

Visual Communication Design Units 3 & 4

Chapter 7 — Professional design practice

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Chapter 7 Professional design practice — 7A Contexts, roles, relationships & responsibilities

Theory

Professional design practice is the way designers actually work: *where* they are based, *who* they work with, and *what they are answerable for*. Unit 3 Area of Study 1 asks you to **compare the contexts in which contemporary designers work** and to **explain the roles of, and relationships between, designers, specialists and stakeholders when resolving design problems**. This subtopic covers both, and the vocabulary it establishes is used in almost every Section A question.

A **contemporary designer** is a designer practising from **2000 onward** within a field of visual communication design — **Messages, Objects, Environments or Interactive experiences**. Fine artists, photographers and craftspeople are not visual communication designers, and a designer whose career ended before 2000 is not contemporary.

Design practice contexts

A **design practice context** is the setting and circumstances in which a designer works. When you compare contexts, compare these things:

- **the size and structure of the practice** — a sole practitioner or freelancer, a small independent studio, a large multidisciplinary agency or consultancy, an in-house design team inside a company or institution, a government or not-for-profit design unit, or a collective;
- **where and how the team works** — one shared studio, several offices, or a distributed team working remotely;
- **the field(s) of design practice** the designer works in, and the kinds of outcomes produced;
- **the clients and sectors served** — commercial, cultural, community, government or industry — and whether the practice's reach is local, national or global;
- **the resources and technology available** — an in-house prototyping workshop and research team, or specialists engaged project by project;
- **the cultural and social setting** the practice works within, including the communities it designs with and for.

NORTHLIGHT STUDIO		CARDINAL DESIGN	
independent studio · Messages		consultancy · Objects & Interactive experiences	
STRUCTURE	small independent studio — three designers sharing one inner-suburban space	STRUCTURE	multidisciplinary consultancy of 60+ staff across three offices, plus a remote team
FIELD	Messages	FIELD	Objects and Interactive experiences
CLIENTS	local galleries, councils and small businesses, almost all within one city	CLIENTS	national brands and government departments, some of them overseas
TYPICAL WORK	posters, identities, signage and publications	TYPICAL WORK	product ranges, packaging systems, apps and services
SPECIALISTS	engaged project by project — illustrator, typographer, screen printer	SPECIALISTS	employed in house — engineers, UX researchers and a prototyping workshop
THE DESIGNER	researches, designs AND deals with the client directly	THE DESIGNER	designs inside a team led by a design director; a project manager handles the client

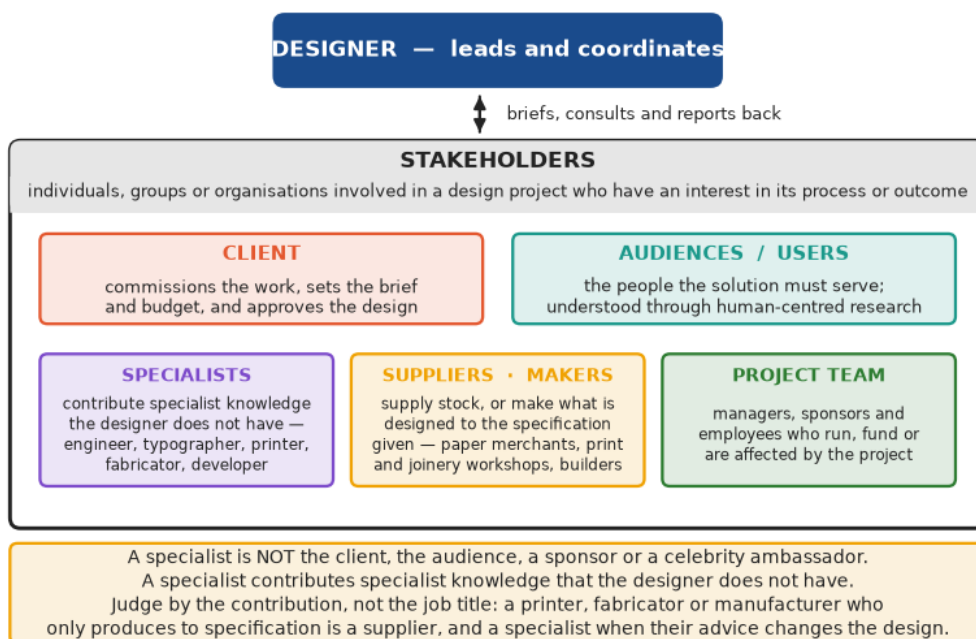
The two original practices above respond to the same profession from opposite ends of it. **NORTHLIGHT STUDIO** is a three-person independent studio working in **Messages** for local clients; because the practice is small, one designer

researches, designs *and* speaks to the client, and any specialist knowledge must be bought in project by project. **CARDINAL DESIGN** is a multidisciplinary consultancy of more than sixty staff working in **Objects** and **Interactive experiences** for national and government clients; because the practice is large, its designers work inside a team led by a design director, a project manager owns the client relationship, and engineers, UX researchers and a prototyping workshop are available in house. Both are contemporary design practices, and both resolve design problems using the VCD design process — but the *scale and structure of the context* changes how much of the process any one designer personally carries.

Watch-out — two different “contexts”. The context in which a *designer works* (a small studio, a distributed team, a government department) is not the same as the context of a *design example* (the setting and circumstances in which it is created, used or viewed). Read the question and answer about the right one. Neither of them means the **presentation format**.

Watch-out — “contemporary” has a date. A contemporary designer practises from 2000 onward, within visual communication design. Naming a mid-century designer, an artist or a photographer loses the mark before your explanation is even read.

Who is who: designers, specialists and stakeholders



Stakeholders are *individuals, groups or organisations involved in a design project who have an interest in its process or outcome*. The two you should always be able to name are the **client** (who commissions the work, sets the brief and budget, and approves the design) and the **audiences or users** (the people the solution must serve). Stakeholders may also include **specialist practitioners, suppliers, project teams and managers, sponsors, subcontractors and employees**.

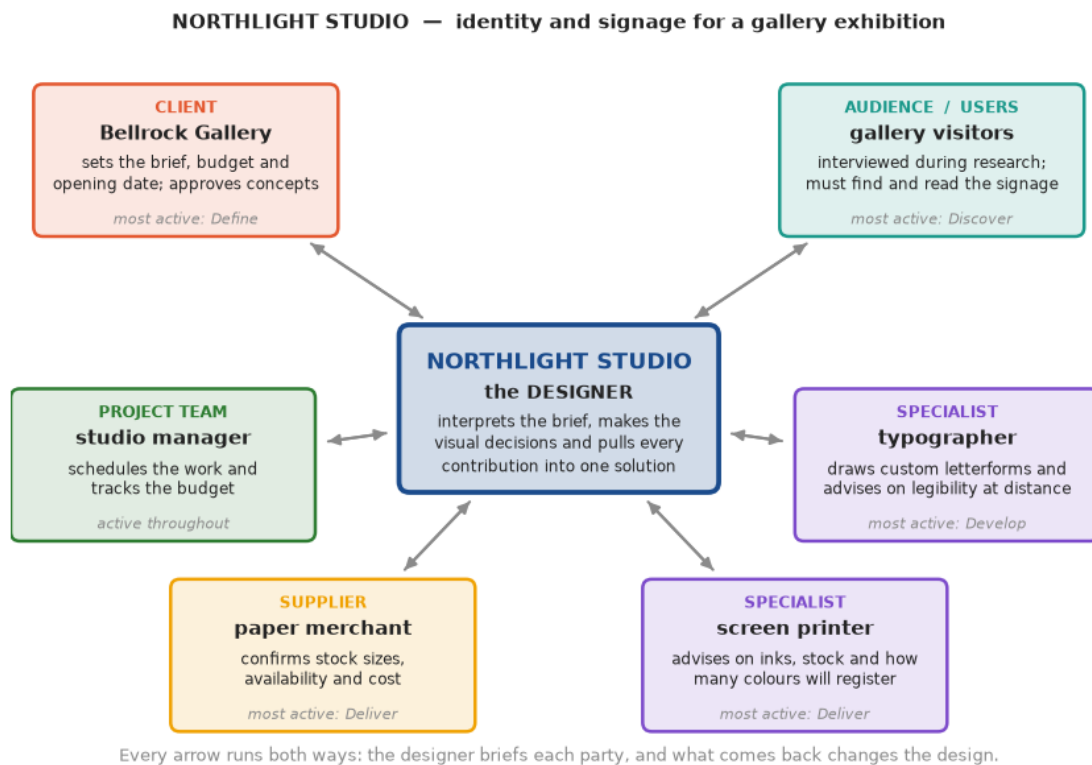
The **designer** leads the visual problem-solving. The designer interprets the brief, applies the VCD design process, makes the decisions about visual language, and — critically — **coordinates**: every other contribution has to be pulled into one resolved solution. In a larger practice this role is split across job titles: a **design director** or **creative director** sets and approves the creative direction; **senior and junior designers** develop and produce the work; a **project or account manager** owns the schedule, the budget and the client contact; a **researcher or strategist** runs the human-centred research.

A **specialist** is a stakeholder who contributes **specialist knowledge the designer does not have**. Typical specialists include a typographer, an illustrator, a photographer, a printer or prepress technician, a structural engineer, a materials scientist, a manufacturer or fabricator, a model maker, a UX researcher, a front-end developer, an accessibility consultant, a copywriter, a lighting designer, an exhibition or signage specialist and a cultural adviser. Note the nesting: a specialist is *also* a stakeholder, because they have an interest in the outcome — but not every stakeholder is a specialist. It is the **contribution**, not the job title, that settles it: a printer, fabricator or manufacturer engaged only to

produce the solution to the specification supplied is acting as a **supplier**, while the same party is a **specialist** as soon as their expert advice changes what is designed. That is why the screen printer on the project map below is labelled a specialist and the paper merchant, who confirms only stock sizes, availability and cost, is not.

Watch-out — a specialist supplies specialist knowledge. Assessors report students naming the client, the target audience or general public, a celebrity or sportsperson, another designer, or a builder whose role is construction rather than design resolution as the “specialist”. None of them qualify. Name the person’s **expertise** and say **what that expertise contributes to the design**, or the mark is not earned. The reverse error costs just as much: do not write off a printer, fabricator or manufacturer as “only a supplier” when the stimulus shows their advice changing the design.

Relationships: what flows, in both directions



The map above shows one NORTHLIGHT STUDIO project. Every relationship is **two-way**, and each one is most active at a particular phase of the VCD design process:

- **Designer and client.** The client supplies the brief, the budget and the deadline, and approves the work; the designer returns research insights, concepts, a **design pitch** and the reasoning behind each decision. Strongest at **Define** and at each approval point.
- **Designer and audiences or users.** This relationship is usually *indirect* and is built through **human-centred research methods** — interviews, surveys, focus groups, personas, observation and user testing. Insights flow in during **Discover**; the finished solution flows back out at **Deliver**.
- **Designer and specialist.** The designer briefs the specialist and supplies drawings or files; the specialist returns expert advice that **changes the design**. When the screen printer says a four-colour build will not register on that stock, the designer reduces the palette — that is the relationship doing its work. Strongest at **Develop** and **Deliver** — but read the map for the individual specialist: the typographer’s advice lands at **Develop**, the screen printer’s at **Deliver**.
- **Designer and supplier or manufacturer.** Stock sizes, lead times, tooling limits and costs constrain what can actually be made, so this contact happens *before* the solution is locked, not after. Where what comes back is more than price and availability — expert advice that changes what is designed — that party is acting as a specialist as well. Strongest at **Deliver**.

- **Designer and the wider project team.** Studio managers, project managers and sponsors keep the work on schedule and on budget; the **design critique** brings other designers in to test ideas with constructive, actionable feedback. Active throughout.

Collaboration takes several forms: **consultation** (asking a specialist for advice), **collaboration** (working alongside them on the outcome), **subcontracting** (paying them to produce part of it) and **co-design**, in which stakeholders and users become co-creators of the solution rather than just its recipients.

Watch-out — relationships are two-way, and they move. “The designer talks to the client” is not an explanation. Say **what each party gives, what comes back, and how that changed a decision** — and, where the marks allow, **when** in the VCD design process it happened.

Responsibilities

Each party carries obligations to the others.

- **The designer** is responsible for delivering a solution that meets the brief and the design criteria; for working to the agreed budget and deadline; for communicating and justifying decisions clearly; for producing documentation accurate enough to build or manufacture from; for the usability, accessibility and safety of what is made; for acknowledging sources of inspiration and respecting others’ intellectual property; and for practising in a culturally appropriate and environmentally responsible way.
- **The client** is responsible for a clear and accurate brief, for supplying information, assets and permissions, for timely feedback and approvals, and for paying for the work.
- **A specialist** is responsible for accurate advice within their expertise, for working to the specification supplied, and for flagging risks the designer cannot see.

Watch-out — legal and ethical obligations are different things. A **legal** obligation is enforceable by law: copyright exists **automatically** the moment an original work is created, while a **registered trade mark or registered design must be applied for and granted by IP Australia**. An **ethical** obligation is a professional or moral duty — acknowledging sources, designing inclusively, and following cultural protocols such as the Australian Indigenous Design Charter. Both are treated in full in Chapter 10; in this subtopic keep the two words apart when you write about responsibilities.

Watch-out — “compare” means one congruent answer, not two silos. When you compare two practice contexts or two designers, address the **same points about both** and state a **similarity and a difference**. Two separate descriptions written side by side will not earn comparison marks.

Contemporary practice contexts — real designers

NORTHLIGHT STUDIO and CARDINAL DESIGN are originals, written so the six comparison points stay visible. Two documented practices show the same points in real settings; both are contemporary, the work named here dating from 2008 onward.

Objects — Adam Goodrum, Sydney. The National Gallery of Victoria, whose media release announced Goodrum as the winner of the Rigg Design Prize 2015 for *Unfolding*, describes him on the exhibition page as a Sydney-based designer working on mass-produced products, design commissions, and limited-edition and one-off furniture. His *Stitch* chair, designed in 2008, is manufactured by Cappellini in Meda, Italy, so the production capacity sits outside the studio. In 2018 Goodrum and the French marquetry artisan Arthur Seigneur, working as A&A from an inner-city Sydney studio, produced the *Bloom* cabinet: Goodrum designed it, Seigneur laid the straw, and the marquetry alone took more than 400 hours in rye straw imported from Burgundy. The NGV purchased it in 2018. That specialist relationship is continuous rather than bought in for one job, and the cultural setting is a gallery and a collection rather than a retail shelf.

Source: National Gallery of Victoria, “Adam Goodrum’s shimmering translucent houses win Rigg Design Prize 2015”, https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/media_release/adam-goodrums-shimmering-translucent-houses-win-rigg-design-prize-2015/; NGV, “Rigg Design Prize 2015”, exhibition page, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/rigg-design-prize-2015/>; NGV collection record, *Stitch*, chair, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/122866/>; NGV, “Adam Goodrum, Arthur Seigneur *Bloom*, cabinet”, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/adam-goodrum-arthur-seigneur-bloom-cabinet/>; A&A, studio and workshop page, <https://www.adamandarthur.com/studio-workshop>. Retrieved 28 July 2026.

Messages and Interactive experiences — Pentagram. Founded in 1972, Pentagram describes itself as a multidisciplinary, independently owned studio and as the only major design studio in which the owners of the business are the people who make the work and the primary contact for every client. In 2026 its site listed 24 partners — all practising designers — working from New York, London, Austin and Berlin, and work spanning identity, packaging, exhibitions, websites and typefaces. Its published project credits show what that structure means day to day: a partner, or a pair of partners, named above the team who worked with them. In 2016 partners Michael Bierut and Luke Hayman led a four-person team on a refresh of the Mastercard brand mark and identity, reducing the mark to two overlapping circles and setting the name in the typeface FF Mark for use across digital and physical applications.

Source: Pentagram, “About”, <https://www.pentagram.com/about>; Pentagram project page, Mastercard, <https://www.pentagram.com/work/mastercard>; *It’s Nice That*, “Pentagram unveils refresh of Mastercard’s brand mark and identity”, 15 July 2016, <https://www.itsnicethat.com/news/mastercard-brand-mark-refresh-by-pentagram-150716>. Retrieved 28 July 2026.

Set against the six points, the difference is structural, not stylistic: one designer briefing an artisan and an offshore manufacturer, against a partner-led team resolving a system for a corporate client.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Using the NORTHLIGHT STUDIO project map, explain the role of one specialist and how the relationship with that specialist influenced the designer’s decisions. (4 marks)

Working	Comment
The specialist is the screen printer. The printer contributes specialist knowledge of inks, stock and registration that the designer does not have.	Name the specialist AND the specialist knowledge. This is where the “specialist = specialist knowledge” mark sits.
The designer briefs the printer with the concept artwork and the print quantity; the printer advises how many colours will register cleanly on the chosen stock.	Show the relationship running BOTH ways — the designer gives something and something comes back.
Told that a four-colour build will not register on that stock, the designer reduces the palette to two colours and rebuilds the poster so overprinting creates the third.	This is the marked move: name a concrete DECISION that changed because of the specialist’s advice.
The map tags this relationship most active: Deliver , when the solution is being resolved for production — unlike the typographer, whose advice lands earlier, at Develop .	Tying the relationship to a phase of the VCD design process lifts a description into an explanation. Read the phase off the stimulus: not every specialist is most active at the same point.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Compare the contexts in which NORTHLIGHT STUDIO and CARDINAL DESIGN work. (6 marks)

Working	Comment
Similarity. Both are contemporary practices working within visual communication design, and both resolve client design problems using the VCD design process.	Open with a genuine similarity — a comparison needs both sides, not only differences.
Size and structure. NORTHLIGHT STUDIO is an independent studio of three designers sharing one space; CARDINAL DESIGN is a multidisciplinary consultancy of 60+ staff across three offices with a remote team.	Address the SAME point about BOTH practices in one sentence. That congruence is what earns comparison marks.
Field and clients. NORTHLIGHT works in Messages for local galleries, councils and small businesses; CARDINAL works in Objects and Interactive experiences for national brands and government departments, some overseas.	Use the Study Design’s field names, and keep the two halves parallel.

Working	Comment
Access to specialists. NORTHLIGHT buys in an illustrator, typographer or printer project by project; CARDINAL employs engineers, UX researchers and a prototyping workshop in house.	A high-value point of difference — it explains the practice, not just describes it.
Effect on the designer. In the small studio one designer researches, designs and manages the client directly; in the consultancy a designer works to a design director while a project manager holds the client relationship, so the role is narrower and more specialised.	Finish by explaining what the difference in context MEANS for how a designer works.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Distinguish between a stakeholder and a specialist, using examples from the NORTHLIGHT STUDIO project. (4 marks)

A **stakeholder** is any individual, group or organisation involved in a design project who has an interest in its process or outcome. In the NORTHLIGHT STUDIO project the stakeholders include Bellrock Gallery (the client), the gallery visitors (the audience), the studio manager, the paper merchant, the typographer and the screen printer. A **specialist** is one *kind* of stakeholder, distinguished by contributing **specialist knowledge the designer does not have**: the typographer, who draws custom letterforms and advises on legibility at distance, and the screen printer, who advises on inks and registration, are specialists. The gallery and its visitors are stakeholders but not specialists — they hold an interest in the outcome, but they contribute no specialist expertise to how the design is made. Every specialist is therefore a stakeholder, but not every stakeholder is a specialist.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Explain the responsibilities a designer has to the client and to the users of a design solution, and discuss what a designer should do when the two conflict. (6 marks)

A designer's responsibilities to the **client** are contractual and professional: to deliver a solution that meets the brief and the agreed design criteria, to work within the budget and to the deadline, to keep the client informed through critique and the design pitch, and to justify the decisions made. A designer's responsibilities to **users** are broader: the solution must be usable, accessible, safe and honest, because the users are the people the design actually serves even though they do not pay for it. These duties can pull in opposite directions — a client may ask for a reduced type size to fit more copy onto a sign, or for a cheaper material that will not weather. The professional response is not simply to comply or to refuse, but to **use the evidence from the Discover phase**: the designer presents the user research and the accessibility requirement, explains the consequence for the user, and offers a resolved alternative that still satisfies the client's communication need. Where a request would make the solution unsafe, misleading or inaccessible, the designer's responsibility to users takes precedence, because meeting the brief while failing the audience does not resolve the design problem.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

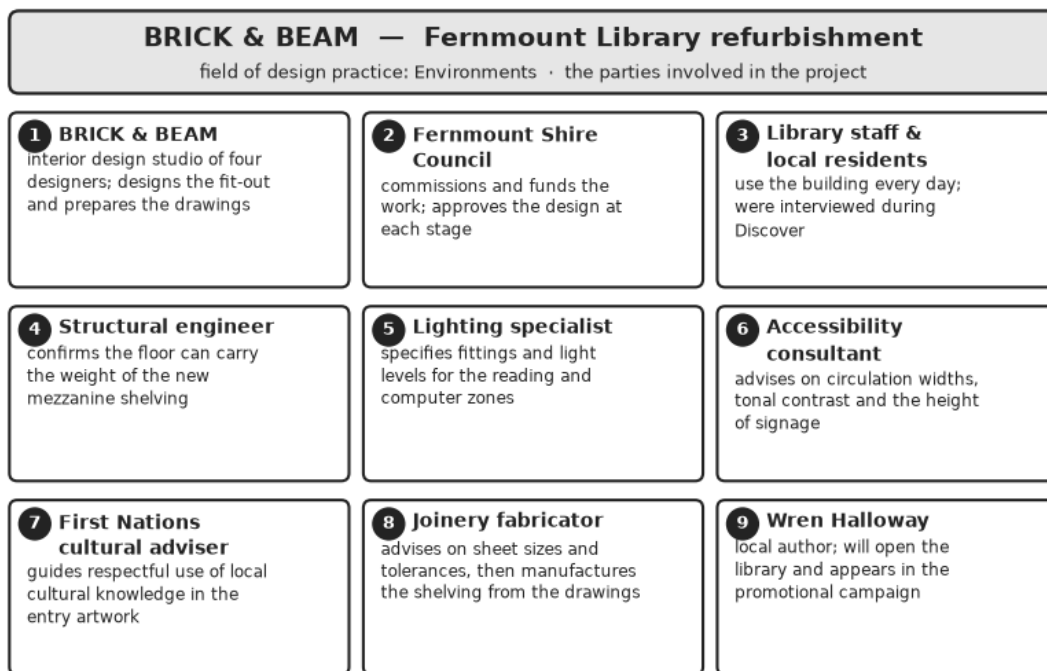
Q1. Using the two design practice profiles (NORTHLIGHT STUDIO and CARDINAL DESIGN): (a) Identify the field or fields of design practice each practice works in. (2 marks) (b) Describe where and how the people in each practice work. (2 marks) (c) Explain how a practice's client base — local community clients compared with national and government clients — could influence the work its designers produce. (3 marks)

Q2. Using the stakeholder diagram: (a) Define the term **stakeholder**. (1 mark) (b) Name two stakeholders in a design project other than the client. (2 marks) (c) Explain why the audiences or users of a design are stakeholders even though they do not commission or pay for the work. (2 marks)

Q3. Using the NORTHLIGHT STUDIO project map: (a) Identify one specialist engaged on the project. (1 mark) (b) State what the designer must supply to that specialist for them to do their work. (1 mark) (c) Explain what the specialist returns to the designer and how it improves the final solution. (2 marks)

- Q4.** The designer's relationships with the client and with the users are not the same: (a) Distinguish between these two relationships. (2 marks) (b) Describe one human-centred research method a designer could use to build the relationship with users. (2 marks)
- Q5.** Responsibilities run in more than one direction: (a) State two responsibilities a client has to the designer. (2 marks) (b) State one responsibility a specialist has to the designer. (1 mark) (c) Explain why accurate documentation drawings are a professional responsibility of the designer. (2 marks)
- Q6.** Contexts: (a) Define the term **design practice context**. (1 mark) (b) Explain the difference between the context in which a designer works and the context of a finished design example. (2 marks) (c) Describe how working in a distributed team, rather than one shared studio, could change the way a designer presents ideas to colleagues. (2 marks)

Un scaffolded



Questions 7–16 refer to the BRICK & BEAM Fernmount Library refurbishment shown above, unless otherwise stated.

- Q7.** Identify the client and the users in the BRICK & BEAM project, and explain how their interests in the project differ. (4 marks)
- Q8.** Explain the role of the structural engineer on this project and how this specialist's knowledge could influence a decision made by the designer. (4 marks)
- Q9.** Wren Halloway is listed as one of the parties involved in the project. Explain why Wren Halloway is a stakeholder but is not a specialist. (3 marks)
- Q10.** Explain at which phase of the VCD design process BRICK & BEAM would most need the library staff and residents, the structural engineer and the joinery fabricator, and why the timing of each matters. (6 marks)
- Q11.** Describe one responsibility BRICK & BEAM has to the joinery fabricator, and one responsibility the fabricator has in return. (4 marks)
- Q12.** Explain how engaging a First Nations cultural adviser reflects the responsibilities of a designer when cultural knowledge is used in a design solution. (4 marks)
- Q13.** Compare the design practice context of BRICK & BEAM with that of CARDINAL DESIGN. (6 marks)
- Q14.** Evaluate the effectiveness of BRICK & BEAM's approach to working with specialists on this project. (6 marks)

- Q15.** Explain how the role of the accessibility consultant differs from the role of the lighting specialist, and describe one decision on which the two would need to work together. *(4 marks)*
- Q16.** BRICK & BEAM is one of nine parties listed. Explain how the role of the designer differs from the role of any single specialist on the project. *(4 marks)*
- Q17.** With reference to a contemporary designer or design practice you have studied this year, explain how the context in which they work shapes their relationships with specialists and other stakeholders. *(6 marks)*
- Q18.** Using the two real practices described in the theory, compare the design practice context of **Adam Goodrum** with that of **Pentagram**, referring to a dated work by each. *(6 marks)*

Answers

Q1. (a) NORTHLIGHT = Messages; CARDINAL = Objects and Interactive experiences. (b) NORTHLIGHT: three designers sharing one inner-suburban studio; CARDINAL: 60+ staff across three offices plus a remote team. (c) See solutions. **Q2.** (a) An individual, group or organisation involved in a design project who has an interest in its process or outcome. (b) Any two of: audiences/users, specialists, suppliers, manufacturers, subcontractors, project managers, sponsors, employees. (c) See solutions. **Q3.** (a) The typographer (or the screen printer). (b) The brief, the concept artwork/files and the constraints (size, quantity, stock, deadline). (c) See solutions. **Q4.** (a) Client = direct, contractual, briefs and approves; users = indirect, built through research and testing. (b) E.g. interviews, surveys, focus groups, observation, personas, user testing. **Q5.** (a) Any two of: a clear accurate brief, information/assets/permissions, timely feedback and approvals, payment. (b) Accurate advice within their expertise / working to the specification / flagging risks. (c) See solutions. **Q6.** (a) The setting and circumstances in which a designer works — the practice's size, structure, location, field, clients, resources and cultural setting. (b) See solutions. (c) Ideas must be presented digitally and be self-explanatory (shared boards, annotated files, video critique) rather than shown in person. **Q7–Q17.** See fully-worked solutions. **Q18.** See fully-worked solutions.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) NORTHLIGHT STUDIO works in **Messages**; CARDINAL DESIGN works in **Objects** and **Interactive experiences**. (b) The three NORTHLIGHT designers work together in one shared inner-suburban studio, so the whole team is co-located; CARDINAL's staff are spread across three offices with an additional remote team, so much of its work is distributed. (c) NORTHLIGHT's clients are local galleries, councils and small businesses, so its designers produce comparatively small, one-off outcomes — a poster, an identity, a set of signage — for a local audience the designers can research directly, often on modest budgets. CARDINAL's national brand and government clients commission work at a much larger scale, so its designers produce systems rather than single items — product ranges, packaging systems, apps and services — that must hold together across many touchpoints, be accessible to a national or overseas audience, and satisfy formal approval and compliance requirements (3 marks: both client bases characterised, with a clear consequence for the work produced).

Q2. (a) A stakeholder is an individual, group or organisation involved in a design project who has an interest in its process or outcome. (b) Any two of: the audiences or users, a specialist practitioner, a supplier, a manufacturer or subcontractor, a project manager, a sponsor, an employee. (c) Audiences and users are stakeholders because the definition rests on **having an interest in the process or outcome**, not on paying for it. They are the people the solution is made for: they must be able to read, use or move through it, and its success is judged on whether it works for them. That interest is why the designer researches them during Discover and tests concepts with them, even though the client alone commissions and approves the work.

Q3. (a) The typographer. (b) The designer must supply the brief and the concept artwork or files, together with the constraints — the exhibition title, the sizes the type must work at, the viewing distance and the deadline. (c) The typographer returns custom letterforms and expert advice on legibility at distance. This improves the final solution because the signage type is drawn for the distance it will actually be read from, so visitors can locate and read the exhibition information from across the gallery — something the designer's standard typeface choice may not have achieved (2 marks: what comes back, plus the effect on the resolved solution).

Q4. (a) The relationship with the **client** is direct and contractual: the client briefs the designer, gives feedback and approves the work, and the two are in regular contact. The relationship with the **users** is usually indirect: users do not commission or approve the design, so the designer builds the relationship through research and testing rather than through meetings. (b) Any one of: interviews, a survey, a focus group, observation or ethnographic research, user personas built from that data, or usability testing of a prototype — described as a method that gathers insight into users' needs, behaviours and attitudes.

Q5. (a) Any two of: to provide a clear and accurate brief; to supply information, assets and permissions; to give timely feedback and approvals; to pay for the work. (b) To give accurate advice within their area of expertise, to work to the specification supplied, or to flag risks the designer cannot see. (c) The fabricator, printer or builder works from the documentation drawings alone. If dimensions, scale, line types or material notes are wrong, the wrong thing is manufactured — at the designer's cost and to the client's and users' detriment. Accurate documentation is therefore a professional responsibility to every party downstream of the designer (2 marks).

Q6. (a) A design practice context is the setting and circumstances in which a designer works — the size and structure of the practice, where and how the team works, the field(s) and clients it serves, the resources and technology available, and its cultural and social setting. (b) The context in which a *designer works* describes the professional setting (a three-person studio, a large consultancy, a government department). The context of a *design example* describes the setting and circumstances in which that design is created, used or viewed (a gallery wall, a supermarket fridge, a phone screen on a train). They are different questions and neither means the presentation format. (c) In a distributed team ideas cannot simply be pinned up and talked through, so the designer must present them digitally and make them self-explanatory — annotated concept boards, shared files and recorded or online critique — which places more weight on written annotation and visual clarity.

Q7. The **client** is Fernmount Shire Council, which commissions and funds the refurbishment and approves the design at each stage. The **users** are the library staff and local residents who use the building every day. Their interests differ: the Council's interest is in the project itself — that it is delivered within budget, meets its obligations to ratepayers and is completed on time — whereas the users' interest is in the experience of the finished space, that it is comfortable, accessible and easy to navigate. The Council pays for and approves the work; the users neither commission nor approve it, yet they live with the outcome, which is why the designer must research their needs directly (4 marks: both parties identified, and the difference in interest explained rather than listed).

Q8. The structural engineer is a **specialist**: they contribute specialist knowledge of loads and structural capacity that the interior designers at BRICK & BEAM do not have. Their role on this project is to confirm that the existing floor can carry the weight of the new mezzanine shelving. The relationship is two-way — BRICK & BEAM supplies the proposed layout and shelving loads, and the engineer returns a verdict and any limits. If the engineer advises that the floor cannot carry a full mezzanine, the designer must change a decision about form: reducing the shelving run, relocating the heaviest stock to the ground floor, or specifying lighter materials. The specialist's knowledge therefore directly shapes the resolved design, and also protects the safety of users (4 marks: specialist knowledge named, role stated, and a concrete design decision changed).

Q9. Wren Halloway is a **stakeholder** because, as a local author who will open the library and appear in its promotional campaign, they are involved in the project and have an interest in its outcome. Wren Halloway is **not a specialist**, however, because they contribute no specialist knowledge to the design of the fit-out. A specialist supplies expertise the designer lacks — such as the structural engineer's load calculations or the lighting specialist's lux levels — and a public profile or an ambassadorial role is not design expertise (3 marks: stakeholder justified, specialist definition applied, and the distinction made explicit).

Q10. The **library staff and local residents** are needed at **Discover**, when human-centred research methods are used to understand how the building is actually used; if they are consulted later, their insights cannot shape the brief and the design will be built on assumptions. The **structural engineer** is needed early in **Develop**, as soon as the mezzanine is proposed; engaging them late risks developing a concept that cannot legally or safely be built, wasting the development work. The **joinery fabricator** is needed at **Deliver**, when the concept is being resolved and documented; consulting them before the drawings are finalised means the shelving is designed to sheet sizes, fixings and tolerances the workshop can actually produce, whereas consulting them afterwards forces expensive redrawing. Timing matters because each party's contribution either shapes the design or arrives too late to be used (6 marks: three parties tied to the correct phases with a consequence in each case).

Q11. BRICK & BEAM is responsible for supplying the fabricator with **accurate, complete documentation** — drawings at a stated scale, with correct dimensions, line types, material specifications and finishes — in time for the fabricator to order stock and program the work, and for answering queries promptly during manufacture. The fabricator is responsible for **manufacturing to that specification**, working to the agreed tolerances and timeline, and for flagging any detail that cannot be built as drawn before it is made rather than after. Both responsibilities protect the same thing: a resolved solution that reaches the client as designed (4 marks: one clear responsibility each way, described with specifics).

Q12. Using cultural knowledge in a design carries an **ethical** responsibility. By engaging a First Nations cultural adviser, BRICK & BEAM ensures that any local Aboriginal cultural knowledge used in the entry artwork is included with the consent, involvement and guidance of the people to whom it belongs, rather than being appropriated or misrepresented. This reflects the designer's responsibility to consult, to seek permission, to attribute the knowledge and its holders correctly, and to share benefit — the approach set out in ethical frameworks such as the Australian Indigenous Design Charter. It is an obligation of respectful professional practice as well as of accuracy: the adviser is

also a specialist, contributing cultural knowledge the studio does not hold (4 marks: responsibility identified as ethical, the adviser's contribution explained, and the practice of consent/attribution named).

Q13. Both BRICK & BEAM and CARDINAL DESIGN are contemporary design practices that resolve client design problems using the VCD design process, and both must engage stakeholders and specialists to do so. They differ in scale and structure: BRICK & BEAM is a small studio of four designers, while CARDINAL DESIGN is a multidisciplinary consultancy of more than sixty staff across three offices with a remote team. They also differ in field and client: BRICK & BEAM works in **Environments** for a local government client on a single public building, whereas CARDINAL works in **Objects** and **Interactive experiences** for national brands and government departments, some of them overseas. The most significant difference is access to expertise: BRICK & BEAM must engage every specialist externally — engineer, lighting specialist, accessibility consultant, cultural adviser — and coordinate them itself, while CARDINAL employs engineers, UX researchers and a prototyping workshop in house. As a result the BRICK & BEAM designers spend far more of their time coordinating outside parties, while a CARDINAL designer works within a structured team under a design director (6 marks: congruent treatment of both practices, a similarity and several matched differences, and the consequence for the designer).

Q14. BRICK & BEAM's approach to specialists is largely effective. Its **strengths** are breadth and timing: the studio has engaged specialists across the whole range of risks in an Environments project — structural capacity, lighting, accessibility and cultural knowledge — rather than only the technical ones, and the engineer's advice on the mezzanine can still change the concept because it is sought while the design is being developed. Engaging an accessibility consultant and a First Nations cultural adviser also shows the studio meeting responsibilities to users and to the community, not just to the client. A **limitation** is that a four-person studio must coordinate seven outside parties itself, with no in-house project manager; advice may arrive at different times and conflict — the lighting specification and the accessibility requirements for tonal contrast must be reconciled by the designers themselves — and each external engagement adds cost and delay to a council-funded budget. A further limitation is that library staff and residents appear to have been consulted only at Discover; a critique or test with users at Develop would verify that the resolved design works for them. **Overall**, the range and timing of specialist engagement is appropriate to the complexity of the project, so the approach is effective, provided the studio resolves conflicting specialist advice itself rather than passing the problem to the fabricator (6 marks: strengths, limitations and an overall judgement, each tied to evidence in the project).

Q15. The **accessibility consultant** contributes specialist knowledge of inclusive design: how wide circulation routes must be for a wheelchair or pram, what tonal contrast a person with low vision needs to read signage, and at what height signage should sit. The **lighting specialist** contributes specialist knowledge of illumination: which fittings to use and what light levels the reading and computer zones require. Their roles differ in the expertise supplied and in what each protects — inclusion and legibility on one hand, visual comfort and function on the other. They must work together on the lighting of the reading zone and its signage: light level directly affects whether the tonal contrast the accessibility consultant specifies will actually be perceived, and glare on a screen or a sign can defeat an otherwise compliant design. The designer coordinates the two so that one specification does not undo the other (4 marks: both roles distinguished by their specialist knowledge, plus a genuine shared decision).

Q16. Each specialist contributes knowledge in **one** area and is responsible only for that contribution — the engineer for structural capacity, the lighting specialist for light levels, the fabricator for manufacture. BRICK & BEAM, as the **designer**, has a different kind of role: it interprets the brief and the design criteria, applies the VCD design process, makes the decisions about visual language — form, materials, colour, wayfinding and spatial arrangement — and then **coordinates and reconciles** every specialist contribution into one resolved solution. It also carries the relationship with the client and the responsibility to users, which no single specialist holds. In short, a specialist answers a question the designer asks; the designer decides which questions to ask, and is accountable for the whole outcome (4 marks: the specialist's single-domain contribution contrasted with the designer's decision-making and coordinating role).

Q17. (Model, written using the fictional practice **NORTHLIGHT STUDIO** in place of the contemporary designer you have studied this year. In the examination, use your own designer and name them.) **NORTHLIGHT STUDIO** is a contemporary practice of three designers working in **Messages** from a single inner-suburban studio for local galleries, councils and small businesses. That context shapes its relationships in three ways. First, because the studio is small it holds **no specialist knowledge in house**, so specialists such as a typographer, an illustrator and a screen printer are engaged project by project; the studio's relationships with specialists are therefore short, contractual and repeated across many projects, and the designers must be skilled at briefing outsiders quickly. Second, because there is no

project manager, the designer deals with the **client** directly — the same person researches, designs, presents the pitch and negotiates the budget — so the client relationship is close and personal, and design decisions are justified face to face rather than through an account team. Third, because the clients are local cultural and community organisations, the **audiences and users** are physically nearby, so the studio can use direct human-centred research methods such as on-site observation and interviews during Discover rather than commissioned research. A designer at a large national consultancy would experience the reverse of all three: in-house specialists on call, a project manager between the designer and the client, and users reached through a dedicated research team. The context does not change *what* the VCD design process requires; it changes **who** the designer must build each relationship with, and how directly (*6 marks: the context described in Study Design terms, and at least two relationships explained as consequences of it*).

Q18. Similarity. Both are contemporary practices — the work named here dates from 2008 onward — and neither resolves its design problems alone: Goodrum’s *Bloom* cabinet (2018) depended on Arthur Seigneur’s straw marquetry, and Pentagram’s Mastercard identity (2016) was resolved by a partner-led team.

Size and structure. Goodrum practises under his own name in Sydney, and on the A&A work he is one half of a two-person collaboration with Seigneur; Pentagram is an independently owned multidisciplinary studio whose partners own the business, make the work and hold the client relationship, each leading a project team, with partners its site listed in 2026 in New York, London, Austin and Berlin. **Where and how the work is done** follows from that: *Bloom* was designed and made in one inner-city Sydney studio, while the Mastercard identity was developed by a team inside a practice working from several offices in different countries.

Field and clients. Goodrum works in **Objects** — furniture and products — for manufacturers such as Cappellini in Meda, Italy, which manufactures the *Stitch* chair he designed in 2008, and for cultural clients, the NGV having purchased *Bloom* in 2018. Pentagram works across **Messages** and **Interactive experiences** — identity, packaging, exhibitions, websites and typefaces — for corporate clients such as Mastercard.

Resources and expertise. Both buy in what they do not hold, but they hold different things: industrial manufacture of the *Stitch* chair is carried out by Cappellini rather than by Goodrum’s studio, and the marquetry skill belongs to his collaborator, whereas Pentagram’s partners lead teams inside the practice, so a large identity system can be developed in house.

Cultural setting, and what it means for the designer. Goodrum’s collectible work is made as single pieces for a gallery and collection audience; the Mastercard mark was made for a commercial audience and had to survive standardised application by other people across digital and physical uses. So Goodrum’s relationships are few, long-running and direct — designer to artisan, designer to manufacturer — while a Pentagram designer works within a team whose partner holds the client relationship (*6 marks: a genuine similarity, congruent treatment of both practices across several of the six comparison points, each supported by a named and dated work, and a consequence for the designer*).

Chapter 7 Professional design practice — 7B Practices, processes, conventions & obligations

Theory

Unit 3 Area of Study 1 asks *what are the visual communication practices used by designers?* Where the previous subtopic dealt with the **contexts** designers work in and their **roles, relationships and responsibilities**, this subtopic deals with what designers actually **do**: the **practices and processes** they use, the **conventions** they follow, how professional practice has **changed from the past and may change in the future**, and the **ethical and legal obligations** that shape every project.

Practice and process are not the same word.

- A designer's **practice** is the habitual way they and their studio work — the research they carry out, the drawing and making they use, who they collaborate with, how they test and critique work, how they document and hand a job over, how they record sources and protect ideas.
- A **process** is the structured sequence a practice follows to move a problem toward a solution. The reference model in this study is the **VCD design process — Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver**. It is **iterative** (phases are revisited as new information arrives) and **situational** (a studio adapts it to the problem, the field, the client and the budget).

Because the examination asks you to *describe and compare* practices, an answer must name **concrete studio activities** — “walk-along interviews with rangers on site”, “a low-fidelity prototype tested with users”, “third-angle documentation drawings issued to the manufacturer”. “They design things” and “they use a design process” are not descriptions of practice.

Methods, media, materials and conventions. The Study Design lists these together as part of a designer's practices and processes. Keep the four terms exact:

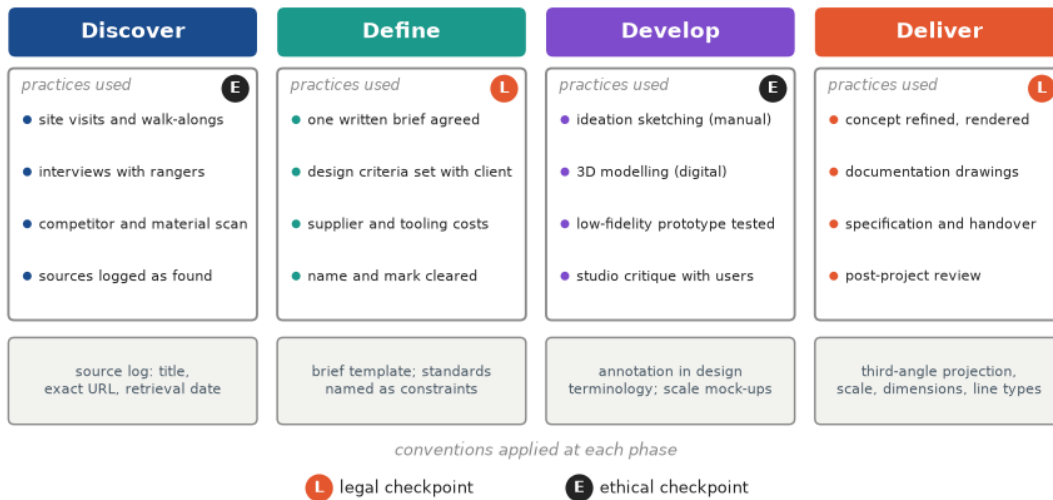
- **Methods** are the manual or digital **processes** used to evolve ideas, concepts and solutions — drawing, collage, printing, photography, model-making, prototyping.
- **Media** are the manual or digital **applications** used to communicate — pencil, ink, markers, paint, analogue film; software, apps and online platforms.
- **Materials** are the **surfaces or substrates** on or from which designs are made — paper, card, textile, metal, plastic, glass, a touchscreen or digital interface.
- **Conventions** are agreed ways of doing and presenting things that practitioners in a field follow so that work is legible, consistent, reproducible, and able to be built, printed or coded by someone else.

The conventions that matter in each field. A convention is not a matter of taste. It is a shared rule that lets a drawing or file survive the trip from the studio to the manufacturer, printer or developer.

- **Technical drawing conventions** (Objects, Environments) — third-angle orthogonal projection and its symbol, **scale, dimensioning, line types** (outline, hidden, centre, section), title blocks, and compliance with Australian Standards.
- **Typographic and layout conventions** (Messages) — a hierarchy of primary, secondary and tertiary information; grids, columns, gutters and margins; kerning, tracking and leading; legibility and readability.
- **Colour and production conventions** — **CMYK** for print and **RGB** for screen; spot colours; bleed, trim and crop marks; image resolution.
- **Interface conventions** (Interactive experiences) — sized screens and wireframes, a consistent layout grid, standard icons and navigation patterns, minimum tap-target sizes, accessible contrast.
- **Environmental drawing conventions** — plans, elevations and sections drawn to a stated scale, a north point, site plans, and standard symbols for doors, windows and fixtures.
- **Conventions for acknowledging sources** — for a website, record the **title of the website, the exact URL and the retrieval date**; for a social media post, the **username, site name, exact URL and date of post**; and record it **at the point in the folio where the sourced material is used**.

FORGE COLLECTIVE — practices, processes and conventions on one project

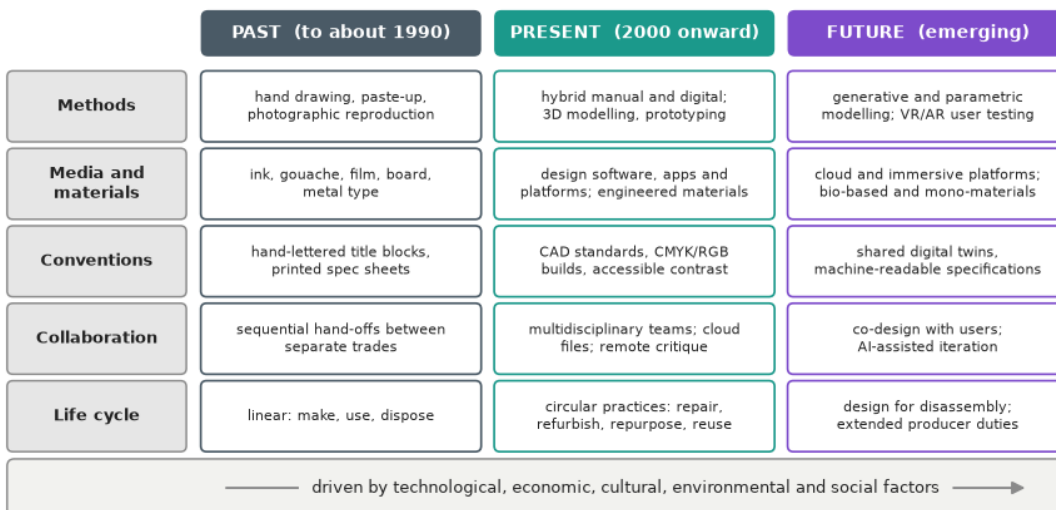
(LODESTAR — a modular solar trail beacon for a regional park network)



The diagram above follows one project through an original fictional studio, **FORGE COLLECTIVE**, a five-person multidisciplinary practice designing **LODESTAR**, a modular solar trail beacon for a regional park network. Read it as a model of contemporary practice: the studio researches on site before it draws; it writes a single brief with agreed **design criteria**; it moves between manual sketching and digital modelling; it tests a low-fidelity prototype and holds a **studio critique**; and it delivers documentation drawings and a written specification, not just a pretty rendering. The grey band records the **conventions** applied at each phase, and the small tokens mark the points where a **legal** or **ethical** obligation is checked rather than assumed.

Past, present and future practice. The Study Design requires you to *describe and compare* the differences between past, present and future professional design practices. Practice changes because the **technological, economic, cultural, environmental and social factors** around it change — so the strongest answers name the shift **and** the factor driving it.

Professional design practice — past, present and future



- Past practice** was hand-based and sequential. Artwork was drawn, cut and pasted up physically; type was set by a specialist typesetter; documentation was inked on film or vellum and copied; models were built by hand. Work passed down a chain of separate trades, each finishing before the next began, and products were designed on a linear **make, use, dispose** model.
- Present practice** (from about 2000) is **hybrid**: manual sketching and model-making sit alongside digital modelling, layout and rendering, and a designer routinely does work that was once three separate trades. Teams are **multidisciplinary** and often remote, sharing files and critique online. Research is **human-centred**,

accessibility and inclusion are designed in, and many studios adopt **sustainable and circular design practices**.

- **Future practice** is a reasoned extrapolation of what is already visible: generative, parametric and AI-assisted tools taking over routine iteration; VR and AR used to test an environment or object before it exists; shared digital models replacing issued paper drawings; bio-based, recycled and mono-material specification; on-demand and local manufacture; and design for disassembly under extended producer responsibility.

Sustainable and circular design practices. Circular practices reject the linear make-use-dispose model and instead seek ways for a design to **retain its value**: designers aim to **extend life cycles and regenerate natural systems**, prioritising outcomes that are **durable, adaptable, and can be repaired, refurbished, repurposed or reused**. In practice that means specifying mono-materials that can be recycled, using mechanical fixings instead of glue so a product can be taken apart, offering spare parts and take-back, and avoiding finishes that contaminate a recycling stream. When a question asks about *the extent to which* a designer adopts these practices, it is asking for a judgement with evidence — not a list of good intentions.

Ethical and legal obligations in practice. These are two different categories and the examination reports every year that students merge them.

- A **legal obligation** is imposed by law. Breaching it exposes the designer or the client to court action, damages, fines or an order to stop production.
- An **ethical obligation** is a professional and moral responsibility, set out in codes of practice, charters and protocols rather than in legislation. Breaching it damages trust, reputation and relationships, but is not in itself unlawful.

Obligations in practice — legal and ethical are not the same thing

LEGAL — required by law	ETHICAL — expected of the profession
AUTOMATIC on creation copyright — original drawings, illustrations, photographs, text and code, once fixed in material form. No form, no fee. Marked ©.	Acknowledging sources record every source of inspiration where it is used: title, exact URL, retrieval date; username, site name and date of post
Must be REGISTERED trademark ® — a sign that distinguishes goods patent — how an invention works design registration — how a product looks	Cultural protocols Australian Indigenous Design Charter and ICIP — consult, seek free prior informed consent, represent accurately, attribute, share benefit
Field-specific law building codes, safety and accessibility; product and electrical standards; privacy and data law; labelling and advertising law	Professional conduct honest representation; fair dealing with collaborators and suppliers; sustainable and inclusive choices beyond the legal minimum
the practice that acknowledges the obligation clearance search before naming · licence, commission and release files · an IP register of what is filed and when a source log kept in the folio · a signed consultation agreement · a materials and end-of-life statement in the specification	

Intellectual property is an umbrella term, not a single obligation. It covers several different rights, obtained in different ways:

Right	What it protects	How it is obtained
Copyright	original artistic and literary works — drawings, illustrations, photographs, layouts, text, code	automatic the moment the work is expressed in material form; no application, no fee; the © symbol is a courtesy, not a requirement
Trademark	a sign that distinguishes one trader's goods or services — a name, logo, shape, colour or sound	registered with IP Australia after examination; shown as ® once registered (™ may be used for an unregistered mark)
Patent	a new invention — how something	registered : applied for, examined,

Right	What it protects	How it is obtained
Design registration	works, its function or process the visual appearance of a product — its shape, configuration, pattern or ornamentation	paid for, and limited in time registered with IP Australia; file before the design is made public, because it must still be new and distinctive when it is examined

Australian copyright law also carries **moral rights** — the individual creator’s right to be named as the author and to have the work treated with integrity. Naming the photographer or illustrator whose work you have licensed, and not altering it in ways that damage their reputation, is therefore a **legal** duty as well as a courteous one. Draw the line carefully: crediting the **individual creator of a copyright work** is a legal obligation, while acknowledging a **source of inspiration**, a research source, or the **cultural knowledge of a community** — none of which copyright protects — is an ethical one.

Legal obligations differ by field. There is no single list; the obligations follow from what is being designed and where it will be used.

- **Messages** — copyright in commissioned photographs and illustrations; **licensing** of images and typefaces, including Creative Commons licences and their conditions; trademark registration and correct use of a client’s registered marks under a **style guide**; advertising and labelling requirements.
- **Objects** — patents for a mechanism, design registration for appearance, product and electrical safety standards, labelling and consumer guarantees.
- **Environments** — building codes, safety regulations, **accessibility** requirements, planning and heritage approvals.
- **Interactive experiences** — copyright and licensing of images, fonts and code; **privacy and data protection** law; accessibility requirements.

Ethical obligations include acknowledging sources of inspiration; culturally appropriate practice — in particular the protocols set out in the **Australian Indigenous Design Charter** and around **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)**, which call on a designer to consult the community, seek free, prior and informed consent, represent culture accurately and respectfully, attribute the creators and the communities whose knowledge is used, and share the benefit; honest representation of a product or place; fair dealing with collaborators, specialists and suppliers; and sustainable, inclusive choices made beyond the legal minimum.

The analytical move — name the practice, not just the rule. The key skill is to *identify and analyse design practices that acknowledge ethical and legal obligations*. A studio does not “obey copyright” in the abstract; it does specific, nameable things:

1. runs a **clearance search** before committing to a name or mark;
2. keeps a **licence, commission or release file** for every image, illustration, font and photograph, with the scope and term of use recorded;
3. keeps a **source log** in the folio, at the point where each source was used;
4. records **consultation** and a signed agreement when working with a community’s cultural material;
5. follows the client’s **style guide** so a registered mark is reproduced correctly;
6. writes a **materials and end-of-life statement** into the specification;
7. maintains an **IP register** of what has been filed, when, and for how long.

For a Section A answer: **name the obligation, say whether it is legal or ethical, name the practice that acknowledges it, and point to evidence in the design example.**

Watch-out — legal is not ethical. Assessors report that a large number of students answer a *legal obligations* question by discussing the Indigenous Design Charter or ICIP. These are important **ethical** frameworks; they are not legislation and cannot be offered as legal obligations. Consultation, free prior informed consent, respectful representation and acknowledging a source of inspiration are ethical practices, not laws. The one form of attribution that *is* legal is the **moral right** of a creator to be named as the author

of a copyright work — so the individual illustrator or photographer is credited under **law**, while the community and its knowledge are credited under **protocol**.

Watch-out — copyright is automatic; trademarks, patents and design registrations are not. Never write that a designer “applied for copyright” or that “trademark protection is automatic”. Copyright exists the moment the work is made; a trademark, a patent and a design registration must all be formally registered.

Watch-out — “intellectual property” is not one obligation. Naming IP and stopping there is vague. Name the specific right (copyright, trademark, patent, design registration) and match it to the specific feature of the design example it protects — the mechanism, the appearance, the mark or the artwork.

Watch-out — conventions are technical rules, not a pitch. Discussing a convention means discussing scale, dimensioning, line types, a grid, clear space, CMYK/RGB, minimum sizes or accessible contrast. Describing the design’s features, or arguing that it looks good, is not a discussion of conventions.

Watch-out — keep method, media and material distinct. The **method** is the process (drawing, printing, model-making); the **media** are the manual or digital applications used (marker, ink, layout software); the **materials** are the substrates (card, metal, a screen). Naming a software package as a “method” loses the mark, and evaluation questions ask about what is visible in the **final** solution, not the sketching that led to it.

Watch-out — a “future practice” answer must be reasoned, not fanciful. Extrapolate from a trend that already exists (AI-assisted iteration, VR testing, bio-based materials, take-back schemes) and name the **factor** driving it, using the exact terms: technological, economic, cultural, environmental, social.

Methods, media and materials in real practice

FORGE COLLECTIVE and PAPERMILL are written to model the method. The cases below are documented practice, drawn from what each studio has published about its own process.

Objects — Tom Fereday and Susan Chen, *Pelo* pendant light (2017). Fereday describes his practice as built on *honest design*: work that celebrates the materials and the manufacture behind an object rather than concealing them. Pelo’s **method** is 3D printing, the shade extruded as one continuous coil of clay by a ceramic printer Chen built during her masters research; the **media** are digital — the form and its coil path are resolved in three-dimensional modelling software, which is what drives the printer; the **materials** were trialled from earthenware through to porcelain. Many prototypes were printed before the conical form would hold without shrinking or slumping. Each shade dries for ten days before it is fired, and its ridged surface is simply the coil left visible.

Source: Tom Fereday and Susan Chen, *Pelo* — Dezeen, 20 August 2017, <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/08/20/tom-fereday-pelo-light-made-from-single-coil-extruded-ceramic-3d-printing-design/>; Tom Fereday designer profile, Archiproductions, <https://www.archiproductions.com/en/designers/tom-fereday>. Retrieved 28 July 2026.

Environments — Breathe Architecture, *Nightingale 1*, Brunswick (completed 2017). Its 2018 Good Design Australia citation records the **materials**, left exposed rather than lined: off-form concrete, recycled timber floors, blackbutt battens, formply joinery, exposed services and thermally-broken double glazing. The **method** is architectural documentation — plans, elevations and sections drawn to scale — and the **media** are digital drawing and documentation software. What those drawings specify is a strategy of **reduction**: no plasterboard ceilings, no gas, no air-conditioning, no individual car parking, no second bathrooms and no individual laundries. The building reached an average 8.2-star energy rating.

Source: Breathe Architecture, *Nightingale 1* — studio project page, <https://www.breathe.com.au/project/nightingale-1>; Good Design Australia award citation, 2018, <https://good-design.org/projects/nightingale-1/>. Retrieved 28 July 2026.

Messages — Büro North, wayfinding for Falls Creek Alpine Resort, north-eastern Victoria (documented 2016). The studio’s own account records weeks spent on site interviewing stakeholders, then a modular system of two **sand-cast aluminium** components that slide over standard street poles and lock together, so signs can be reconfigured as facilities open and close between seasons. The studio states it chose casting over fabrication for recyclability, design for disassembly and durability in freezing conditions.

Source: Büro North, Falls Creek wayfinding — studio project page, <https://buronorth.com/projects/falls-creek/>; *Landscape Australia*, 28 April 2016, <https://landscapeaustralia.com/articles/falls-creek-wayfinding-signage-by-buro-north/>. Retrieved 28 July 2026.

In each case the material and the manufacturing process were chosen together, and the **conventions** each studio works to — a published energy rating, a sign system the resort’s own staff can reassemble — follow from who must build, certify or maintain the outcome. Notice also what has *not* been tagged as a method, a medium or a material: a machine such as Chen’s ceramic printer is **equipment** serving a method; a philosophy such as *honest design*, or a strategy such as reduction, is an **approach**; and the finished light, building or sign is the **solution**. Under examination only the three Study Design terms earn the marks, so reserve them for what they actually name.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Using LODESTAR as evidence, explain the legal obligations FORGE COLLECTIVE may have needed to consider in the development of the design example. (4 marks)

Working	Comment
Obligation 1 — a patent. LODESTAR’s modular latch, which lets a ranger swap a solar head without tools, is a new mechanism, so FORGE COLLECTIVE could apply to register a patent protecting how it works.	Name a specific right and tie it to a specific FEATURE of the example. “The designer must consider IP” earns nothing.
Obligation 2 — design registration. The tapered beacon profile is the product’s visual appearance, so the studio would register the design before the beacon is shown publicly, protecting shape and configuration rather than function.	Patent and design registration are commonly confused: function versus appearance. Showing the distinction is where the marks sit.
Both must be formally registered with IP Australia; by contrast, copyright in the studio’s own drawings, renderings and specification exists automatically the moment they are made.	Bake in the automatic-versus-registered distinction. This is the single most reported error on this question type.
The beacon is also an outdoor electrical product on public land, so FORGE COLLECTIVE must meet product and electrical safety standards and the park network’s accessibility requirements for the mounting height of the tactile trail marker.	A complete answer reaches beyond IP to the field-specific law that applies to Objects placed in a public environment.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Compare how the documentation of an object such as LODESTAR would have been produced in the past with how FORGE COLLECTIVE produces it today, and predict one way this practice may change in the future. (4 marks)

Working	Comment
Similarity. In both eras the studio issues third-angle orthogonal projections carrying the same conventions — scale, dimensions, line types and a title block — because a manufacturer must be able to build the object from the drawing alone.	“Compare” requires a congruent two-sided treatment. Start with what has NOT changed, or the answer becomes a list of new gadgets.
Difference — media and method. In the past the drawing was inked by hand on film or vellum with a set square and compass, then copied and posted; today it is modelled in 3D and the views are generated from that model, then issued as a file.	Difference stated on a named axis (media and method), with both sides given.
Difference — how the drawing is verified. In the past a fault in fit was found only when a physical prototype was built and measured; today the studio checks fit,	A second axis of difference — how the work is checked, not just what tool drew it.

clearance and clash inside the 3D model before anything is made.

Future. Issued drawings may be replaced by a shared **digital twin** with machine-readable specifications that a manufacturer's equipment reads directly — a **technological** change that also cuts cost, an **economic** driver.

A future claim must be a reasoned extrapolation and should name the factor in the Study Design's exact terms.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Discuss two conventions FORGE COLLECTIVE must apply when presenting the resolved LODESTAR concept to the client and the manufacturer. (4 marks)

The first is the **technical drawing convention of scale and dimensioning**. The beacon is documented in **third-angle orthogonal projection** at a stated scale, with each dimension in millimetres written clear of its **dimension line** — a line set outside the outline whose arrowheads touch the thin **extension (projection) lines** carried out from the feature being measured — and the third-angle symbol shown in the title block. This is used because the manufacturer must be able to read the true size of the mounting plate and bolt centres from the drawing without measuring it, and because a stated scale removes any ambiguity about the size of the printed sheet.

The second is the **convention of line types**. Continuous thick lines describe visible outlines, dashed lines describe hidden detail such as the internal battery cavity, and a chain line marks the centre of the mast. This is used so that the manufacturer can distinguish what is seen from what is concealed on a single view, which keeps the documentation compact and unambiguous. Together the two conventions make the drawing a legal-quality instruction for production rather than an illustration.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

*Identify and analyse two design practices FORGE COLLECTIVE has adopted that acknowledge its **ethical** obligations. (6 marks)*

Practice 1 — presentation renderings that represent the product honestly. FORGE COLLECTIVE renders LODESTAR at its actual mounting height and true light output, and annotates the timber post shown in the concept board as an indicative finish rather than the specified material. This acknowledges the ethical obligation of **honest representation**: a rendering is a persuasive image, and a studio that brightens a solar output or shows a finish it cannot supply wins client approval on a false basis and transfers the disappointment to the park network and its visitors. By keeping the image inside what the specification can deliver, the studio makes its own pitch verifiable, which is what separates persuasion from misrepresentation.

Practice 2 — a materials and end-of-life statement written into the specification. FORGE COLLECTIVE specifies a single recyclable housing polymer, mechanical fixings instead of adhesive, and a replaceable solar head, and it records how each part is to be recovered at the end of the beacon's life. This acknowledges the studio's ethical responsibility for the **enduring environmental impact** of its work: it rejects the linear make-use-dispose model and instead extends the product's life cycle by making it repairable and its materials recoverable. Neither practice is imposed by legislation — no law requires a concept rendering to be annotated or an end-of-life statement to be written — which is precisely why both are ethical rather than legal: the studio has chosen a standard above the legal minimum, and has built the choice into a document the client can hold it to.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Using the FORGE COLLECTIVE process diagram: (a) Identify the phase in which the studio tests a low-fidelity prototype. (1 mark) (b) Name one method and one media the studio uses in the Develop phase. (2 marks) (c) Explain how working iteratively reduces risk before LODESTAR goes to manufacture. (2 marks)

Q2. Intellectual property: (a) State which form of intellectual property protection arises automatically. (1 mark) (b) Name two forms that must be registered. (2 marks) (c) Explain what the symbols © and ® each indicate about how protection was obtained. (2 marks)

- Q3. Ethical obligations:** (a) Identify one ethical obligation a designer owes to the specialists and collaborators they work with. (1 mark) (b) Describe one practice a studio uses to meet that obligation. (2 marks) (c) Explain the difference between a legal obligation and an ethical obligation. (2 marks)
- Q4. Past and present practice:** (a) Describe one difference between past and present practice in the way designers work with specialists. (2 marks) (b) Identify the factor that most drove that change and justify your choice. (2 marks)
- Q5. Conventions across the fields:** (a) Name one convention used in documentation drawings for objects. (1 mark) (b) Name one convention used when designing an interface. (1 mark) (c) Explain why conventions differ between fields of design practice. (2 marks)
- Q6. Acknowledging sources:** (a) State the details a designer must record when acknowledging an image found on a website. (2 marks) (b) Explain why acknowledging sources is described as a convention as well as an ethical obligation. (2 marks)

Unscaffolded



PAPERMILL — Harvest Letterpress Fair poster (left) and studio note (right)

Questions 7–16 refer to the PAPERMILL studio and its Harvest Letterpress Fair poster shown above, unless otherwise stated.

- Q7.** Identify the field of design practice in which PAPERMILL works, and describe two practices typical of that field that are recorded in the studio note. (3 marks)
- Q8.** Using the poster and studio note as evidence, explain the legal obligations the PAPERMILL designer needed to consider in producing the design example. (4 marks)
- Q9.** Discuss two conventions PAPERMILL has applied to the printed poster. (4 marks)
- Q10.** PAPERMILL combines a manual method with a digital method. Identify each, and explain why a contemporary studio might choose to work in this hybrid way. (4 marks)
- Q11.** Compare the way a poster such as PAPERMILL's would have been produced in the past with the way it is produced today, referring to methods, media and conventions. (6 marks)
- Q12.** Predict two ways the practices of a studio such as PAPERMILL may change in the future, naming the factor driving each change. (4 marks)
- Q13.** PAPERMILL wishes to commission an Aboriginal artist to create an illustration for a future poster. Describe two ethical practices the studio must adopt, and explain why these are ethical rather than legal obligations. (6 marks)
- Q14.** Explain how **one technological** factor and **one social** factor have influenced the practices of a studio such as PAPERMILL. (4 marks)

- Q15.** Evaluate the extent to which PAPERMILL has adopted sustainable and circular design practices. *(4 marks)*
- Q16.** Compare the practices and processes of FORGE COLLECTIVE and PAPERMILL, referring to at least one similarity and two differences. *(6 marks)*
- Q17.** Explain one legal obligation that is specific to the field of **Interactive experiences** and one that is specific to the field of **Environments**, and account for the difference between them. *(4 marks)*
- Q18.** Choose **one** of the two studios in this subtopic. Evaluate how effectively its practices and processes meet both its legal and its ethical obligations. *(6 marks)*
- Q19.** Choose **one** of the real studios described in the theory — Tom Fereday and Susan Chen (*Pelo*), Breathe Architecture (*Nightingale I*) or Büro North (Falls Creek wayfinding). Analyse how that studio's choice of **methods, media and materials** serves its design intention. *(6 marks)*

Answers

Q1. (a) Develop. (b) Method = model-making/prototyping (or drawing); media = digital 3D modelling software (or pencil/marker). (c) See solutions. **Q2.** (a) Copyright. (b) Any two of: trademark, patent, design registration. (c) © = copyright, which arose automatically on creation; ® = a trademark that has been formally registered. **Q3.** (a) E.g. fair dealing with collaborators and specialists — crediting and paying them properly. (b) E.g. a written commission agreement naming the fee, the schedule and the credit line. (c) Legal = required by law and enforceable; ethical = expected by the profession, set out in codes and charters, not legislation. **Q4.** (a) Past = sequential hand-offs to separate trades; present = multidisciplinary teams working concurrently on shared files. (b) Technological (accept economic, with justification). **Q5.** (a) Any one of: scale, dimensioning, line types, third-angle projection symbol, title block. (b) Any one of: a layout grid, sized screens/wireframes, standard icons, minimum tap-target size, accessible contrast. (c) See solutions. **Q6.** (a) The title of the website, the exact URL and the retrieval date, recorded at the point of use. (b) See solutions. **Q7–Q18.** See fully-worked solutions. **Q19.** See fully-worked solutions.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) The **Develop** phase. (b) The **method** is model-making/prototyping — a low-fidelity prototype is built and tested; the **media** are digital 3D modelling software (accept pencil or marker for the manual ideation sketching). (c) Working **iteratively** means the studio returns to earlier phases as it learns: a prototype is tested with rangers, the critique exposes a fault, and the concept is revised before any tooling is paid for. Because the cost of a change rises sharply once manufacturing begins, discovering a problem in a cheap prototype rather than in a production run protects both the client's budget and the studio's reputation (2 marks: *iteration explained as a cause-and-effect chain, tied to a consequence before manufacture*).

Q2. (a) **Copyright**. (b) Any two of: a **trademark**, a **patent**, a **design registration**. (c) The © symbol indicates **copyright**, which arose **automatically** the moment the work was expressed in material form — no application was made and no fee was paid, and the symbol is a courtesy notice rather than the source of the protection. The ® symbol indicates a **trademark that has been formally registered** with IP Australia after examination; a trader who has only claimed a mark, without registering it, may use TM but not ® (2 marks: *each symbol linked to how the protection was obtained, not merely to what it protects*).

Q3. (a) **Fair dealing with the specialists and collaborators a designer works with** — crediting their contribution and paying them on agreed terms (*accept: honest representation; acknowledging sources of inspiration; culturally appropriate practice*). (b) The studio issues a **written commission agreement** before work begins, naming the fee, the payment schedule, the scope of use and the credit line the collaborator will receive in the finished work, and then names them in that credit line. This converts an intention into a record that both parties can hold each other to (2 marks: *a named, concrete practice, not an intention*). (c) A **legal obligation** is imposed by legislation and is enforceable — breaching it can result in court action, damages, fines or an order to stop. An **ethical obligation** is a professional and moral responsibility set out in codes of practice, charters and protocols rather than in law; breaching it damages trust and reputation but is not in itself unlawful.

Q4. (a) In **past** practice a project moved down a chain of separate trades — the designer handed artwork to a typesetter, then to a platemaker, then to a printer — each finishing before the next began. In **present** practice the designer works in a **multidisciplinary team** with engineers, manufacturers and developers concurrently, commenting on one shared cloud file and holding remote critiques (2 marks: *both sides described, on the same axis*). (b) The **technological** factor. Networked file sharing, cloud collaboration and 3D modelling software made it possible for several specialists to work on the same file at the same time, which removed the need for the sequential hand-off (*accept economic, justified by the pressure to shorten project timelines and reduce cost*).

Q5. (a) Any one of: **scale, dimensioning, line types, the third-angle projection symbol, a title block**. (b) Any one of: a **layout grid, sized screens/wireframes, standard icons and navigation patterns, minimum tap-target size, accessible contrast**. (c) Conventions exist so that a design can be correctly built, printed or coded by someone other than its author, so they follow from **how the outcome is produced and used**. An object is manufactured from a drawing, so its conventions govern true size and hidden detail; an interface is coded and operated by a finger on a screen, so its conventions govern grids, touch targets and contrast. Different production and use conditions therefore demand different agreed rules (2 marks: *reason given, illustrated across two fields*).

Q6. (a) The **title of the website**, the **exact URL** and the **retrieval date**, recorded at the point in the folio where the sourced material is used. (b) It is a **convention** because the profession has an agreed format for doing it — a set of details recorded in a set place — which allows anyone reading the folio to trace the source. It is an **ethical obligation** because it is a matter of honesty and respect toward other creators: it distinguishes inspiration from appropriation and gives credit to the people whose work informed the design. The same act therefore satisfies a professional rule and a moral responsibility at once.

Q7. PAPERMILL works in the field of **Messages** — it designs and prints a promotional poster, a piece of printed collateral that communicates an event to an audience. Two practices typical of the field recorded in the studio note are, first, **commissioning an illustration from a freelance illustrator under a licence**, which is how message designers routinely obtain pictorial content they do not draw themselves; and second, **reproducing the client's own logo from the client's style guide**, which is how a studio keeps an identity consistent across every application (*3 marks: field named, two practices described and identified as typical*).

Q8. The most significant legal obligation is **copyright**. The illustration was **commissioned from a freelance illustrator** and the studio note records that the **licence covers this edition only**; copyright in the illustration arose **automatically** when the illustrator drew it, so PAPERMILL may reproduce it only within the terms of that licence and would need a new licence to reprint or to use it on other material. The illustrator's **moral rights** apply as well: they must be **named** as the creator and their drawing must not be altered in ways that damage their reputation — a legal duty, not merely a courtesy. Copyright also subsists automatically in PAPERMILL's own layout artwork, but it does not attach to the hand-set metal letterforms: in Australia copyright protects **font software** as a literary work rather than the design of a typeface, so a font licence becomes a live obligation only where a **digital** typeface is used to prepare a plate. A second obligation concerns **trademarks**. The studio's own mark is shown as **PAPERMILL™** and the note states that registration has not yet been applied for — the ™ symbol signals a claimed but **unregistered** mark, and the studio could obtain exclusive rights only by **registering** it with IP Australia. The fair's own **HLF roundel**, printed at the head of the poster, is a client mark reproduced under the **style guide**, and PAPERMILL is contractually obliged to use it at the approved size, colour and clear space. Finally, the poster carries event details, so consumer and advertising law requires that the date, venue and any claims be accurate (*4 marks: at least two specific rights, correctly distinguished as automatic or registered, each linked to evidence in the example*).

Q9. Convention 1 — a layout grid. The poster is set on a three-column grid with even margins; the title, sub-heading, motif and details all align to the same column structure. The convention is used because a shared grid gives the sheet a consistent vertical rhythm and keeps every element in a predictable relationship, which lets a passer-by scan the poster quickly and lets the studio typeset a second poster in the series without re-inventing the layout.

Convention 2 — the colophon. The block at the foot of the poster records **PAPERMILL™**, the edition number “no. 47 of 200” and the note “set in metal type”. A colophon is the printing convention for stating who produced a piece, how, and in what quantity. It is used here to attribute authorship, to establish the edition as a limited and numbered print run, and to disclose the production method to a specialist audience of print buyers (*4 marks: two conventions named, each with its purpose explained; note that neither answer describes how attractive the poster is*).

Q10. The **manual method** is **printing** by letterpress — the type is hand-set in metal and impressed into the board. The **digital method** is also printing-related but computer-based: the **printing plates are made from a digital file**, so the layout is prepared on screen before it is committed to a plate. A contemporary studio works in this **hybrid** way because each method contributes something the other cannot. The digital stage gives speed, accuracy and the ability to revise a layout at no cost, and it produces plates that reproduce fine artwork exactly; the manual letterpress stage gives the physical impression, ink texture and hand-made character that a digital press cannot imitate, and which is precisely what a specialist print audience values. Combining them lets the studio work economically and still deliver a distinctive craft outcome (*4 marks: both methods identified correctly as methods, with a reasoned explanation of the hybrid practice*).

Q11. Similarity. In both eras the poster is produced by **letterpress printing** onto board and follows the same **typographic and layout conventions** — a hierarchy of title, sub-heading and event details, a grid, and a colophon at the foot — because the poster must still be read at a distance and must still credit its maker.

Difference — method and media. In the past every stage was manual: the layout was drawn as a mechanical, type was hand-set from a case, and any illustration was cut as a woodblock or engraved plate. Today PAPERMILL

prepares the layout in **digital media** and has the **plates made from a digital file**, so only the impression stage remains manual.

Difference — who does the work. In the past a compositor, a blockmaker and a pressman were separate tradespeople; today two designers carry out the design, the platemaking specification and the printing themselves, because digital tools have absorbed the specialist stages.

Difference — conventions of production. Past studios worked to physical proofs, hand-marked corrections and printed colour swatch books; today the same studio specifies **spot inks** from a digital file and can check colour and register on screen before a plate is made.

Overall, the **outcome and its typographic conventions have changed least, while the media, the division of labour and the production conventions have changed most** — a shift driven chiefly by the **technological** factor (*6 marks: congruent two-sided comparison, similarity and differences named on consistent axes, methods/media/conventions all addressed*).

Q12. Prediction 1 — materials. PAPERMILL is likely to move further toward **bio-based and mill-recycled stocks and plant-based inks**, and to publish an end-of-life statement with each edition. The driver is the **environmental** factor: client and audience expectations around waste, and the growing cost and regulation of virgin materials, push studios to specify recoverable materials.

Prediction 2 — production. Short-run **on-demand printing** and variable digital plates are likely to let the studio print an edition only as it is ordered, rather than printing 200 and storing them. The driver is the **technological** factor, since it depends on faster and cheaper digital platemaking, with an **economic** benefit in reduced stock and waste (*4 marks: two reasoned extrapolations from existing trends, each with a factor named in the Study Design's exact terms*).

Q13. Practice 1 — consultation and free, prior and informed consent. Before any artwork is commissioned, PAPERMILL should approach the artist and, where the imagery carries community knowledge, the relevant community, explain fully how the illustration will be used, reproduced, cropped and distributed, and obtain consent **before** work begins. Consent must be specific: permission to print one poster is not permission to use the image on merchandise.

Practice 2 — culturally accurate representation and benefit sharing. The colophon should record the **Country and the community** the imagery belongs to and not merely the artist's own name, so the cultural source of the work is visible to the audience. The studio should check with the artist and the community that the way the illustration is cropped, recoloured and placed on the sheet keeps its cultural meaning intact, and should agree that the artist and their community **share in the ongoing benefit** of the work — a royalty on the edition and a say in any reprint or merchandise — rather than receiving a one-off fee.

These are **ethical** rather than legal obligations because they come from the **Australian Indigenous Design Charter** and **ICIP** protocols, which are professional frameworks and codes of practice — not legislation. The boundary needs to be drawn precisely. Copyright, and the **moral rights** that come with it, do give the individual artist enforceable **legal** rights: once the illustration is fixed in material form the artist owns copyright in it, must be **named as its author**, and can object to treatment that is prejudicial to their reputation. What the law does **not** reach is the community material behind the image — copyright protects a particular expression, not the underlying knowledge, stories or designs — and no statute requires a designer to consult, to obtain free, prior and informed consent, to credit Country, or to share the benefit with a community. Those duties are carried by ethical practice alone, which is why a designer who ignored them might breach no law while doing serious cultural harm (*6 marks: two specific practices described; the ethical/legal boundary explained accurately, with the reason copyright does not cover it*).

Q14. Technological factor. Digital platemaking and layout software have changed how PAPERMILL works: the studio can set and revise a layout on screen, output a plate from that file, and still print by letterpress. The technological factor has therefore reshaped the studio's **process** — a hybrid of digital preparation and manual impression — rather than only its tools, allowing two people to do work that once required three separate trades.

Social factor. A renewed public interest in hand-made, locally produced and small-batch work has influenced the studio's **decisions about how the poster is made and sold**: it retains hand-set metal type and the physical impression of letterpress, which a digital press could imitate more cheaply; it issues a **numbered limited edition of 200** so the poster is collectable rather than disposable; and it discloses the production method in the colophon, because that

audience values knowing how a piece was made. Note in both cases that the factor influenced **the designer's own decisions** — the process, the run length, the information disclosed — not simply “the need for a poster” (4 marks: 2 per factor, exact Study Design terms used, influence traced to specific decisions).

Q15. PAPERMILL has adopted circular practices **to a moderate extent**. The evidence in favour is substantial: the poster is printed on **100% recycled cotton board**, which keeps fibre in circulation rather than drawing on virgin pulp; **offcuts are returned to the paper mill**, closing a loop instead of sending waste to landfill; and the **limited edition of 200** avoids the over-production and pulping of unsold stock that a speculative print run creates. Each of these decisions rejects the linear make-use-dispose model.

There are limitations. The inks are **oil-based** rather than plant-based, which can complicate de-inking and recycling of the printed sheet; the studio's note says nothing about the recyclability of the finished poster itself, and a numbered collectable poster is designed to be kept rather than recovered; nor is there evidence of extending a life cycle through repair, refurbishment or reuse, which is where a truly circular practice goes beyond recycled input.

Overall, PAPERMILL's practices are genuinely sustainable at the input and waste-handling stages and its material choices are made deliberately rather than by default, but the studio has not yet designed for the recovery of the finished piece — so it adopts circular practices partially rather than fully (4 marks: strengths and limitations with evidence, plus an overall judgement).

Q16. Similarity. Both studios run the same **iterative, situational process**, and both build obligation checks into it rather than treating them as an afterthought: FORGE COLLECTIVE clears its name and mark during Define and logs sources during Discover, while PAPERMILL secures an illustration licence before printing and logs sources with title, URL and retrieval date. Both also work in a hybrid of manual and digital.

Difference 1 — the field and therefore the conventions. FORGE COLLECTIVE designs **objects**, so its practice ends in **documentation drawings** carrying third-angle projection, scale, dimensions and line types for a manufacturer. PAPERMILL designs **messages**, so its practice ends in a printed sheet carrying typographic, grid, spot-colour and colophon conventions for a print run.

Difference 2 — scale of practice and collaboration. FORGE COLLECTIVE is a five-person **multidisciplinary** studio that collaborates with an engineer and a manufacturer and holds formal studio critiques with users; PAPERMILL is a two-person studio that commissions a freelance illustrator and otherwise carries out the design, platemaking specification and printing itself.

A third difference lies in the obligations each must manage: FORGE COLLECTIVE deals with patents, design registration and product safety standards, while PAPERMILL deals mainly with copyright licensing and trademark use (6 marks: congruent comparison, one similarity and two or more differences on named axes, evidence from both examples).

Q17. In **Interactive experiences**, a legal obligation specific to the field is **privacy and data protection law**. An app or online platform collects personal information — names, locations, payment details, usage data — so its designer must obtain informed consent, collect only what is needed, store it securely and disclose how it is used.

In **Environments**, a legal obligation specific to the field is compliance with **building codes and accessibility requirements**. A public building or park must meet minimum standards for structural safety, fire egress, balustrade heights, ramp gradients and step-free access so that it can lawfully be built and occupied.

The difference arises because **legal obligations follow from the risk the outcome creates**. An interface creates risk to a user's **information**, so the law regulates data. A physical environment creates risk to a user's **body** and can exclude people from public life, so the law regulates construction and access. Both fields also share copyright obligations, but the field-specific law is determined by what can go wrong for the person using the design (4 marks: one correct obligation per field, plus a reasoned account of the difference).

Q18. (Model, using FORGE COLLECTIVE.) FORGE COLLECTIVE's practices meet its obligations **effectively**, though its ethical practices are stronger than its legal safeguards in one respect.

Its **legal** obligations are handled by practices built into the process rather than bolted on. The name and mark are **cleared** during Define, before any money is spent on branding, which reduces the risk of infringing a registered trademark. Product and electrical safety standards and the park network's accessibility requirements are named as

constraints in the brief, so they shape the concept instead of being discovered at documentation stage. Design registration is dealt with **before** LODESTAR is shown publicly, which matters because a design must still be **new and distinctive** when it is examined, so a studio that publishes first puts its own images into the material its application will be tested against. Australian law now allows a **12-month grace period** for the designer's own earlier disclosure, but that is a safety net rather than a strategy — it does not stop a competitor filing or copying in the meantime. Copyright in the studio's own drawings arises automatically and needs no action.

Its **ethical** obligations are met by two verifiable practices. Sources of inspiration are logged at the point of use with title, exact URL and retrieval date, so influence is distinguishable from authorship. A **materials and end-of-life statement** is written into the specification, committing the studio to a recyclable mono-material housing, mechanical fixings and a replaceable head — a standard above the legal minimum.

A **limitation** is that the process diagram shows only one legal checkpoint after Define; the licences for any commissioned photography or illustration used in the presentation renderings are not separately recorded, and a studio can meet every product-safety duty and still infringe a photographer's copyright in a presentation image. A second limitation is that consultation with park users is shown as critique rather than as an ongoing relationship, so the studio's claim to human-centred practice rests on a single testing round.

Overall, because the obligations are treated as **checkpoints inside the process**, with a named practice attached to each, FORGE COLLECTIVE meets both its legal and its ethical obligations effectively — but it would be more secure with an explicit licence register covering every third-party image (*6 marks: legal and ethical treated separately and accurately, specific practices as evidence, a limitation, and an overall judgement*).

Q19. (*Model, using Büro North's Falls Creek wayfinding.*) The **design intention** is to let visitors find their way around a complex alpine village in both seasons, when snow, weather and the opening and closing of facilities keep changing what is there to be found.

Methods — human-centred research, then sand casting rather than fabrication. The studio's first method is **human-centred research**: weeks on site and interviews with stakeholders. That matters analytically: the seasonal-reconfiguration requirement was **discovered** from users rather than assumed at the desk, and it then drove every later decision. The making method that answers it is **sand casting**. The studio casts each module as a single component with its locking mechanism formed into it, instead of cutting and welding signs from sheet and section. This serves the intention in two ways. Because the parts are cast from one repeated pattern, the whole resort is signed from just two components — a short and a tall — so the system stays consistent and can be extended cheaply. Because each part is a discrete casting that locks to the next, the system can be **taken apart and reassembled** by resort staff, which is the only way a fixed sign can answer a brief that changes twice a year.

Media — digital modelling and layout. The two components, the locking detail and the way they stack on a pole had to be resolved in **three-dimensional modelling software** before a casting pattern could be made, and the directional arrows, pictograms and place names carried on the sign faces were set in **digital layout software** to one specification for the whole resort. These are the media: the manual and digital applications through which the system was visually communicated, first to the foundry and then to the visitor. The signs themselves are not media — they are the **solution**, and the branching configuration that carries several directions from a single point is how that solution is arranged.

Materials — aluminium, and an existing pole. Aluminium is specified because it stays stable and durable at freezing temperatures, casts well and is recyclable, so the material choice answers the climate and the studio's circular intent at once. The modules also slide over the **standard street poles already in the village**, so an existing structure is reused rather than a new one built.

Judgement. The choices are not independent: the on-site research found the seasonal problem, casting makes disassembly possible, disassembly is what makes seasonal reconfiguration possible, and reconfiguration is the design intention. The material was chosen for the same reasons as the process, which is what distinguishes an integrated practice from a stylistic one (*6 marks: methods, media and materials each identified correctly and distinguished, each tied by cause and effect to a stated design intention, with evidence from the real example*).

Chapter 7 Professional design practice — 7C Comparative case study & practical exploration

Theory

Unit 3, Outcome 1 asks you to **compare the ways in which visual communication practices are used by contemporary designers, using research methods and practical exploration**. That single sentence carries two pieces of work:

- a **comparative case study** of designers in your selected field(s) of design practice, presented as a written report, an annotated visual report, or a digital format such as an online presentation or interactive website; and
- **two practical design exercises** documenting your emerging skills in the practices of that field.

It is also the only part of Section A that is **not** answered from the Resource Book. One question each year asks you to compare two contemporary designers **you have studied this year**, so the evidence has to come out of your own head. In 2025 that question averaged 2.8 out of 8 marks, and 30 per cent of students scored zero — almost always for reasons this subtopic can fix.

Who counts as a contemporary designer. Four tests, all of which must pass:

1. **Practising from 2000 onwards.** This is the study's definition of *contemporary*. A designer whose significant work sits before 2000 cannot earn full marks, however famous they are.
2. **Working within visual communication design** — in Messages, Objects, Environments or Interactive experiences. Painters, sculptors, photographers, illustrators working as artists and craftspeople sit outside the study.
3. **A named individual designer or a named design studio**, not a job title. “A graphic designer” or “an interior designer” is a design *type*; assessors report that comparing two types instead of two named practices prevents any real comparison being made.
4. **At least one named design example each** — a specific project, dated. That project is where every piece of evidence in your answer comes from.

A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY — two contemporary practices under the same headings

TWO RIVERS DESIGN established 2014 · Messages · regional Victoria	HALLMARK STUDIO established 2004 · Objects · Melbourne + Singapore
CONTEXT a two-person studio in a regional river town; clients are the shire council, land-care groups and a festival, all within 40 km; work is on poles and in shopfronts	CONTEXT 24 staff across a Melbourne studio and a Singapore office; clients are national manufacturers and city councils; work is installed in public streets and plazas
DESIGN EXAMPLE River Reach (2023) — an identity and poster campaign for a river-restoration program	DESIGN EXAMPLE Tessellate (2022) — a modular public seat for footpaths, plazas and interchanges
PROCESS walks the site with volunteers; pencil thumbnails and collage, vectorised last	PROCESS digital-led: CAD modelling, 3D-printed test parts, two rounds of on-street user trials
METHODS · MEDIA · MATERIALS screen printing and drawing (both manual); water-based ink and vector software; uncoated recycled 250 gsm stock	METHODS · MEDIA · MATERIALS digital modelling and 3D printing (digital), model making (manual); CAD software; recycled alloy and marine plywood
CONVENTIONS symbol grid · three-level type hierarchy · two spot colours · a minimum size	CONVENTIONS third-angle orthogonal drawings to Australian Standards · dimensioning · scale · isometric
SPECIALISTS ENGAGED screen printer — colours that will register on uncoated stock; typographer — legibility	SPECIALISTS ENGAGED structural engineer — load and fixings; materials specialist — alloy weathering
EVALUATES IDEAS BY a community design critique, then a client review and a SWOT against the criteria	EVALUATES IDEAS BY prototype testing on site with users, then a PMI scored against the design criteria
CONCEPTIONS OF GOOD DESIGN 'honest', 'as little design as possible' — the mark must work in a single colour	CONCEPTIONS OF GOOD DESIGN 'long-lasting', 'thorough down to the last detail'; entered for a Good Design Award
FACTORS economic — a small council budget caps it at two colours; cultural — river motifs	FACTORS environmental — recycled alloy, replaceable parts; technological — CAD, rapid prototyping
LEGAL · ETHICAL legal: licenses typefaces, shoots its own photos · ethical: credits volunteers	LEGAL · ETHICAL legal: registers the design, patents the fixing · ethical: free repair guide

Both are CONTEMPORARY designers: practising from 2000 onwards, within visual communication design. Each is a named studio with a named design example — not a job title such as 'a graphic designer'.

The two original practices above are the case study used through this subtopic. **TWO RIVERS DESIGN** is a two-person Messages studio in regional Victoria; **HALLMARK STUDIO** is a 24-person Objects consultancy working across Melbourne and Singapore. Notice the file is built so that both practices are read **under the same headings**. That is not a presentation choice — it is what makes a comparison possible. If you research one designer's process and the other designer's clients, you have nothing to compare.

Research methods for a case study. You need both kinds:

- **Primary** — interviewing a designer or emailing them a short set of questions; a studio visit; a designer's talk, exhibition or open studio; observing the design example in use (standing at the bus stop where the seat is installed, using the app in the field).
- **Secondary** — the studio's own website, portfolio and case-study pages; published interviews and podcasts; award citations; design magazines and industry press; museum and gallery resources; books and documentaries.

Weigh your sources. A studio's own site is a *promotional* source: it will tell you what worked and rarely what did not. Cross-check at least one claim against an independent source, and prefer sources that describe the **process** — how the problem was framed, who was consulted, what was tested — over sources that only show the finished image.

Acknowledging sources is both a Study Design requirement and an ethical obligation. Record the **title and publication date** of a book or magazine; the **title of the website, the exact URL and the date you retrieved it**; and for social media the **username, the site name, the exact URL and the date of the post**. Place the acknowledgement **at the point where the sourced material is used**, not only in a list at the end.

The points of comparison. Your comparison is not free-form. Unit 3 Outcome 1 key knowledge supplies the list, and an exam question will name one of them:

BUILDING A COMPARATIVE RESPONSE

PICK THE POINT OF COMPARISON
(the question names one — answer only that one)

- contexts in which they work
- practices and processes: methods, media, materials and conventions
- conceptions of good design
- past, present and future practice
- characteristics and role of visual language in the field
- roles of specialists and stakeholders
- techniques for evaluating ideas
- decisions made when resolving design problems
- the five factors
- ethical and legal obligations

drawn from the Unit 3 Outcome 1 key knowledge list

WHAT LOSES MARKS — two silos

Designer 1 — TWO RIVERS DESIGN works in a small regional studio, prints by hand, two colours...

Designer 2 — HALLMARK STUDIO works across two offices, models in CAD, tests prototypes...

"...and both of them are very good designers."
one linking sentence bolted on is not a comparison

WHAT EARNS MARKS — one congruent comparison

SIMILARITY
Both practices bring in a specialist whose knowledge the designer does not hold — TWO RIVERS a typographer on River Reach, HALLMARK a materials specialist on Tessellate.

DIFFERENCE
However, the typographer's knowledge is tested in the instant a poster is read, so it sets a minimum size, whereas the materials specialist's is tested over a decade of weather, so it sets the alloy and its finish.

SENTENCE FRAME
Both A and B ... ; however A ... , whereas B ...
one point of comparison · both designers · a named design example for each · a similarity AND a difference

Never write a memorised block — answer the command term asked.

Design decisions is the point students most often leave out of their preparation, and it is one VCAA has already set: the 2024 comparative question asked for the contexts in which two designers worked **and the design decisions they made**. A design decision is a specific choice made while resolving the problem — to cap the palette at two spot colours, to cantilever the seat, to build an offline mode — never a general description of style. Name the decision, then name what drove it: a client's budget, a specialist's advice, a material, a manufacturing limit, an audience need.

Context deserves particular care, because it is the point most often misread. Context is the setting and circumstances in which a design is **created, used or viewed** — and it also covers **where and how the designer works**: a local or international practice, studio-based or client-based, a two-person studio or a 24-person consultancy across two countries. It is never the presentation format.

How a comparison is actually built. A *compare* question wants one **congruent** treatment, not two profiles side by side. Work in four moves:

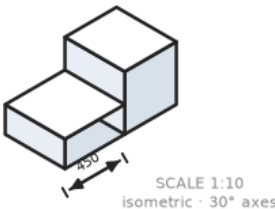
1. **Name both designers and a specific design example for each.** Two lines of set-up.
2. **Take the one point of comparison the question names** and apply it to both.
3. **State at least one similarity and at least one difference**, each with evidence from the named design example — this is where the marks are.
4. **Use comparative language** — *both, similarly, likewise, however, whereas, by contrast, while* — so the two halves are welded together rather than stacked.

The most-reported fault is exactly the opposite: a paragraph on Designer 1, a paragraph on Designer 2, and one linking sentence such as "and both of them are very good designers". Two descriptions plus a link is not a comparison.

Practical exploration. The second half of the outcome is practical: you present a **minimum of two practical design exercises** showing emerging skills in the visual communication practices used in your selected field(s). A practical

design exercise is a short, focused experiment in a **method, medium, material or convention** typical of the field — not a full design solution to a brief.

PRACTICAL EXPLORATION — two design exercises documenting emerging skills

EXERCISE 1 • Messages after TWO RIVERS DESIGN	EXERCISE 2 • Objects after HALLMARK STUDIO
 PICTURE NIGHT a two-colour symbol study	 SCALE 1:10 isometric · 30° axes
METHODS screen printing, preceded by drawing (both manual methods)	METHODS digital modelling (digital); drawing and model making (both manual)
MEDIA water-based ink; vector software for the final artwork	MEDIA CAD software; fineliner for the presentation drawing
MATERIALS uncoated recycled 250 gsm stock	MATERIALS 300 gsm card for the model
CONVENTIONS symbol grid · two spot colours · minimum reproduction size	CONVENTIONS isometric 30° axes · scale 1:10 · dimensioning
DEMONSTRATES the two-colour production limit TWO RIVERS DESIGN works within	DEMONSTRATES how HALLMARK STUDIO documents a modular part for a manufacturer
presentation format: a mock-up on a concept board	presentation format: presentation drawing + model

The key skills tell you what each exercise must do: **apply the practices and processes** used by the designers you researched; **use visual language** to communicate to a specific audience, purpose and context; **incorporate the relevant conventions** in documentation or presentation drawings; **use a presentation format characteristic of the field**; **adopt conceptions of good design** aligned with the field; and **apply the legal and ethical obligations** that field carries. Document each exercise with annotation that names the methods, the media, the materials and the conventions, and states which researched practice it came from — the exercise is evidence of the case study, not a decoration beside it.

Keep the three terms straight while you annotate. The **method** is the manual or digital process used to evolve the design — drawing, collage, printing, photography, model making and prototyping, so screen printing, digital modelling and 3D printing all qualify; the **media** are the manual or digital applications used (ink, fineliner, CAD software, interface design software); the **materials** are the surfaces or substrates (recycled stock, card, alloy, the device screen). Naming a software package as a “method” loses the mark, and so does naming an evaluation **technique** as one — usability testing, a design critique, a SWOT or a PMI are techniques used to *evaluate* design ideas, not methods used to *make* them. Say of every method whether it is **manual** or **digital**: assessors report that students who could name a method often could not tell those two apart.

Watch-out — contemporary means 2000 onwards, and it means a designer. Check the dates before you commit to a designer, and check they work in visual communication design. Assessors record lost marks for students who chose designers practising before 2000, and for “designers” who were actually artists, photographers or craftspeople.

Watch-out — compare, do not silo. Discussing each designer separately and adding a linking sentence is the single most common reason this question scores 2 or 3 out of 8. Every paragraph should mention both designers, or make an explicit similarity or difference statement.

Watch-out — a specialist contributes specialist knowledge. An engineer, a typographer, a printer, a manufacturer, a materials or exhibition specialist, an accessibility consultant. A specialist is **not** the client, the audience or users, a sponsor, a celebrity, or a tradesperson whose role is construction rather than resolving the design. Another designer doing the same job is not a specialist either.

Watch-out — context is not the presentation format. “It was presented as a mock-up” describes the presentation format. Context is where and when the work is created, located or viewed, and where and how the designer works — local or international, studio-based or client-based.

Watch-out — legal is not ethical. Copyright is **automatic** on creation; **trademarks, patents and design registrations must be applied for and registered.** Acknowledging sources, sustainable and circular practice, plain-language privacy notices, and the Australian Indigenous Design Charter and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protocols are **ethical** frameworks, not legal obligations.

Watch-out — do not write a memorised block. Assessors report students reciting a prepared profile of two designers regardless of what was asked. Read the command term and the point of comparison in the question, and answer only that. A brilliant answer to a question that was not asked earns nothing.

A real comparative case study

The two practices above are originals, written so the method stays visible. Here is the same four-move structure applied to two documented practices, on the point VCAA sets most often — **context**.

Set-up. Round is a design studio founded in Melbourne in 2002 by Michaela Webb and Robert Nudds, working in **Messages**; from 2017 to 2022 it designed the brand identity and campaign creative for **Melbourne Fashion Week**, for the City of Melbourne. **Ross Gardam** is a Melbourne designer working in **Objects**; the **Ora pendant**, designed by Ross Gardam, was a Gold winner in Product — Furniture and Lighting at the 2016 Good Design Awards.

Similarity. Both practices are city-based, commissioned rather than self-directed, and both resolve the work with specialists instead of alone: Round credits photographers, stylists, a videographer and an animator across the six Melbourne Fashion Week campaigns, **while** Good Design Australia records the *Ora* as made by a group of manufacturers in and around Melbourne.

Difference. However, each designs into a different context, and each context produced a different decision. Round works to a **recurring event with a fixed annual date**, so the outcome is temporary and renewed each year; the studio’s own record of the 2020 campaign describes a digital-only response assembled from imagery reused from earlier years. **By contrast,** Gardam designs for **manufacture and long ownership**, so the *Ora*’s decisions cannot be revised after release — the disk is opaque so the LED is concealed and direct glare is blocked from any viewpoint, and the fitting takes a warm-white LED rated at 25,000 hours.

Weigh the sources. Round’s project page is promotional, so the 2002 founding and the 2017 start are cross-checked against the NGV’s profile of the studio, and the *Ora* against an award citation rather than a retailer.

Source: Good Design Australia, “Ora Pendant”, <https://good-design.org/projects/ora-pendant/>, retrieved 28 July 2026; Round, “Melbourne Fashion Week”, [round.com.au](https://www.round.com.au/home/melbourne-fashion-week-copy), <https://www.round.com.au/home/melbourne-fashion-week-copy>, retrieved 28 July 2026; National Gallery of Victoria, “Round”, Melbourne Now, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/melbourne-now/artists/round/>, retrieved 28 July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Compare the contexts in which TWO RIVERS DESIGN and HALLMARK STUDIO work. (4 marks)

Working	Comment
TWO RIVERS DESIGN is a two-person studio in a regional river town, working on <i>River Reach</i> (2023); HALLMARK STUDIO has 24 staff across Melbourne and Singapore, working on the <i>Tessellate</i> seat (2022).	Set up both designers AND a named design example each before comparing. Two lines is enough.
Both practices work to commissioning clients in the public realm — a shire council and land-care groups for TWO RIVERS, city councils and manufacturers for HALLMARK — so both design for outdoor settings the public passes through.	Start with a genuine similarity, and make it a point about context , not about style.
However, TWO RIVERS works entirely within a 40 km	The difference is the mark-earning half. Use a

Working	Comment
radius, so the designers can walk the site and know the audience personally, whereas HALLMARK works nationally and across two countries and must design for streets its designers will never visit.	comparative connective, and give the <i>consequence</i> of the difference, not just the fact.
That difference in the context of the practice shows in the work: TWO RIVERS can use motifs drawn from the local river, while HALLMARK must design a seat neutral enough to suit any Australian plaza.	Close by tying context to an actual design decision — this is what “context” questions are really testing.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Using a specific design example from each, compare how TWO RIVERS DESIGN and HALLMARK STUDIO have engaged a specialist when resolving design problems. (4 marks)

Working	Comment
Designer 1: TWO RIVERS DESIGN · Design example: <i>River Reach</i> · Specialist: typographer. Designer 2: HALLMARK STUDIO · Design example: <i>Tessellate</i> · Specialist: materials specialist.	The exam gives you these four label lines. Fill them first — an answer with no named specialist cannot score.
Both are genuine specialists : each contributes specialist knowledge the designer does not hold — which letterforms still separate at a small size in a hand-pulled two-colour print; how a recycled alloy’s finish behaves on an exposed street.	Say <i>what knowledge</i> the specialist brought. This is the sentence that separates a specialist from a client or a supplier.
Both designers engaged their specialist so that the design would survive the conditions it meets outside the studio, and in both cases the advice settled a specific decision rather than merely approving the work.	The similarity, stated at the level of the <i>contribution</i> , not the job title.
However , the typographer’s knowledge has to hold in the instant a poster is read, so it fixes the three-level type hierarchy and a stated minimum reproduction size. By contrast , the materials specialist’s knowledge has to hold over a decade of weather, so it fixes the alloy and its finish.	The difference: how long each specialist’s knowledge has to hold good — a moment of reading against the life of the object. Comparing what the knowledge <i>has to survive</i> , not “they do different jobs”, is what full marks look like.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Compare the practices and processes, including the methods, media and materials, used by TWO RIVERS DESIGN and HALLMARK STUDIO. (6 marks)

TWO RIVERS DESIGN designed *River Reach* (2023), an identity and poster campaign, and HALLMARK STUDIO designed *Tessellate* (2022), a modular public seat. **Both** practices work iteratively and both test an idea in physical form before committing to it — TWO RIVERS through cut-paper collage and a printed proof, HALLMARK through 3D-printed test parts and an on-street trial — so in both studios the resolved solution is arrived at by making, not only by drawing. **However**, the balance of manual and digital methods is reversed. TWO RIVERS is manual-led: the **methods** are drawing and screen printing, the **media** are water-based ink with vector software used only at the end, and the **material** is uncoated recycled stock, so the final posters carry visible ink texture and are limited to two spot colours. HALLMARK is digital-led: the **methods** are digital modelling and 3D printing, with **manual model making** used to check the form at full size; the **media** are CAD and rendering software; and the **materials** are recycled alloy and marine plywood, so the resolved seat is precise, repeatable and manufacturable in quantity. Their **conventions** differ accordingly — TWO RIVERS works to a symbol grid, a three-level type hierarchy and a minimum reproduction size, **whereas** HALLMARK documents in third-angle orthogonal drawings to Australian Standards, dimensioned and to scale. The similarity is a shared commitment to testing; the difference is that TWO RIVERS’ process is shaped by what a hand-pulled print can hold, and HALLMARK’s by what a manufacturer can repeat.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Describe two practical design exercises that would document emerging skills in the practices of TWO RIVERS DESIGN and HALLMARK STUDIO, identifying the methods, media, materials and conventions each would apply. (6 marks)

Exercise 1 (Messages, after TWO RIVERS DESIGN) is a two-colour symbol and type lock-up for a fictional volunteer-run country film night, *PICTURE NIGHT*. The **methods** are drawing and screen printing, both manual; the **media** are water-based ink, with vector software used to prepare the artwork; the **material** is uncoated recycled 250 gsm stock. The **conventions** applied are a symbol grid, a limit of two spot colours and a stated minimum reproduction size, and it is presented as a mock-up on a concept board. It documents an emerging skill because it forces me to work inside the same two-colour production limit TWO RIVERS accepts, and to test whether a mark still reads when reduced.

Exercise 2 (Objects, after HALLMARK STUDIO) is an isometric presentation drawing of one modular seat unit, supported by a 300 gsm card model standing in for recycled alloy. The **methods** are digital modelling of the unit, then manual drawing of the presentation view and manual model making; the **media** are CAD software and a fineliner for the presentation drawing; the **material** is card. The **conventions** applied are isometric 30 degree axes, a stated scale of 1:10 and dimensioning in millimetres, and it is presented as a presentation drawing with the model. It documents an emerging skill because it reproduces the way HALLMARK communicates a repeatable part to a manufacturer, where a drawing that cannot be measured cannot be made. Together the two exercises cover a manual and a digital practice, a two-dimensional and a three-dimensional outcome, and two different presentation formats.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Selecting designers for a comparative case study: (a) State what makes a designer **contemporary** in this study. (1 mark) (b) Give one reason a landscape painter would not be a suitable choice. (1 mark) (c) Explain why writing about “a graphic designer” and “an architect” rather than two named practices would limit a comparative response. (2 marks)

Q2. Building the research file: (a) Identify one **primary** and one **secondary** research method you could use to gather information about TWO RIVERS DESIGN. (2 marks) (b) Describe what you must record when acknowledging information taken from a studio’s website. (2 marks) (c) Explain one limitation of relying only on a studio’s own website. (2 marks)

Q3. Structuring a comparison: (a) Identify three points of comparison drawn from the Unit 3 Outcome 1 key knowledge. (3 marks) (b) Explain why a response that describes each designer separately and then adds a linking sentence does not satisfy the command term **compare**. (2 marks)

Q4. Specialists: (a) Define a **specialist**. (1 mark) (b) Name the two specialists engaged by HALLMARK STUDIO and state the specialist knowledge each contributed. (2 marks) (c) Explain why the shire council that commissioned *River Reach* is **not** a specialist. (2 marks)

Q5. Using the practical exploration record: (a) Identify the methods, the media and the material used in Exercise 1. (3 marks) (b) Describe one convention of the field applied in Exercise 2. (1 mark) (c) Explain how Exercise 2 documents an emerging skill drawn from the case study of HALLMARK STUDIO. (2 marks)

Q6. Context: (a) Define **context** as it is used in this study. (1 mark) (b) State two things that count as context for a designer, other than where the finished work is viewed. (2 marks) (c) Explain why “the seat was presented to the council as a rendered concept board” is not a statement about context. (2 marks)

SEDGE & CO — research file
established 2016 · field: Interactive experiences · a remote-first studio



Rivergrass — the plant log screen
an original stylised interface for a fictional studio

THE PARTIES

- the not-for-profit — client
- wetland volunteers — users
- accessibility consultant
- ecologist
- a software developer who builds and releases the app

CONTEXT
a remote-first studio of six; the designers work from three states and meet online, with no shared office; clients are national not-for-profits; the work is used on phones outdoors, in wetlands where reception drops out

DESIGN EXAMPLE
Rivergrass (2021, rebuilt 2024) — a mobile app that helps volunteers identify and log wetland plants on a working bee

PROCESS
interviews and user personas, then wireframes, a low-fidelity prototype and three rounds of usability testing with volunteers

METHODS · MEDIA · MATERIALS
digital drawing and prototyping — both digital methods; interface design software; the material is the device screen itself

CONVENTIONS
screens sized to the device · an 8-pt spacing grid · RGB colour · a consistent icon set · minimum contrast and tap-target sizes

SPECIALISTS ENGAGED
an accessibility consultant — contrast ratios, tap-target size and screen-reader labels; an ecologist — verifies plant content

EVALUATES IDEAS BY
usability testing with five volunteers per round, a team design critique, then a PMI scored against the brief's design criteria

CONCEPTIONS OF GOOD DESIGN
'makes a product understandable' and 'is unobtrusive' — a volunteer standing in mud should not need instructions

FACTORS
social — volunteers range from 12 to 80 and vary widely in confidence; technological — older phones and patchy rural reception forced an offline mode

LEGAL · ETHICAL
legal: complies with privacy law when storing location data, licenses its icon set · ethical: plain-language privacy notice; seeks permission before mapping culturally sensitive sites

The accessibility consultant and the ecologist are **SPECIALISTS** — they contribute specialist knowledge.
The volunteers are users and the not-for-profit is the client: neither of them is a specialist.

Questions 7–19 refer to the SEDGE & CO research file above, together with the TWO RIVERS DESIGN and HALLMARK STUDIO case study, unless otherwise stated.

- Q7.** Compare the techniques SEDGE & CO and TWO RIVERS DESIGN use to evaluate design ideas. (4 marks)
- Q8.** Using a specific design example from each, compare how SEDGE & CO and HALLMARK STUDIO have engaged specialists when resolving design problems. (6 marks)
- Q9.** Compare the contexts in which SEDGE & CO and HALLMARK STUDIO work, and the design decisions those contexts led each studio to make. (4 marks)
- Q10.** Compare the methods, media and materials evident in the final design solutions of SEDGE & CO and TWO RIVERS DESIGN. (6 marks)
- Q11.** Compare the ways **technological** factors have influenced the design practices of SEDGE & CO and TWO RIVERS DESIGN. (4 marks)
- Q12.** Analyse and compare the distinguishing characteristics and the role of visual language in the fields in which SEDGE & CO and HALLMARK STUDIO work. (6 marks)
- Q13.** Compare how SEDGE & CO and TWO RIVERS DESIGN acknowledge their **legal** and **ethical** obligations, keeping the two clearly distinct. (6 marks)
- Q14.** Compare the conceptions of good design evident in the practices of TWO RIVERS DESIGN and HALLMARK STUDIO. (4 marks)

Q15. You are presenting your comparative case study of SEDGE & CO and TWO RIVERS DESIGN as an **annotated visual report**. Describe what that report must contain to satisfy Unit 3 Outcome 1, and explain one research method that would give you evidence a studio's website could not. (4 marks)

Q16. Compare the extent to which HALLMARK STUDIO and SEDGE & CO adopt **sustainable and circular design practices**. (4 marks)

Q17. Describe one way professional design practice in SEDGE & CO's field differed in the past, and predict one way it may change in the future. (4 marks)

Q18. Propose a practical design exercise that would document emerging skills in SEDGE & CO's field. Identify the methods, the media, the materials and the conventions you would apply, and name the presentation format you would use. (6 marks)

Q19. Choose **two** of the three practices in this subtopic. Using a specific design example from each, compare the ways in which visual communication practices are used by the two contemporary designers. (8 marks)

Q20. (Do not use SEDGE & CO, TWO RIVERS DESIGN or HALLMARK STUDIO for this question.) Using **two real contemporary designers or design studios you have studied this year**, each working in a different field of design practice, compare the **contexts** in which the two practices work. Name a dated design example for each, and state one design decision that each designer's context produced. (6 marks)

Answers

Q1. (a) Practising from 2000 onwards. (b) A painter works outside visual communication design. (c) See solutions.

Q2. (a) Primary = interview/studio visit/designer talk; secondary = published interview, award citation, industry press. (b) Website title, exact URL, retrieval date. (c) See solutions.

Q3. (a) Any three: contexts; practices and processes (methods, media, materials, conventions); conceptions of good design; past/present/future practice; characteristics and role of visual language; roles of specialists and stakeholders; techniques for evaluating ideas; decisions made when resolving design problems; the five factors; ethical and legal obligations. (b) See solutions.

Q4. (a) Someone who contributes specialist knowledge the designer does not have. (b) Structural engineer — load and fixing calculations; materials specialist — alloy finish and weathering. (c) It is the client.

Q5. (a) Methods = drawing and screen printing (both manual); media = water-based ink and vector software; material = uncoated recycled 250 gsm stock. (b) Isometric 30 degree axes (or scale 1:10, or dimensioning). (c) See solutions.

Q6. (a) The setting and circumstances in which a design is created, used or viewed, and where/how the designer works. (b) Where the designer is based; whether the practice is local or international, studio-based or client-based; when the work was made. (c) That is the presentation format.

Q7. Both critique and test against criteria; SEDGE & CO tests with users before building, TWO RIVERS with the community and the client. See solutions.

Q8. Both use specialists to make the design work in the real world; SEDGE & CO's shape the interface and its content, HALLMARK's the structure and material. See solutions.

Q9. Both work beyond one site; SEDGE & CO has no shared office and designs for a phone in the field, HALLMARK has two studios and designs for fixed public places. Decisions that follow: an offline mode; recycled alloy with replaceable parts. See solutions.

Q10. Both prepare the final artwork in digital media and both work to a grid; the methods diverge — SEDGE & CO digital drawing and prototyping, with the device screen as its material, TWO RIVERS manual screen printing on uncoated recycled stock. See solutions.

Q11. Both are shaped by the limits of a production technology — reception and older phones for SEDGE & CO, the printing press for TWO RIVERS. See solutions.

Q12. Interactive experiences = navigation, interface and interaction over time; Objects = form, materiality and three-dimensional presence. See solutions.

Q13. Legal: privacy law and licensing (SEdge & CO), typeface licensing and copyright (TWO RIVERS). Ethical: privacy notice and cultural permission; acknowledging community knowledge. See solutions.

Q14. Both align with Rams; TWO RIVERS with honesty and restraint, HALLMARK with durability and detail. See solutions.

Q15. Both practices under the same headings; a dated design example each, acknowledged at the point of use; comparative annotation; plus the two practical exercises. Research method = a primary interview. See solutions.

Q16. Both extend life cycles; HALLMARK materially (recycled alloy, replaceable parts, repair guide), SEDGE & CO indirectly (low data use, rebuilt not replaced, an environmental purpose). See solutions.

Q17–Q19. See fully-worked solutions.

Q20. Two real practices in different fields, a dated design example each; the context of the practice and the context of use compared, and one design decision produced by each context. See fully-worked solutions.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) A contemporary designer is one **practising from 2000 onwards**. (b) A landscape painter works in fine art, not in visual communication design — the study is limited to designers of messages, objects, environments and interactive experiences. (c) “A graphic designer” and “an architect” are **design types**, not named practices. Because a type has no specific projects, clients, specialists or dates attached to it, there is no evidence to compare — the response can only describe how such designers “typically” work, which assessors record as failing the question’s requirements. Naming a studio, and a dated design example for it, gives you the evidence every comparative statement has to rest on (2 marks: *the problem identified + the consequence for the comparison*).

Q2. (a) **Primary:** interviewing the designers, visiting the studio, attending a talk, or observing the *River Reach* posters in place on the town’s street poles. **Secondary:** a published interview, an award citation, a design magazine article, or the studio’s own case-study page. (b) The **title of the website**, the **exact URL** and the **date you retrieved it**, placed at the point in your report where the material is used. (c) A studio’s own website is a promotional source. It presents the work as a success, usually omits the ideas that failed, the constraints imposed by the client and the contribution of specialists, and gives you the finished image rather than the process. Relying on it alone produces a case study that cannot describe how design problems were actually resolved, so the comparison has nothing to work with (2 marks: *bias named + effect on the case study*).

Q3. (a) Any three of: the **contexts** in which they work; their **practices and processes**, including methods, media, materials and conventions; their **conceptions of good design**; **differences between past, present and future practice**; the **distinguishing characteristics and role of visual language** in the field; the **roles, relationships and**

responsibilities of designers, specialists and stakeholders; the **techniques used to evaluate design ideas**; the **decisions made during the resolution of design problems**; the **technological, economic, cultural, environmental and social factors**; and **ethical and legal obligations**. (b) **Compare** requires a congruent, two-sided treatment: the same point applied to both designers, with explicit similarities **and** differences. Two separate descriptions leave the reader to do the comparing, and a single linking sentence such as “both are very good designers” adds no analysis. Assessors report this as the most common reason the comparative question scores poorly (2 marks).

Q4. (a) A **specialist** is a practitioner who contributes **specialist knowledge or expertise the designer does not have**, in order to help resolve part of a design problem. (b) The **structural engineer** contributed load and fixing calculations, confirming what the cantilevered seat could carry; the **materials specialist** contributed knowledge of the recycled alloy’s finish and how it would weather outdoors. (c) The shire council is the **client**: it commissions the work, sets the brief and budget and approves the design. Approving, funding or briefing a design is not contributing specialist knowledge, so a client — like an audience, a sponsor or a celebrity — is a **stakeholder** but never a specialist (2 marks: the council’s actual role + why that role is not specialist knowledge).

Q5. (a) **Methods**: screen printing, preceded by drawing — both manual methods. **Media**: water-based ink, with vector software used to prepare the artwork. **Material**: uncoated recycled 250 gsm stock. (b) Isometric **30 degree axes** (accept: a stated scale of 1:10, or dimensioning in millimetres). (c) HALLMARK STUDIO documents its modular parts in dimensioned drawings so that a manufacturer can repeat them exactly. By producing an isometric presentation drawing at 1:10 with dimensions, the exercise practises the same convention on a small scale, so it is evidence that I can apply the studio’s documentation practice, not just describe it (2 marks: the researched practice named + the link to what the exercise demonstrates).

Q6. (a) **Context** is the setting and circumstances in which a design is **created, used or viewed**, and it also covers **where and how the designer works**. (b) Any two of: where the designer is based; whether the practice is local, national or international; whether it is studio-based or client-based; the size and structure of the practice; the time or period in which the work was made. (c) A rendered concept board is a **presentation format** — the form in which the solution was shown to the client. Context would be the plaza the seat is installed in, the weather and use it must survive, or the fact that HALLMARK designs it from Melbourne for streets across the country (2 marks: the distinction stated + a correct context example supplied).

Q7. SEDGE & CO evaluates the *Rivergrass* app and TWO RIVERS DESIGN evaluates *River Reach*. **Both** practices evaluate in two stages — an informal critique first, then a structured convergent-thinking strategy scored against the design criteria in the brief (a PMI for SEDGE & CO, a SWOT for TWO RIVERS) — so in both studios judgement is tied back to written criteria rather than to taste. **However**, the evidence each gathers is different. SEDGE & CO runs **usability testing with five volunteers per round**, watching real users attempt tasks before anything is built, so the evaluation measures whether the design *works*. TWO RIVERS runs a **community design critique and a client review**, so its evaluation measures whether the design is *understood and approved* by the people it represents. The similarity is the criteria-based convergent stage; the difference is that SEDGE & CO tests behaviour and TWO RIVERS tests reception (4 marks: technique named for each, a similarity, a difference, evidence).

Q8. Designer 1: SEDGE & CO · *Rivergrass* · **Specialist:** accessibility consultant. **Designer 2:** HALLMARK STUDIO · *Tessellate* · **Specialist:** structural engineer. **Both** designers engage a specialist whose knowledge they do not hold, and in **both** cases the specialist’s advice constrains the resolved solution rather than simply approving it: the accessibility consultant sets minimum contrast ratios and tap-target sizes that the interface must meet, and the structural engineer sets the loads and fixings the seat must carry. **Similarly**, each specialist is engaged so that the design is safe and usable by the widest possible group of people, and in both practices the specialist is brought in during Develop, while the design can still change. **However**, the two contributions operate at different scales and on different aspects of the design. The accessibility consultant shapes the **visual language** of the outcome — type size, tonal contrast, icon labelling — and SEDGE & CO also engages a second specialist, an **ecologist**, whose knowledge governs the *content* rather than the form. The structural engineer instead shapes the **physical form and material** of the seat, and HALLMARK’s second specialist, a **materials specialist**, advises on weathering. So SEDGE & CO’s specialists make an interface understandable and correct, **whereas** HALLMARK’s make a physical object stand up and last (6 marks: named example and specialist for each, the specialist knowledge stated, sustained similarity and difference).

Q9. SEDGE & CO designed the *Rivergrass* app; HALLMARK STUDIO designed the *Tessellate* seat. **Both** practices work well beyond a single site — SEDGE & CO’s six designers are spread across three states, HALLMARK’s 24

staff across Melbourne and Singapore — so **both** must design for audiences and settings the designers cannot visit, and both rely on research and testing to stand in for local knowledge. **However**, the context of the practice itself is very different. SEDGE & CO is **remote-first with no shared office**: the studio exists online, which suits a digital outcome that is also delivered online. HALLMARK maintains **two physical studios with a prototyping capacity**, which its outcome requires, because a seat has to be built and tested at full size. The **context of use** differs just as sharply, and each context produced a specific **design decision**: *Rivergrass* is used on a phone held in a wetland where reception drops out, so SEDGE & CO decided to build an **offline mode** and to keep image files small enough for an older phone; **whereas** *Tessellate* is installed permanently in streets and plazas and must survive weather and heavy public use, so HALLMARK decided to **specify recycled alloy with replaceable parts** and to trial a full-size prototype on the street before manufacture. In both cases the decision follows from the context, not from taste (4 marks: *context of practice and context of use, the design decision each context produced, a similarity and a difference*).

Q10. SEDGE & CO resolved *Rivergrass* and TWO RIVERS DESIGN resolved *River Reach*. **Both** practices use **digital media** to produce the final artwork — interface design software for SEDGE & CO, vector software for TWO RIVERS — and **both** work to a grid, so in each resolved solution the spacing and alignment are systematic rather than improvised. **However**, the **method** and the **material** diverge completely. SEDGE & CO's final solution is produced by **digital drawing and prototyping** and its **material is the device screen itself**, so colour is specified in RGB, the design must resize to every screen and the outcome can be updated after release. TWO RIVERS' final solution is produced by **manual screen printing**, its **media** are water-based inks and its **material** is uncoated recycled stock, so colour is limited to two spot inks, ink texture is visible in the printed sheet and the solution is fixed the moment it is printed. **By contrast** with SEDGE & CO's revisable screens, TWO RIVERS must resolve everything before the press run, which is why its process front-loads proofing. Evaluating what is **visible in the resolved solutions**, the similarity is a shared digital artwork stage, and the difference is that one solution is delivered as light on a screen and the other as ink on paper (6 marks: *methods, media and materials distinguished for both, evidence from the final solutions, congruent comparison*).

Q11. **Both** practices have their decisions shaped by the limits of the production technology they depend on. For SEDGE & CO, older phones and patchy rural reception in the wetlands where *Rivergrass* is used forced the designers to build an **offline mode** and to keep image files small so screens load on low-specification devices. For TWO RIVERS DESIGN, the screen-printing press imposes an equivalent limit on *River Reach*: only so many colours will register cleanly on uncoated stock, so the designers reduced the identity to **two spot colours** and a mark that survives at a small size. **Similarly**, in both cases the technological factor pushed the designers toward simplification. **However**, technology works in opposite directions for the two practices: for SEDGE & CO the technology is **changing and improving**, so the design must be built to be updated and re-released, **whereas** for TWO RIVERS the printing technology is **stable and manual**, so the constraint is fixed and the design is resolved once and printed. In both answers the factor influences the **designer's decisions** about colour, file size and layout — not merely “the need for the design” (4 marks: *the factor correctly named as technological, its influence on decisions in each practice, a similarity and a difference*).

Q12. SEDGE & CO works in **Interactive experiences** and HALLMARK STUDIO in **Objects**. **Both** fields use visual language to make something **usable without instructions**, and both rely on the design **principles** — hierarchy, contrast, scale and proportion — to organise design **elements** such as type, colour, tone and form, so that a person is told what to do first. In **Interactive experiences** the distinguishing characteristics are **navigation, interface and interaction across time**: *Rivergrass* uses a consistent icon set, an 8-pt spacing grid, RGB colour and minimum tonal contrast so a volunteer standing in mud can find the search field, read a plant name in daylight and log a record in a few taps. The role of visual language here is to **guide a sequence of decisions**, and it can respond — a tapped item changes state. In **Objects** the distinguishing characteristics are **three-dimensional form, materiality and surface**: *Tessellate* communicates through the proportion of the module, the modelled form of the seat and the finish of the recycled alloy, so the visual language tells a passer-by where to sit and that the object is durable and public. The role here is to **communicate function and quality at a glance and by touch**, and it cannot change once installed. **So** while both fields use visual language to make behaviour obvious, SEDGE & CO's is two-dimensional, responsive and time-based, **whereas** HALLMARK's is three-dimensional, fixed and material (6 marks: *field-specific characteristics for both, the role of visual language in each, evidence, a congruent comparison*).

Q13. **Both** practices meet **legal** obligations by paying for what they use: SEDGE & CO **licenses its icon set** and complies with **privacy law** in storing volunteers' location data, while TWO RIVERS DESIGN **licenses its typefaces**

and shoots its own photography rather than using images it does not own — avoiding infringement of others' **copyright**, which exists automatically from the moment a work is created. **Similarly**, both go beyond the law. SEDGE & CO publishes a **plain-language privacy notice** so volunteers actually understand what is collected, and **seeks permission before mapping culturally sensitive sites**; TWO RIVERS **credits the volunteers whose local knowledge shaped the imagery**. These are **ethical** commitments — they are not required by statute, and frameworks such as the Australian Indigenous Design Charter and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property protocols sit in this ethical category, not the legal one. **However**, the obligations sit in different places for each practice. SEDGE & CO's chief legal exposure is **data and privacy**, because it holds personal information, **whereas** TWO RIVERS' is **ownership of imagery and type**, because it publishes printed work. Note that neither registers a trademark or patent for these projects; those rights, unlike copyright, would have to be **applied for and registered** (6 marks: legal and ethical kept distinct for both practices, a similarity and a difference, accurate IP detail).

Q14. Both practices work from conceptions of good design associated with Dieter Rams' Ten Principles, and **both** treat restraint as a virtue rather than a limitation. TWO RIVERS DESIGN aligns with **“good design is honest”** and **“as little design as possible”**: the *River Reach* mark is stripped back until it works in a single colour, and nothing is added that the two-colour print cannot carry, so the design does not pretend to be more than it is. HALLMARK STUDIO aligns with **“good design is long-lasting”** and **“thorough down to the last detail”**: *Tessellate* is specified in recycled alloy with replaceable parts and a published repair guide, and it was entered for a Good Design Award. **However**, the emphasis differs. TWO RIVERS reads good design as **restraint in appearance**, judged when the poster is seen; HALLMARK reads it as **durability and resolution over a life cycle**, judged years after installation. **So** both reject decoration, but one measures good design at the moment of communication and the other across the object's lifetime (4 marks: a named conception for each with evidence, a similarity and a difference).

Q15. An annotated visual report must do four things. First, it must present **both** practices under the **same headings**, so that every heading yields a comparison rather than two profiles. Second, it must show a **named, dated design example** for each designer — *Rivergrass* and *River Reach* — with every image and quotation **acknowledged at the point where it is used** (website title, exact URL, retrieval date). Third, the annotation itself must be **comparative**: each note should make an explicit similarity or difference statement against a key knowledge point (contexts; practices and processes including methods, media, materials and conventions; specialists and stakeholders; conceptions of good design; decisions made when resolving design problems; the five factors; ethical and legal obligations), not simply caption the picture beside it. Fourth, it must be accompanied by the **two practical design exercises** documenting emerging skills in the field. The research method that a website could not replace is a **primary interview** — emailing the designers a short set of questions, or attending a talk — because it reveals the *process*: which ideas were rejected, what the client's constraints were, when the accessibility consultant was engaged and what changed as a result. A studio's own website is promotional and shows only the resolved outcome (4 marks: report requirements described, research method named and justified against the limits of a secondary source).

Q16. Both practices reject a make-use-dispose model, and **both** are designing so that an existing thing keeps its value rather than being replaced. HALLMARK STUDIO does this **materially**: *Tessellate* is specified in **recycled alloy** with **replaceable parts**, and the studio publishes a free **repair and disassembly guide**, so a damaged module can be repaired or its material recovered instead of the whole seat being scrapped — a clear example of extending a life cycle and keeping material in use. SEDGE & CO has no physical product, so its sustainable practice takes an indirect form: small file sizes and an **offline mode** reduce the data and power an older phone must use, and the app was **rebuilt in 2024 rather than replaced**, extending the life of the existing design; *Rivergrass* also exists to support wetland restoration, so the design's **purpose** is environmental. **However**, the extent differs. HALLMARK's circular practice is designed into the object and can be measured at end of life, **whereas** SEDGE & CO's is largely about digital longevity and the environmental outcome the design enables rather than the design's own materials. **Overall**, HALLMARK adopts circular design practices more fully in the Study Design's sense of extending life cycles and regenerating systems, while SEDGE & CO's contribution is real but indirect (4 marks: evidence from each practice, a similarity, a difference, and a judgement about extent).

Q17. In the past, interactive experiences were designed for a **fixed desktop screen size**, delivered on disc or as a website, and built by a developer only after the visual design was finished, so evaluation happened late and changes were expensive. Designers worked in one shared office and handed over static screen artwork. **At present**, SEDGE & CO designs **mobile-first and device-responsive**, prototypes before anything is built, tests with real users in three rounds and works remotely across three states, so evaluation is continuous and the design is expected to be updated after release. **In the future**, practice in this field may shift again: on-device machine learning could identify a plant

from the camera, so the designer's job becomes designing for **voice, camera and conversational input** rather than for taps; tightening privacy regulation may require designers to collect less data by default; and growing attention to the energy cost of digital products may make **designing for low power and small file size** a criterion in its own right (4 marks: a specific past practice, a specific future prediction, both grounded in the field.)

Q18. I would produce a **three-screen low-fidelity prototype** for logging a single plant record in a field app. The **methods** are digital drawing and prototyping, both digital processes; the finished screens are then evaluated by **usability testing** with two classmates, which is an evaluation technique rather than a method. The **media** are interface design and prototyping software. The **material** is the device screen — the prototype is sized to an actual phone and viewed on one, not on paper. The **conventions** applied are screens sized to the device, an 8-pt spacing grid, RGB colour, a consistent icon set, and minimum tonal contrast and tap-target sizes so the screens remain readable in daylight and usable with wet hands. The **presentation format** is a set of resolved screens with a clickable prototype, annotated with the grid and contrast decisions. This documents an emerging skill because it applies SEDGE & CO's researched practice — prototype and test before building — and because the accessibility conventions are the same ones its specialist consultant imposes (6 marks: method, media, materials and conventions correctly distinguished, a field-appropriate presentation format, and a link back to the researched practice).

Q19. (Model, comparing TWO RIVERS DESIGN and SEDGE & CO.) TWO RIVERS DESIGN, a two-person Messages studio in regional Victoria, designed *River Reach* (2023), an identity and poster campaign; SEDGE & CO, a remote-first Interactive experiences studio of six, designed *Rivergrass* (2021, rebuilt 2024), an app for logging wetland plants. **Both** are contemporary practices working from 2000 onwards within visual communication design, and **both** begin with people rather than imagery: TWO RIVERS walks the site with volunteers, SEDGE & CO runs interviews and builds user personas, so in **both** practices the communication need is defined from research before any visual decision is made. **Similarly**, both test before committing — a printed proof and a community critique for TWO RIVERS, three rounds of usability testing for SEDGE & CO — and both then evaluate against the brief's criteria using a convergent strategy (a SWOT and a PMI respectively). **Both** also engage specialists rather than deciding alone: a screen printer and typographer for TWO RIVERS, an accessibility consultant and an ecologist for SEDGE & CO.

However, the practices diverge in context, media and the permanence of the outcome. TWO RIVERS works within 40 km of its studio, so its visual language can carry motifs drawn from the local river and its audience is known personally, **whereas** SEDGE & CO has no shared office and designs nationally for volunteers aged from 12 to 80 whom it meets only through research. TWO RIVERS is **manual-led** — screen printing on uncoated recycled stock, limited to two spot colours by both the press and a small council budget — **while** SEDGE & CO is **entirely digital**, its material the device screen, its colour specified in RGB and its layout governed by a spacing grid and minimum tap-target sizes. Most importantly, TWO RIVERS' solution is **fixed once it is printed**, so everything must be resolved before the press run, **whereas** SEDGE & CO's can be updated after release, so its practice is built around iteration that continues past delivery.

Overall, the two practices share a research-led, tested, criteria-driven process and a willingness to bring in specialist knowledge, but the field they work in determines the rest: a printed message resolved once for a local audience, against a digital experience resolved continuously for a national one (8 marks: two contemporary designers named with a design example each, sustained comparison across several points, explicit similarities AND differences, evidence throughout).

Q20. (Model, comparing Round and Ross Gardam. Any two real contemporary practices are acceptable, provided each is named, works in a different field, and carries a dated design example.) **Round**, founded in Melbourne in 2002 by Michaela Webb and Robert Nudds, works in **Messages**, and from 2017 to 2022 designed the brand identity and campaign creative for **Melbourne Fashion Week** for the City of Melbourne. **Ross Gardam** works in **Objects** from Melbourne; the *Ora* pendant was a Gold winner in Product — Furniture and Lighting at the **2016 Good Design Awards**. **Both** are contemporary practices working from 2000 onwards, **both** are city-based and commissioned rather than self-directed, and **both** resolve the work with specialists rather than alone — Round credits photographers, stylists, a videographer and an animator across the Melbourne Fashion Week campaigns, **while** Good Design Australia records the *Ora* as made by a group of manufacturers in and around Melbourne. **However**, the context each designs into differs, and the difference shows in the decisions. Round works to a **recurring public event with a fixed annual date**, so the outcome is temporary and must be renewed every year: the studio's record of the 2020 campaign describes a digital-only response assembled from imagery reused from earlier years, a decision that follows directly

from a context in which the festival could not be staged as usual. **By contrast**, Gardam designs for **manufacture and long ownership**, so the *Ora*'s decisions cannot be revised after release — the disk is opaque so that the LED is concealed and direct glare is blocked from any viewpoint, and the fitting takes a warm-white LED rated at 25,000 hours. **Overall**, both practices are commissioned and collaborative, but Round's context makes its work renewable and Gardam's makes the work permanent *(6 marks: two real contemporary designers named in different fields, a dated design example each, the context of the practice and the context of use, one design decision produced by each context, an explicit similarity AND difference)*.

Source: Good Design Australia, "Ora Pendant", <https://good-design.org/projects/ora-pendant/>, retrieved 28 July 2026; Round, "Melbourne Fashion Week", [round.com.au](https://www.round.com.au/home/melbourne-fashion-week-copy), <https://www.round.com.au/home/melbourne-fashion-week-copy>, retrieved 28 July 2026; National Gallery of Victoria, "Round", Melbourne Now, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/melbourne-now/artists/round/>, retrieved 28 July 2026.