aims, design materials and techniques, learners were not credited for influences and design description which was the content that most of them studied.

Most learners that answered 5.2 struggled to respond to all three questions. Weak learners often received no marks at all for this question. Learners could not interpret "technique" based on the image. There was limited information to indicate if it was beading, painting and if the material was wood. By using a Yoruba example, learners would not have been able to relate to this image as its not South African. It would have been better to use an Ndebele example.

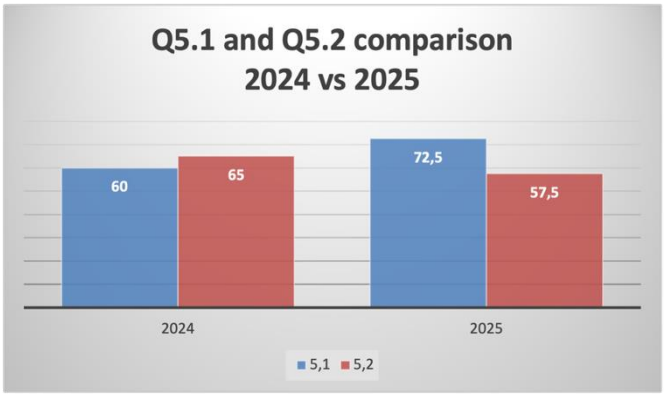
Although 5.2.2 is a familiar question based on examples in past papers, there were more learners

this year answering incorrectly. Often using contemporary designers in this question. Markers noticed that learners in some packs had all been taught to respond with a particular craft designer (Jabula Nala) that used a traditional craft technique in this question rather than in 5.2.3.

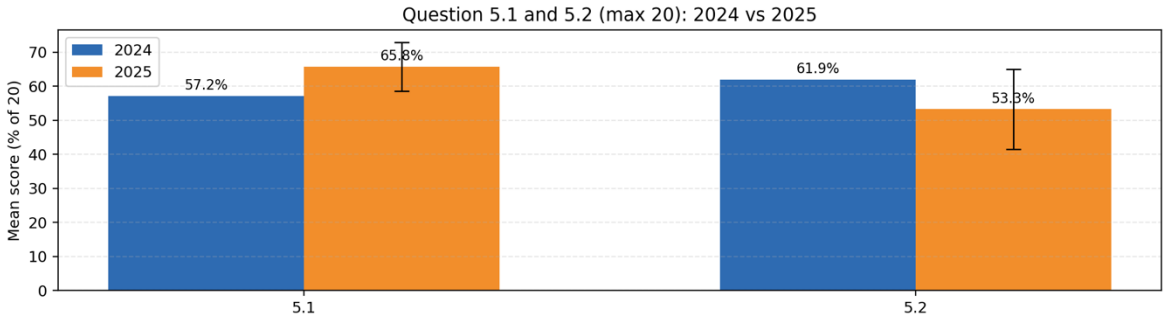
In 5.2.3, learners were required to write an essay on ONE South African designer influenced by a traditional South African craft technique was often poorly answered. The responses in this question varied from excellent (10/10 to very poor (below 3/10). This was often due to the instruction in the last bullet where learners were required to explain "how the contemporary design product was an adaption and continuation of the indigenous craft technique". Most learners did not understand this instruction and were impacted by not being credited with the 3/10 marks. As in 5.1.3, learners discussed from memory not actually responding to the bullets. Learners had a lot of information on the method and process of how the contemporary item was made as well as the description of the design, but very little on the influences.

Furthermore, the Subject Advisor commented that often the centres that struggle with language are encouraged to study 5.2 as many can relate to cultural techniques from their own cultural context. These learners struggled with this question with terms like "adaptation" and "continuation".

In general, it seemed as though the question was more challenging for learners to answer than 5.1



Question 5 shows contrasting trends between its two sub-parts. Q5.1 improved significantly in 2025, with the average rising from 57.2% to 65.8% and the proportion of learners achieving full marks increasing from 4.1% to 15.5%. The share of learners scoring at least 50% also grew from 67.6% to 73.2%, indicating stronger overall mastery. In contrast, Q5.2 declined, with the average dropping from 61.9% to 53.3% and the percentage of learners above 50% falling sharply from 84.6% to 55.2%, while full marks remained low and stable. Predictions based on the 2025 sample suggest Q5.1 will maintain its upward trajectory whereas Q5.2 is likely to remain weaker.



(c) Provide suggestions for improvement in relation to Teaching and Learning.

Here are **actionable suggestions for teachers and subject advisors:**

1. **Clarify Indigenous Craft Concepts-** Many learners struggled to identify the correct indigenous community and explain adaptation in contemporary designs. Teachers should use authentic examples of South African craft traditions and demonstrate how these influence modern design. Subject advisors can provide curated resource packs with case studies and visual references to avoid confusion.

2. **Reinforce Essay Structure and Criteria-** Learners often omitted key points such as materials, processes, and social value. Teachers should model structured essay writing using bullet-point criteria and provide practice tasks that require addressing all aspects. Advisors can organise workshops on teaching essay planning and scaffolding techniques.

3. **Strengthen Terminology and Language Support-** Language barriers led to vague responses and repetition of question wording. Teachers should integrate terminology drills and bilingual glossaries into lessons. Subject advisors should encourage schools to use visual aids and oral activities to build confidence in applying technical vocabulary.

4. **Correct Misconceptions Through Practical Activities-** Common misconceptions included assuming any handmade item qualifies as indigenous craft and confusing adaptation with imitation. Teachers should use hands-on activities—such as comparing traditional and contemporary designs—to illustrate adaptation and cultural continuity. Advisors can recommend interactive teaching strategies during professional development sessions.

(d) Describe any other specific observations relating to responses of learners and comments that are useful to teachers, subject advisors, teacher development etc.

See comments above.

QUESTION 6

(a) General comment on the performance of learners in the specific question. Was the question well answered or poorly answered?

Question 6 was poorly answered overall, especially by weaker and second-language learners. While a few strong candidates produced well-structured essays and demonstrated good understanding of sustainability concepts, the majority struggled with both the short-answer and essay components. By this stage of the paper, learners are often under time pressure to finish the paper. This is further impacted by any surprises they might encounter in Q6. The question 6 in the 2025 question paper was much better than the 2024 question. As a result learners faired considerably better than 2024. The average increased from **10,5/20 in 2024** to **14/20 in 2025**

Most learners managed Q6.1.1 (definition of "eco-friendly") reasonably well,
but Q6.1.2 and Q6.2 posed significant challenges. Many responses lacked depth, with learners giving vague or generic answers such as "use recycled materials" without elaboration. Learners struggled to elaborate on "methods of making products that are eco-friendly". Most learners were

able to give examples of sustainable materials used but not explain the method of making products. As the curriculum requires that learners prepare by studying TWO designers for this section, most learners repeated the "method" and design example in 6.1.2 and 6.2. Learners were credited regardless.

In the essay section (Q6.2), learners frequently omitted key criteria like aims, materials, and processes, or wrote incomplete essays. Language barriers and fatigue at the end of the paper further affected performance, leading to poorly structured responses and limited factual content.

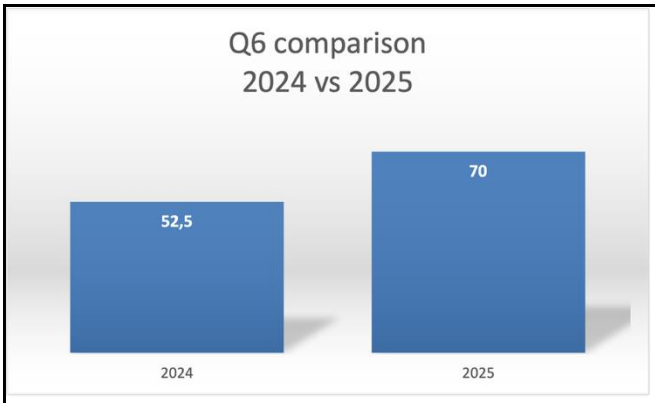
Markers noted that misconceptions were common—for example, confusing sustainability with aesthetics or failing to link design choices to environmental impact. Some learners substituted unrelated designers or repeated case studies from earlier questions, indicating weak preparation and poor understanding of the question requirements.

Several learners wrote on Heath Nash on 6.2. Most were able to discuss another design example like the "Flowerball". Some learners discussed the example in the paper. There was evidence that some learners were surprised and possibly stressed by this inclusion as they fared well in the rest of the paper, responded well in 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 but only answered with an international designer in 6.2, not even attempting to write on a South African designer. As the instruction said below the essay "You may not refer to any designers that you have discussed previously OR design examples used in this paper."

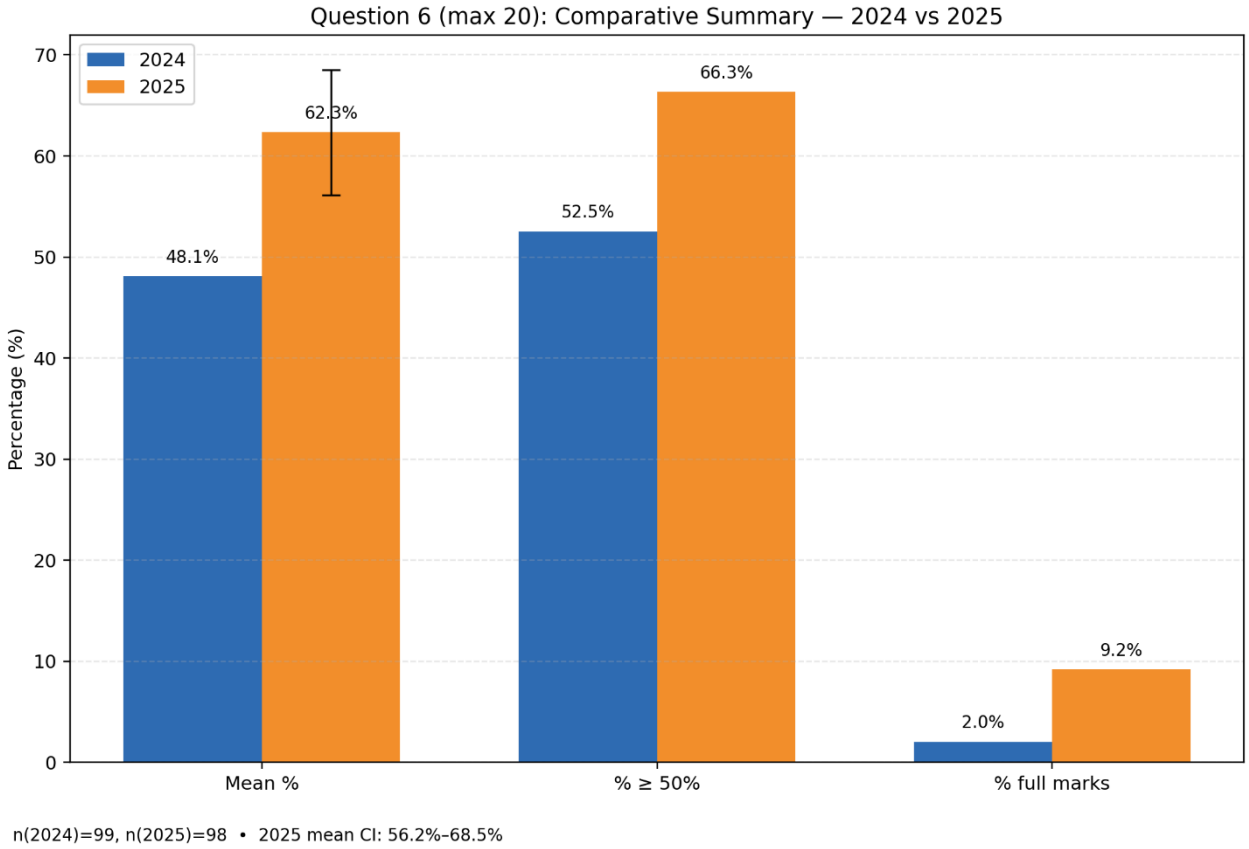
Comparatively, less learners referred to the same designers in Q5 and Q6 in 2025 than in the past years, therefore affording them the opportunity to excel.

(b) Why was the question answered poorly? Also provide specific examples, indicate common errors committed by learners in this question, and any misconceptions.

Although 2025 has seen a considerable improvement in the responses to Q6, some learners have still struggled with this question. Some learners did not manage their time well in the paper, often excelling in all the other questions and only getting 3/20 for Q6 due to not finishing. Learners that struggled with language, simply responded by answer the designers they had studied, responding in rote without applying the content to the question being asked. Some learners chose to answer by referring to designers that inherently were social designers and therefore could not be credited for "reference to environmental concerns" which equated to 2/10 marks.
As mentioned above, several learners struggled with the term "method" in 6.1.2 and often responded with terms like "recycled plastic and recycled paper" where a maximum of 1/ 2 was credited for method.



Question 6 (max 20) shows a clear uplift in 2025: the mean increased from 48.1% → 62.3%, the proportion of learners at or above half marks rose from 52.5% to 66.3%, and full marks (20/20) improved from 2.0% to 9.2% across the 100-script samples.



(c) Provide suggestions for improvement in relation to Teaching and Learning.

Here are **actionable suggestions for improving Teaching and Learning for Question 6**:

1. **Reinforce Sustainability Concepts Early**- Learners struggled to define "eco-friendly" and link design choices to environmental impact. Teachers should introduce sustainability principles from Grade 10 and integrate them into projects and discussions. Use real-world examples of eco-friendly designs to illustrate how materials, processes, and functionality contribute to environmental responsibility. Arrange class visits to "eco-design" sites as part of research in grade 10 and 11 to develop both a visual and terminology vocabulary. The concepts in this question are taught over three years and not in one lesson in grade 12.
2. **Model Structured Essay Writing**- Many learners omitted key criteria such as aims, materials, and processes in Q6.2. Teachers should provide essay templates and practice tasks that require addressing all bullet points. Subject advisors can organise workshops on teaching

essay planning and scaffolding techniques to ensure learners understand how to structure extended responses.

3. **Use Practical Demonstrations**- Misconceptions were common, such as equating sustainability with aesthetics or assuming recycled materials alone make a design eco-friendly. Teachers should use hands-on activities—like analysing actual products for sustainable features—to clarify these concepts. Comparing conventional and eco-friendly designs can help learners understand functional and environmental benefits.
4. **Address Language Barriers**- Second-language learners struggled to articulate ideas clearly. Teachers should incorporate bilingual glossaries, visual aids, and oral practice into lessons. Advisors can recommend strategies such as terminology drills and sentence starters to help learners express ideas confidently in essays.
5. **Reduce Cognitive Load**- Fatigue at the end of the paper affected performance. Teachers should train learners in time management and exam strategies, while subject advisors can suggest balancing essay requirements across the paper or providing clear scaffolding for extended tasks.

(d) Describe any other specific observations relating to responses of learners and comments that are useful to teachers, subject advisors, teacher development etc.

Contextually, Q5 and Q6 are covered in the Grade 11 curriculum extensively according to the ATP and then again in term 3 of grade 12. Many teachers and learners are impacted by the pressures of completing the PAT, starting the Paper 2 alongside the prelim examinations in schools. Few teachers get to actually "teaching" this content. Learners are then just given notes to study with the hope that they will grasp the concepts and be "ok" in question 6. Schools that excelled in these questions covered this content alongside the theory covered in term 1.

Subject advisors need to guide teachers on planning their teaching in grade 12 keeping in mind their school calendar and the requirements they anticipate of their learners. Schools should NOT allow learners to change to design in Grade 12 without a full understanding of the impact of NOT having covered the grade 11 curriculum.