The Design Researcher · Teacher sheet

GCSE D&T · AQA 3.3.1 investigation, 3.3.2 environmental, social and economic challenge, 3.3.3 the work of others · application lesson · 50 minutes · works solo

The idea

Each student is a researcher at a design agency. Clients bring real users with real problems, or ask for a product in the style of a famous designer. Students choose research methods, spot user problems, write measurable spec points and name designers' key features.

How the briefs work

Students do at least two Bronze briefs first, then any order.

Print (per student)

- Research Guide (pages 2–3). Can be shared or laminated.
- Client Board (pages 4–5), double-sided.
- Research Notes (pages 6–7), double-sided.

Running it

1. **5 min:** PowerPoint to the worked example (a garden tool for a user with weak grip; not on the Client Board).
2. **30 min:** students work alone: two Bronze first, then any order.
3. **10 min:** students mark their OWN report in green pen using the answer slides.
4. **5 min:** totals and ranks. **The Audit:** anyone claiming Senior Researcher or Head of Research brings their report to you.

Fees

Bronze £100 · Silver £200 · Gold £300 · Platinum £500. **Full fee** = what the brief asks, specific to the user or designer, with a measurable spec point where asked · **Half fee** = right idea but vague (e.g. "easy to use") · **£0** = not about this user or designer · **+£50** = names a research method or design movement correctly as well.

Ranks

£0–399 Intern · £400–899 Researcher · £900–1,599 Senior Researcher · £1,600+ **Head of Research**

Research Guide

Use this for every brief. Good research is about the USER: who they are, what they need, and what they find hard.

Research methods

Method	Primary or secondary	Good for
Interview	Primary	Detailed opinions from a real user
Questionnaire	Primary	Lots of people; easy to compare answers
Observation	Primary	Seeing what users really do (not what they say)
User testing	Primary	Trying a model or product with real users
Product analysis	Primary (handling it)	What works and what does not in existing products
Anthropometric data	Secondary	Sizes of the human body (5th to 95th percentile)
Books, internet	Secondary	Background facts, designers, standards

Product analysis: ACCESS FM

Aesthetics · **C**ost · **C**ustomer · **E**nvironment · **S**afety · **S**ize · **F**unction · **M**aterials

User-centred and inclusive design

User-centred design: the user is involved at every stage: research, testing and feedback. **Inclusive design**: products usable by as many people as possible, including older and disabled users. **Ergonomics**: how the product fits the body; **anthropometrics**: the body-size data used to do it.

Writing a specification point

A good spec point is **measurable** and can be tested. Weak: *"easy to hold"*. Strong: *"handle at least 30 mm diameter with a soft rubber grip"*.

Research Guide: the work of others

Designers and companies named in the AQA specification. Key features are what make their style recognisable.

Designer / company	Key features	Famous work
William Morris	Arts and Crafts; nature patterns; hand-crafted	Wallpaper and textiles
Charles Rennie Mackintosh	Art Nouveau; tall, straight lines; stylised roses	Ladderback chair
Gerrit Rietveld	De Stijl; primary colours, straight lines, flat planes	Red Blue Chair
Harry Beck	Diagram over geography; straight lines, 45° angles	London Underground map
Marcel Breuer	Bauhaus; tubular steel; form follows function	Wassily Chair
Ettore Sottsass	Memphis; bold colours, clashing patterns, playful	Carlton bookcase
Philippe Starck	Sculptural, witty everyday objects	Juicy Salif lemon squeezer
Vivienne Westwood	Punk; tartan, safety pins, corsetry	Punk fashion
Alexander McQueen	Dramatic tailoring; nature and history	Armadillo shoes
Dyson	Iterative prototyping; problem-solving engineering	Bagless vacuum cleaner
Alessi	Playful, colourful kitchenware by many designers	Kitchenware
Apple	Minimal, user-friendly; form and function together	iPhone, iPod
Braun (Dieter Rams)	"Less but better"; simple, functional	SK4 radio

Client Board

Do at least two Bronze briefs first. Write the client's name on your report.

Bronze

KettleCo — BRONZE £100

“User: Ken, 78, stiff, painful hands. Their kettle has a thin handle and a small, stiff switch. Find two problems and write a spec point.”

BagWorks — BRONZE £100

“A school bag company wants to know what Year 7 students carry. Which research method, and what would you ask or measure?”

DeskFit — BRONZE £100

“Design a desk for 11 to 16 year olds. Which data tells you the right height?”

Silver

Commuter Cups — SILVER £200

“User: Priya, commutes by train, one hand on a rail. Analyse a lidded travel mug for her needs.”

ToyTown — SILVER £200

“User: Sam, age 4. Write three specification points for a wooden push-along toy.”

Citrus Studio — SILVER £200

“The client wants a lemon squeezer "in the style of Philippe Starck". Name two key features.”

CityBus — SILVER £200

“Redesign a bus map "the Harry Beck way". What principles would you use?”

Client Board (continued)

Gold

Heritage Papers — **GOLD £300**

“A wallpaper range inspired by William Morris. Name key features and the movement he belonged to.”

Gallery Lights — **GOLD £300**

“A lamp for a gallery "in the style of Ettore Sottsass". Key features?”

VacuTech — **GOLD £300**

“The client wants to learn from Dyson's design process. What would you tell them?”

Wheelchair Hub — **GOLD £300**

“User: Amir, a wheelchair user. Analyse a supermarket checkout for him. Two problems and a fix.”

Fashion Forward — **GOLD £300**

“A capsule collection inspired by Vivienne Westwood. Key features?”

Platinum

Ageing Well — **PLATINUM £500**

“Write a full research plan for a kitchen product for older users: two primary methods, one secondary, and three spec points.”

Café Nova — **PLATINUM £500**

“A chair "in the style of Gerrit Rietveld" for a modern café. Key features and one change for today's users.”

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Research Notes

Name: _____ Mark in GREEN pen

Example: *Problem: thin handle hard to grip · Spec: handle 35 mm diameter, soft grip · Why: less force needed for weak hands.*

Client	Findings: user problems or designer's key features	Spec point or method (measurable)	Why	Fee £

Research Notes (page 2)

Name: _____ Mark in GREEN pen

Example: *Problem: thin handle hard to grip · Spec: handle 35 mm diameter, soft grip · Why: less force needed for weak hands.*

Client	Findings: user problems or designer's key features	Spec point or method (measurable)	Why	Fee £

TOTAL EARNED: £_____ Rank: Intern · Researcher · Senior Researcher · Head of Research (circle)