

## Graduate Costume Designer Qualification Exit Examination

### System of Colleges and Universities in Jiangxi

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### Abstract

The purposes of this research were to: 1) To study the requirements of qualification in the career for a fashion designer for higher education fashion design majors. 2) To develop a qualification examination system for costume designer graduates of costume design majors in colleges and universities. The study yielded 50 valid samples from 153 populations. In the process of questionnaire distribution, some questionnaires may not have been answered. To ensure the accuracy of the sample, we selected more than 15% of the total which includes large, medium, and small enterprises for the interview and questionnaire survey for the ability requirements of fashion design professional fashion designers. The interviewees in this interview are from enterprise HR in Zhejiang, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Hunan, Guizhou, Fujian, and other provinces. They must have the following qualifications: they need to have work experience in the garment industry, more than three years of working experience in human resource management, and strong professional ability. The results show that the professional

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Competency Assessments, (1) Academic Qualifications and Certifications, (2) Skills and Type, cut and structure, (3) ability requirement of clothing designers includes six elements: (4) Industry-Specific Tests, (5) Business and marketing skills, and (6) Knowledge, abilities, and qualities to be acquired by graduates.

**Key words:** Graduate costume designer, College students' employment ability, Qualification exit examination, Fashion designer

## Introduction

Nowadays, college graduates are faced with the challenge of increasingly fierce competition in the job market. The Chinese Ministry of Education has instructed local universities to find ways to help college graduates secure jobs with additional measures and promote a higher quality of 2024 college graduates' employment.

With the development and changes of the garment industry, the professional qualification requirements for garment design students are also constantly changing to meet the demand of enterprises for talents and improve the employment competitiveness of students. Therefore, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of the enterprises employability requirements for college graduates majoring in fashion design and develop a corresponding qualification examination system to evaluate the comprehensive ability of students.

This study can not only understand the requirements of enterprises for the professional ability of college students majoring in fashion design, but also is of great significance and reference value for enterprises to select excellent fashion designers. Research question for this study is "what the appropriate qualification exit examination system for costume designer graduates in colleges and universities should be?". Objectives of this research are 1. To study the requirements of qualification in the career for fashion designer for higher education fashion design majors, and 2. To develop a qualification examination system for costume designer graduates of costume design majors in colleges and universities.

## Literature Review

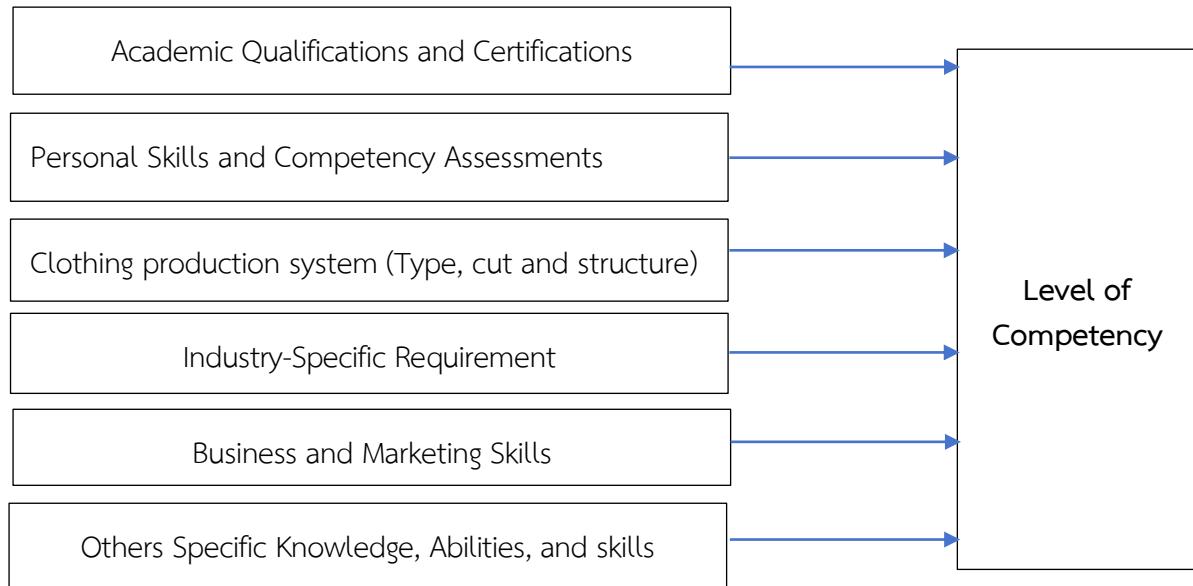
**1. Concept of employability:** In 2000, the International Labor Congress (LTC) defined it as the ability of a worker to obtain a job, maintain a job, and continue to improve himself in work (ILO, 2004). In the same year, the United States Commission on Employment and Education (DFEE) also defined employability: they believe that employability is not only a short-term process of obtaining a job, but also a long-term dynamic process that can continuously maintain and help career advancement in subsequent work. Hillage and his research partner Pollard developed a simple and easy-to-understand definition of employability: "the ability to obtain a job, maintain a job, and obtain a job if necessary" (Hillage & Pollard, 1998).

**2. Research status of college students' employability:** The employment ability of college students is a comprehensive ability (Zheng, 2002). According to researcher Wang, college students' employment ability consists of basic skills, individual management skills and team work skills (Wang, 2005). The structure of college students' employability is divided into three dimensions: inner quality, ability to deal with work and social leadership (Li, Liu & Weng, 2005). The actual meaning of employability should also include employability tendency, that is, the ability to find, keep, develop and create jobs (Lei & Yu, 2005). Ren believes that college students' employability should include three levels, namely basic working ability, professional skills and job-hunting skills (Ren, 2005).

**3. Core competencies and skills of fashion designers in academics and industry practitioners' perspective:** (Zhou, 2011). Shishi Design and Research Institute asked the enterprises to choose one of the five abilities of students concerned about, namely, practical ability, adaptability, working attitude, learning ability and cultivation potential (Liao, 2015). In the era of creative economy, creativity is indispensable to the development of any industry. For the ever-changing, fluctuating currents for the clothing industry, the creativity of clothing designers is not only the necessary ability to achieve self-value, but also the clothing enterprise. (Fu, 2014). The modern clothing market is a very competitive market, and designers must have excellent creative ability to strive for competitive advantages (Zhang, 2014).

**4. Development and design of costume designer qualification examination system:** The vocational qualification certificate has gradually become the basis for enterprises to employ people and the proof of employment of workers. As a famous institution of higher learning, Tongji University took the lead in implementing the vocational qualification certificate system in colleges and universities. Universities in Shanghai have followed suit (Wang, 2004). The development and design of the operation skills test bank is based on the national occupational standards, aiming at the requirements of the occupational activities of garment design customizers, and based on the operational skills and comprehensive working ability in occupational activities, and summarizes the previous experience and deficiencies in the evaluation and assessment of the operation skills of garment design customizers. (Xiao, 2004). Government department pointed out that in 2014, in order to cooperate with the adjustment and reorganization of the national vocational qualification examination, the Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau adjusted the clothing designer examination, which was originally a vocational qualification, to the intermediate title evaluation of the clothing design major of the arts and crafts series (The Bulletin of the Shanghai Municipal People's Government, 2019). Wang mentioned that with the follow-up of the pace of the construction of a skilled society, the textile and garment industry has an increasing demand for high-quality and skilled personnel. Vocational schools need to improve the academic education and vocational training system of textile and garment vocational continuing education from the aspects of curriculum setting, school-enterprise cooperation, credit transfer, and teacher team, enrich the body of vocational continuing education, focus on training skilled high-quality talents, and promote the sustainable development of textile and garment industry. (Wang, 2023)

## Research Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1** Research Framework

## Research Procedure and processes

Using relevant documents to become familiar with the employability requirement status of college student graduates in fashion design, particularly on core abilities and skills from the perspective of academic and industry practitioners, then an expert interview survey to obtain the professional ability requirements of fashion designers, and finally, the professional ability requirement model of fashion designers is put forward.

A 6-question interview was conducted on the professional qualification requirements required by fashion designers, which are: 1. What qualifications, degrees, and certifications are required for fashion designers? 2. How to assess the fashion design skills, creativity, and technical proficiency of a fashion designer? 3. How do fashion designers make plates, cut, and evaluate structures? 4. What do fashion designers need to know about industry trends, materials, and sustainable development? 5. What business and marketing skills do fashion designers need to know? 6. What knowledge, abilities and qualities do fashion designers need

that graduates should acquire? The questionnaire was submitted to five experts IOC checked, revised the questionnaires according to the suggestions of experts before use. Percentage, mean, standard deviation, and variance analysis were conducted for the data obtained from the questionnaire to get the final data of the professional ability requirements of clothing designers.

The professional ability requirements of fashion designers' data obtained are used for the design professional ability test system. The designed test questions were used in three rounds of 21 experts Delphi study. For the first and second rounds, the expert feedback opinions were collected, analyzed, revised the test questions, and distributed the revised test questions to the experts for the next feedback opinions. After the third round, consensus opinions were obtained.

## Results

### *Objective 1: The professional ability requirements of fashion designers*

Among the professional ability requirements of garment designers, 90.48% are required to obtain academic degree certificates, 85.71% are required to evaluate design skills, 90.48% are required to evaluate creativity, 76.19% are required to evaluate technical proficiency, and 80.95% are required to evaluate plate making. The need for three-dimensional cutting evaluation accounted for 90.48%, the need for structural evaluation of clothing designers accounted for 90.48%, the need to understand industry trends accounted for 80.95%, the need to understand materials and sustainable development practices accounted for 76.19%, the need to master the qualities of college graduates accounted for 100.00%.

### *Objective 2 Clothing designer professional ability test system*

The professional clothing designer ability test questions are as follows.

**Part 1: Portfolio review (10 points, 10 minutes)**

**Part 2: Interview questions and answers (15 points, 25 minute) (choose 5 questions, 5 minutes each)**

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1. Explain the important fashion design projects for which you were mainly responsible.
2. What are the key skills and qualities required for a successful fashion designer?
3. How do you balance business needs with design innovation?
4. Explain your ability to connect and predict fashion trends and how to apply them in your design.
5. Explain how to handle and respond to design challenges and changes in your past work.
6. How do you translate design inspiration into fashion design?
7. Please share your experience of participating in a fashion show or competition
8. Explain your role in the successful team design experience you have.
9. Explain your vision for the future development of the fashion industry.
10. Describe lessons learned from your failure experiences in the design process.
11. Describe your design style and signature elements
12. Explain in detail your successful design work.
13. Explain your experience with unexpected design problems and how to solve them.
14. How do you deal with a design director or a company executive conflict on your design ideas?
15. Explain effective designer planning of a design project.
16. What aspects of the relationship among designers must be paid attention to?
17. Explain modern fashion design technologies and their applications you can use.
18. Give a list of your favorite fashion brands and explain their good and limitation characteristics.
19. What kind of cloth material do you like?
20. Do you think creativity or practice is more important?
21. Describe a well-known brand in its style, positioning, and target customer characteristics.

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22. Do you consider environmental sustainability in your design process and from what perspective?

23. Explain aspects of cost saving in the fashion design process.

**Part 3: Understanding and exploration of industry trends, fashion trends, and fabric trends. (20 points, 15 minutes)**

Briefly describe the major current trends in the fashion industry and how your design work fits into these trends.

**Part 4: Business and marketing skills (5 points, 10 minutes)**

Select a clothing brand and describe the brand's target market and positioning

**Part 5: Design skills and creativity (20 points, 100 minutes)**

1. **Project Topic:** Use computer-aided design software to design a freestyle set of novel and chic fashion (men's, women's, children's dresses), make effect drawings and style drawings, and write the design detail description.

**2. Requirements:**

1) Clear production inspiration version, accurate extraction of popular elements, and in line with intended design theme.

2) Complete renderings: clear design element's theme and reflect clothing design principles.

3) Harmonious color matching: should include accessories suitable for overall style, such as hats, shoes, bags, and others, and pattern design elements can highlight the theme style.

4) Accurate style proportion drawing: highlighting the clothing structure and process expression

5) Accurate clothing proportion modeling: dynamic and harmonious characters, and exquisite fabric texture.

6) Use A3 canvas size, 300dpi image resolution, beautiful picture composition, and saved in JPEG format.

7) Beautiful layout (A3 size), style plate with not less than 100 words of

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design description. Clearly express inspiration source, design style, popular elements application, style characteristics, and structure and process

**3. Scoring points and criteria:**

- 1) The design meets all requirements, and the inspiration work is beautiful (10 points);
- 2) Clearly expressed dress line drafting, reasonable fabric application, good texture, accurate effect picture dynamic human body proportion, complete the dress effect harmonious and the performance. (20 points).
- 3) Colorful and in line with fashion trend, reasonable color coordination and complete with accessories (10 points);
- 4) Complete style drawing front and back, accurate proportion and smooth lines (20 points)
- 5) Accurate cloth modeling proportion, dynamic characters and harmonious, and exquisite fabric texture (20 points)
- 6) Standards production canvas size and image resolution, picture composition, and file storage (10).
- 7) Reasonable design description (10 points)

**Part 6: Technical proficiency (15 points, 100 minutes)**

**Project Topic:** Complete structure drawing and embryo production of part 6.

**1. Requirements:**

- 1) Design the effect drawing according to specific specifications and sizes (male coat 170/88A, bottom 170/78A, female coat 160/84A, bottom 160/68A, children's clothing 120, 130, 140) to complete the complete set of clothing structure drawing (three-dimensional cutting method).
- 2) Accurate and integrated size of each part of the embryo.
- 3) Make a clear statement of overall clothing style process design.
- 4) Complete the production of a set of embryonic samples, and take photos (front

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side, back and detail display).

5) Print and submit the above content on A3 answer sheet.

**3. Scoring points and criteria:**

1) Detailed clothing style name, accurate size of each part, and fit (a total of 25 points).

2) Accurate garment structure drawing: clear and standardized beautiful layout, drawing lines and symbols of all parts (front piece structure, back piece structure, sleeve piece, correct structure, appropriate and reasonable proportion) (25 points in total).

3) Clear and accurate description of clothing process design (20 points).

4) Clearly displayed positive, side, back and details of the embryo (collar, sleeve width with consistent and straight, beautiful sewing process, plain clothes, flat left and right symmetry, the back seat), and smooth process is (a total of 30 minutes).

**Part 7: Submit the interview report, try the clothes, and make a brief introduction (15 points, 30 minutes)**

## Conclusion

**1. For the first objective:**

Literature review on the core competence and skills of fashion designers' data showed that covers a variety of abilities, including the ability to master design innovation and creative conception, professional skills, and practical ability. They also need to understand the knowledge of fabrics, the resources of dough suppliers, and the knowledge of industry trend analysis. Working attitude, learning ability and cultivation potential are equally important. Clothing designer's personal moral cultivation, personality charm, artistic characteristics, personality traits, teamwork ability, human-land communication ability are indispensable.

Interviewed with HR personnel; 7 each from large medium and small enterprises, to understand the professional ability requirements of enterprises for the position of fashion designer, including 19 private enterprises (90.47%), 1 foreign enterprise (4.76%) and 1 other enterprise (4.76%). Among 21 experts, 8 were male (38.10%), and 13 were female (61.90%); 4 people working 3-5 years (19.05%), 9 people working 6-9 years (42.86%), and 8 people working more than 10 years (38.10%).

Among the professional ability requirements of garment designers, 90.48% are required to obtain academic degree certificates, 85.71% are required to evaluate design skills, 90.48% are required to evaluate creativity, 76.19% are required to evaluate technical proficiency, and 80.95% are required to evaluate plate making. The need for three-dimensional cutting evaluation accounted for 90.48%, the need for structural evaluation of clothing designers accounted for 90.48%, the need to understand industry trends accounted for 80.95%, the need to understand materials and sustainable development practices accounted for 76.19%, the need to master the qualities of college graduates accounted for 100.00%. 85.71% did not mention that fashion designers need to be proficient in all types of clothing production technology, 90.48% did not mention that fashion designers need to have strong language ability, 90.48% did not mention that fashion designers need to be proficient in strict budget management.

Results of the questionnaire survey on the 21 enterprises HR show that 42 of the 72 data have a value greater than 75%, which is highly recognized by experts, so they are retained and the questions of the garment designer vocational qualification examination system are compiled according to the retained data. 30 data items with low values are not retained.

After analyzing the results of valid data, a 6-question interview was conducted on the professional qualification requirements required by fashion designers. 1. What qualifications, degrees and certifications are required for fashion designers? 2. What are the ways to assess fashion design skills, creativity and technical proficiency of a fashion designer? 3. What are the ways in which fashion designers make plates, cut and evaluate structures? 4. What do fashion designers need to know about industry trends, materials and sustainable development? 5.

What business and marketing skills do fashion designers need to know? 6. What knowledge, abilities and qualities do fashion designers need that graduates should acquire?

## 2. For the second objective:

Analysis results of the data of costume designer qualification examination system in colleges and universities. After the first three rounds of modification, 21 experts reached a consensus on the categories, questions, score values, time, requirements, scoring points and scoring standards of the seven-part costume designer professional qualification test question bank at the fourth round of modification, and agreed to all the contents of the seven-part costume designer professional qualification test.

## Discussion

### 1. Success stories of fashion designers who benefited from qualification tests.

While specific success stories may vary, there are many fashion designers who have benefited from qualification tests and certifications in their careers. Here are a few examples of successful fashion designers whose qualification tests played a significant role in their journeys:

Caroline, Hu, a Chinese fashion designer, is known for her innovative and contemporary designs that blend elegance with modernity. She often draws inspiration from art, culture, and personal experiences, creating pieces that reflect a unique aesthetic. Her work emphasizes craftsmanship, sustainability, and the narrative behind each collection. Hu studied fashion design and had experience in both design and fashion marketing. Her training has equipped her with a deep understanding of textile technology, garment construction, and the business aspects of fashion, allowing her to create impactful collections that resonate with a diverse audience.

Mei, Chen a Chinese fashion designer, is recognized for her distinctive approach that often merges traditional techniques with contemporary styles. Her work frequently explores themes of cultural identity and sustainability, resulting in collections that highlight craftsmanship and ethical production practices. Mei typically holds degrees in fashion design or a related field, often complemented by experience in design studios or fashion houses.

This combination of formal education and practical experience allows her to innovate while staying rooted in traditional fashion practices. Ximon Lee

McCartney, Stella is a renowned British fashion designer known for her sustainable and animal-friendly fashion designs. She graduated from Central Saint Martins in London, one of the prestigious fashion schools, where she refined her skills and received formal qualifications in fashion design.

Ford, Tom is an American fashion designer, filmmaker, and former creative director of Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent. He completed his studies at Parsons School of Design in New York City, where he honed his design skills and gained valuable industry knowledge.

Alexander, Wang is an American fashion designer known for his urban and edgy designs. He studied at Parsons School of Design in New York and participated in various design competitions and showcases, which helped establish his reputation as a young talent in the fashion industry.

Philo, Phoebe is a British fashion designer known for her minimalist and chic designs. She studied at Central Saint Martins and later worked at Chloe and Celine, where her qualifications and expertise in design were instrumental in shaping her successful career.

Abloh, Virgil is an American fashion designer, DJ, and founder of the fashion brand Off-White. He holds a master's degree in architecture from the Illinois Institute of Technology and a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. His educational background has influenced his innovative and boundary-pushing approach to design.

Ilincic, Roksanda is a Serbian-born fashion designer based in London, known for her vibrant and elegant designs. She studied architecture and applied arts in Serbia and later pursued a master's degree in Womenswear at Central Saint Martins, which provided her with the technical skills and industry exposure.

Pugh, G. is a British avant-garde fashion designer known for his experimental and theatrical designs. He studied at Central Saint Martins, where he explored unconventional materials and techniques that shaped his unique design aesthetic.

These success stories illustrate how qualification tests and formal education in fashion design have played a significant role in shaping the careers of many renowned fashion

designers. The knowledge, skills, and industry recognition gained through these qualifications have helped these designers stand out in a competitive field and establish themselves as influential figures in the fashion industry.

## Recommendations

This recommendation can be apply both for realization the project in details and also can be use as a basis of research questions as well, which are:

### 1. Issues of accessibility and inclusivity

Addressing issues of accessibility and inclusivity is crucial to ensure that qualification tests are fair, equitable, and inclusive for all candidates, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances. Here are some strategies to promote accessibility and inclusivity in qualification tests:

**Offering Accommodations:** Provide accommodation for candidates with disabilities or special needs, such as extended time, assistive technology, or alternative formats for test materials. This ensures that candidates can participate in the testing process on an equal basis.

**Multilingual Testing:** Offer qualification tests in multiple languages to cater to candidates from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This helps eliminate language barriers and ensures that candidates can demonstrate their skills and knowledge effectively.

**Diverse Test Development Teams:** Ensure that test development teams include members from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. This can help identify potential biases and ensure that the test content is relevant and representative of different cultural contexts.

**Reviewing Test Items:** Regularly review test items to identify and eliminate any potential bias or culturally specific content. Test items should be free from stereotypes and should not disadvantage candidates from groups.

**Providing Test Preparation Resources:** Offer accessible and affordable test preparation resources to all candidates. This helps level the playing field and provides equal opportunities for test preparation.

**Online and Remote Testing:** Offer online and remote testing options to accommodate candidates who may have difficulty accessing physical test centers or who prefer the flexibility of remote testing.

**Outreach and Awareness:** Conduct outreach and awareness campaigns to promote the availability and benefits of qualification tests among diverse communities. This can help increase participation from underrepresented groups.

**Collaboration with Educational Institutions:** Collaborate with educational institutions and organizations to offer test preparation workshops and support for candidates from marginalized backgrounds.

**Transparent Policies:** Ensure that the testing process and policies are transparent and well-communicated to all candidates. Transparency helps build trust and confidence in the fairness of the qualification tests.

**Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish feedback mechanisms for candidates to provide input on the accessibility and inclusivity of the test process. Regularly gather and analyze feedback to make improvements as needed.

**Training for Test Administrators:** Provide training to test administrators and proctors on handling diverse candidates and ensuring an inclusive testing environment.

**Continuous Improvement:** Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of accessibility and inclusivity measures and make continuous improvements based on feedback and data.

By actively addressing issues of accessibility and inclusivity, qualification tests can become more inclusive, welcoming, and fair for all candidates. Promoting diversity and inclusivity in the testing process not only benefits individual candidates but also contributes to the overall quality and validity of the assessment.

## **2. Opportunities for improvement and evolution in qualification tests**

Qualification tests play a critical role in assessing skills and knowledge, and there are several opportunities for improvement and evolution to make them more effective and relevant. Here are some key areas where qualification tests can be enhanced:

**Embracing Technology:** Incorporate technology and innovative assessment methods to create more dynamic and interactive tests. This could include virtual simulations, gamified assessments, and adaptive testing that tailors' questions based on the candidate's performance.

**Competency-Based Assessments:** Shift towards competency-based assessments that focus on real-world skills and application rather than rote memorization. These assessments should align with the specific requirements of the industry or profession being tested.

**Diverse Question Formats:** Use diverse question formats, including scenario-based questions, open-ended responses, and practical demonstrations. This allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of a candidate's abilities and critical thinking skills.

**Inclusive Content Development:** Ensure that the test content is culturally sensitive and free from biases. Involve diverse subject matter experts in the development of test items to ensure inclusivity and relevance.

**Personalized Learning Paths:** Offer personalized learning paths and targeted study recommendations based on a candidate's performance in practice assessments. This approach helps address individual knowledge gaps and provides focused preparation.

**Continuous Assessment:** Move towards continuous assessment models rather than relying solely on one-time, high-stakes tests. Continuous assessment provides a more accurate picture of a candidate's progress and growth over time.

**Remote Testing Options:** Expand remote testing options to provide flexibility for candidates who may face geographical or accessibility challenges in reaching physical test centers.

**Digital Credentials and Portfolios:** Consider adopting digital credentials and portfolios to showcase a candidate's skills and achievements beyond just test scores. Digital badges and portfolios can provide a more holistic view of a candidate's capabilities.

**Collaboration with Industry Experts:** Collaborate with industry experts and professionals to ensure that the content of qualification tests remains relevant and up to date with current industry practices and trends.

Feedback and Iterative Improvement: Implement feedback loops and regular reviews to continuously improve the quality and relevance of qualification tests based on candidate feedback and industry demands.

Ethical Considerations: Address ethical considerations, such as privacy and data security, in the administration of qualification tests, particularly in online and remote testing formats.

Bridging Skills Gap: Design qualification tests to bridge the skills gap and address emerging needs in the job market, ensuring that candidates are equipped with the right skills for the evolving professional landscape.

By embracing these opportunities for improvement and evolution, qualification tests can better serve candidates, employers, and industries. Continuous advancements in assessment methodologies will ensure that these tests accurately measure candidates' abilities, promote inclusivity, and align with the demands of the modern workplace.

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