Housing and Design
Course Code: HDS315113

Written Exam

Question 1

Generally the question was well answered, with stronger candidates structuring their responses to show their advice using headings and detailed diagrams.

Some candidates misunderstood the north direction or ignored the existing and changed the north orientation of the building to suit their design response.

Weaker responses gave spatial and planning advice without actually addressing the requirements of the question or the criterion. The majority of responses included a plan, yet this was not necessarily required to answer the question. Many responses included paragraphs of information, rather than succinct information relating directly to the question.

Question 2

The majority of responses to Question two reflected a satisfactory understanding of the features and principles that contribute to thermal comfort and minimising energy requirements. Candidates whose response reflected an ‘A’ award demonstrated an accurate and broad knowledge base that was transferred to the given environment and design limitations of the question, including capably utilising all the elements of passive design. Candidates who received a ‘B’ award demonstrated a sound response but in most cases provided some misapplied or extraneous information, for example, listing the principles for a cool temperate climate rather than focusing on the specific hot/humid environment and disregarding the fact that the provided site was fixed. This seemed to be a case of the respondents wishing to provide as much information as they could, rather than providing only the information that was accurate for the given environment (hot/humid) and also that candidates chose to alter either the orientation of the building or its footprint to suit their response. Those candidates who received a ‘C’ award, showed some knowledge of the principles and their application contributing to environmental sustainability. However, they had difficulty in transferring this information to the given environment and design limitations of the question.

Some respondents provided annotation that stated “windows would provide an opportunity for ventilation”. This statement is only accurate if the response also describes how the windows may be opened. Other candidates provided, in sketch form, a tree for shade but placed the tree in a position isolated from the dwelling. Shade from trees in the tropics must form a canopy over the dwelling. This is best shown in an elevation sketch.

Candidates can improve their responses by:

• Reading the question and only responding to what is asked for in the question, (e.g. candidates provided accurate scale drawings when not asked and other information such as wheelchair ramps);
• Sketching and annotating, rather than writing paragraphs – “a picture is worth a thousand words”;
• Applying a clear understanding of the BASIC principles of thermal comfort, and;
• Ensuring that they only use the design principles that apply to the given climate.

Question 3

This was a demanding question for candidates who needed to draw a challenging floor plan to scale and layout the interior space to accommodate the stated needs of the client. It appeared that many candidates struggled to
draw the church to scale, plan the interior layout and fully annotate design decisions in the time allocated to this question.

Many candidates did not comply with the question and failed to note the requirements, and restrictions of the question and therefore their responses did not addresses all of these. Some candidates moved windows, doors and altered the shape of the church. Candidates need to utilise the reading time to fully consider the requirements of the question and draft and reflect upon more than one solution before committing to a final solution.

Annotations

A and B answers included annotations that were succinct and well laid out with clear connection to the drawing. C responses labelled rooms or furniture items with little explanation of design decisions. Many D responses failed to complete the floor plan or include annotations.

Scale

Scale was an issue for many candidates with several not using the scale provided for in the question. Doors and windows were not drawn using drawing conventions in some cases and some candidates chose to draw the floor plan to 1:75 rather than the required 1:100. Many candidates were unable to draw the furniture required for the church at an appropriate scale with beds, dining tables and lounge furniture ranging from the excessively large to incredibly small.

Design Principles

A and B answers showed a good grasp of differentiating public and private spaces and the need to group like spaces together. Better responses indicated flow and movement patterns on the floor plan.

The better responses divided the interior church space across the width of the building with the entrance door located in proximity to the public space. Candidates who divided the space along the length of the building had difficulty grouping spaces and ensuring discreet public and private zones.

C responses tended to have random space layout with little attention to circulation and flow. Many C and D responses had bathrooms off bedrooms requiring all occupants to walk through bedrooms to reach the bathroom zone.

D candidates did not incorporate all the required spaces omitting an entry point, storage zone, bathroom, and library in many responses.

Question 4

As with Question Three, Question Four was very demanding for candidates to complete to a high standard in the time available. The time required to draw the existing structure took away from the time available to show detailed knowledge and to justify design decisions.

Strong responses included all of the required elements, zoned the layout appropriately, demonstrated consideration of flow for accessibility, annotated heights to show accessibility and justified all design decisions.

Weaker responses included some or all of these common mistakes

- Not placing the meeting room where required
- Not dealing appropriately with the change in level between the meeting room and main floor. Some candidates ignored the significant drop, whilst others included ramps with inappropriate gradients. A common mistake was to have a gradient of 1:8 which is not at all suitable for this significant drop. In order to account for difference in teaching approaches candidates using any gradients between 1:12 and 1:20 were considered correct, provided they had calculated the length of the ramp correctly and added in the appropriate number of resting spaces for the gradient used.
• Not annotating heights of facilities that were required to be accessible. To leave heights unspecified or to annotate something as being ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ than usual is not a response of pre-tertiary standard.
• Unrealistic proportion of items such as furniture. Candidates should know, or at least be able to estimate realistic sizes of furniture to appropriately answer C4 questions.

Externally Assessed Folio

Folios produced again encompassed a wide variety of topics. Most candidates demonstrated a range of communication techniques as folios incorporated a combination of hand sketching, drawing and computer generated design.

Generally, the final checking and editing of many projects was poor. A number of projects contained blank pages, were not in logical order, contained text boxes that had missing text, or contained spelling or grammatical errors. It would appear that some candidates ran out of time to proof read and complete a final edit of their work which detracted from the overall quality and presentation of the folio

Brief and aims

Ideally folios should have a short concise brief with aims following. Stronger folios did this, linking the aims with the brief and incorporating user needs. If user needs were not articulated it very difficult for candidates to later demonstrate that they have met the needs within their final design. A number of candidates had a long list of aims. This made it difficult to achieve a satisfactory outcome, as not all aims were achieved. In some instance candidates did not address all the aims or were limited in their response to those aims as there were too many to fully address in any detail.

Precedents

Strong precedents sections looked at practicing architects plus a range of relevant resources in depth. Folios that relied on single web sites generally did not contain the depth of others which were sourced from a wider variety. Images taken by the candidates from relevant precedents they were able to visit and analyse added depth to folios.

Context

The context section was often the weakest section of many folios. A context statement consisting of a paragraph or two of text, does not meet the requirements of the context section as defined by the folio guidelines. There appears to be a lack of understanding with what a context statement actually is. In some instances there was also confusion over what is context and what a site analysis is. Candidates and teachers need to ensure the folio guidelines are followed regarding the content each required section.

Site Analysis

Weaker site analysis sections gave information about sites, but did not explain in detail how these may effect impact on the possible design or how they might need to be considered.

Site analysis sections for people doing internal renovations and interior design continued to often be weaker, with confusion regarding the site and the context.

It is important to again emphasise that if a candidate cannot obtain, or draw plans or get pictures or information about the inside of a building it is better to choose a different building for an internal renovation as there is no way of showing the existing, therefore examiner cannot tell if proposed changes are realistic or appropriate.

Design Development

Design development drawings need to be clearly presented. Strong folios included a scale bar, dimensions, and a north arrow to explain their ideas, and were accurately drawn, rather than been presented as a thumbnail sketch.
Strong folios had clear links to their precedent research and were clearly able to demonstrate how and why they were used. Strong folios had a logical progression with their concepts, and it was evident how the final design was decided. Weaker folios often had their third, or even a fourth option as their final design, but with no explanation or justification as to how this was determined.

**Design Resolution**

Weaker folios lacked evidence of design development and evolution to a final design. Very little discussion and analysis was undertaken and aspects that candidates considered to be negatives of one design appeared in the following concepts and even in some cases in the final design.

At the final design stage, strong folios clearly showed a resolution to their design problem. The use of a north arrow, scale, dimensions, or a scale bar was generally quite good. Clear and appropriate annotations help to justify design decisions. Weaker folios still contained listed design negatives.

Strong folios clearly outlined how they had considered and met the aims of the brief, with some candidates opting to present this information as a chart. This made it clear to markers what had been achieved in the project.

**Referencing**

Referencing, or lack of correct referencing, was an issue in folios this year. The Harvard referencing is the system to use for folio referencing. Candidates should allow time to do this properly. It is recommended that referencing is done throughout the duration of the project, rather than trying to compile a list prior to the submission of the project. Strong folios had clear referencing, either in text, under photographs, at the bottom of each page, or as a final page by page summary at the end. These folios made it very easy to determine where each reference has been sourced. Candidates need to be reminded that any piece of work that is not their own, whether it is information, diagrams or photographs must be clearly acknowledged and appropriately referenced. This also includes cover photographs, as many folios did not acknowledge this.