



The following report gives feedback to assist assessors with general issues and trends that have been identified during external moderation of the internally assessed standards in 2025. It also provides further insights from moderation material viewed throughout the year and outlines the Assessor Support available for Design & Visual Communication. Please note this report does not introduce new criteria, change the requirements of the standard, or change what we expect from assessment.

Insights

92000: Generate product or spatial design ideas using visual communication techniques in response to design influences

Performance overview:

This standard requires students to use visual communication techniques to generate their own design ideas that relate to characteristics seen in selected source materials.

The standard can be effectively met when students:

- Include research in the form of photographs and web images of an appropriate te ao Māori design influence(s) and another design influence.
- Select design influences with distinct characteristics.
- Provide evidence of a rationale for both design influences used in the context of product or spatial design. The rationale can be a written description or a collated set of images.
- Use visual communication techniques (sketching, modelling, digital modelling) to identify the characteristics of the design influences.
- The identified characteristics inform the student's generation of product or spatial design ideas.
- In each of the achievement criteria the generation of ideas is open ended and does not require resolution.

For Merit, the student generated product or spatial ideas must be progressed through further experimentation of both aesthetics and function.

For Excellence, the student generated product or spatial ideas must include evidence of divergent thinking to regenerate new design ideas, beyond an idea generated in the earlier design phases.

There are some minor changes to the wording of the Explanatory Notes for this standard for 2026. A new version of 92000 was published in December 2025.

Practices that need strengthening:

In some teaching and learning practice, research into design influences was sparse and did not enable students to identify characteristics of the design influences that would subsequently inform and inspire the student's own ideas. The characteristics are also known as design elements such as shapes and forms (e.g. circular, cylindrical, rectangular, spherical), and symmetry, balance, proportion, repetition, pattern, rhythm, contrast, texture.

In some cases, research into design influences was drawn from a two-dimensional te ao Māori resource in which illustrations originated from a creation pūrākau. While culturally significant, this source did not support students in identifying design characteristics derived from man-made objects, such as regional stylistic distinctions, specific object types and forms, spatial configurations, or architectural features. As a result, the use of pūrākau cannot be directly regarded as a design influence for these purposes.

The term 'develop' in the Merit criteria refers to sustained and purposeful exploration and experimentation ('explore' has been replaced by 'expand' in the 2026 version of the standard). This involves students expanding their initial concepts by experimenting with alternative designs, refining proportions or forms, and adjusting their ideas based on ongoing analysis and reflection. Some teaching and learning practices misunderstood this as resolving a design outcome.

To achieve Merit, both aesthetics and function must be developed. Submissions that were solely aesthetic or functional were limited to Achieved. Functionality was effectively communicated by showing how people would use the design idea.

To achieve Excellence, both spatial and product design divergence is demonstrated when students explore distinctly different concepts rather than minor variations, showing a wide scope of thinking before selecting and refining their final design pathway.

92001: Use representation techniques to visually communicate own product or spatial design outcome

Performance overview:

The standard can be effectively met when:

- The evidence is the student's own design idea. The use of CAD libraries has led to highly generic design ideas.
- The visual communication modes include hand-rendered presentation drawings, physical models (such as hand built, 3D printed, laser cut), rendered digital models (such as CAD packages), or animations (such as fly-throughs).
- The evidence includes 3D sketches, instrumental drawings, models (digital and traditional), and animations that have been rendered to show form with tone variation across the surfaces relative to a light source, cast shadows, and highlights.
- Features within the product and spatial design are rendered with localised shadows and highlights to describe the materiality and authentic texture associated with the material.
- As physical models cannot be submitted for moderation, knowledge of photography and lighting is required to effectively communicate the model's form, scale, and materiality. This includes selecting views that show design features and materiality by using controlled lighting to generate tonal change, shadows, and highlights.
- The photographic evidence is of suitable resolution so as not to degrade the representation.
- The modelling materials used in physical models are 'finished' to achieve the clarifying and enhancing criteria of Merit and Excellence. This could include painting, sanding, and photography techniques. The photographs could be further clarified and enhanced using CAD editing.
- The purpose is communicated with images of people pasted into the representation. Context is well demonstrated when the render or model is placed in lifelike settings such as a park or being used by people.
- Multiple views support the communication of the design idea.

For Merit, students are required to use refined representation techniques to clarify the visual communication of the design idea and the three-dimensional form, features, and materiality of their own design outcome. This includes showing how light interacts with different surfaces in a consistent and believable way, using controlled tonal gradation and a consistent direction of light and shadow across the design, and variation in surface texture to distinguish between different materials.

For Excellence, students are required to use representation techniques to enhance the visual communication of their own product or spatial design outcome by integrating techniques with precision to visually communicate the three-dimensional form, features, and materiality of their own design outcome with visual impact.

Practices that need strengthening:

A better understanding of rendering is required. There should be an identified light source that generates different tonal values on 3D forms, e.g. a light, medium, and darker tone on rectilinear forms and tonal gradation across cylindrical and spherical forms. Highlights should be used perpendicular to the light source, and cast shadows should be used to indicate the design's siting on the ground and areas on the object that are blocked from the light source.

Materiality requires the application of tone, colour, localised shadows, and highlights to indicate authentic texture associated with the material. Cutting and pasting images of textured materials onto drawings is often not consistent with the identified light source and can appear flat.

When using CAD there are issues regarding generic application of library images of materials. These often appear flat, they do not recognise a light source, and they do not indicate the shadows and highlights of the texture of materials.

Photographs of physical models that are constructed from modelling materials without attempting to communicate finishes (such as bricks, glass, painted surfaces, and corrugated and tiled roofing) limit the communication of materiality.

The use of proprietary materials such as LEGO and Minecraft are not appropriate media for this standard.

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Assessor Support

NZQA offers free online support for teachers as assessors of NZC achievement standards. These include:

- Exemplars of student work for most standards.
- National Moderator Reports.
- Online learning modules (generic and subject-specific).
- Clarifications for some standards.
- Assessor Practice Tool for many standards.
- Webcasts.

Exemplars, National Moderator Reports, clarifications, and webcasts are hosted on the NZC Subject pages on the NZQA website.

[Subject Pages](#)

Online learning modules and the Assessor Practice Tool are hosted on Pūtake, NZQA's learning management system. You can access these through the Education Sector Logon.

[Log in to Pūtake](#)

We also may provide a speaker to present at national conferences on requests from national subject associations. At the regional or local level, we may be able to provide online support.

Please contact assessorsupport@nzqa.govt.nz for more information or to lodge a request for support.