

UNIT-5

QUALITY CONTROL AND TESTING

Quality parameters are crucial in textile finishing to ensure that the fabric meets its intended performance, aesthetic, and comfort requirements for the end-user.¹ Handfeel, color fastness, and durability are three of the most significant parameters.

1. Handfeel (Fabric Hand/Handle/Feel)

Concept: Handfeel refers to the tactile sensation experienced when a fabric is touched, squeezed, or manipulated. It's a complex, subjective perception that combines various sensory attributes and is a critical factor in consumer appeal and comfort.³

Key Attributes: Handfeel encompasses qualities like:

- **Softness:** The perceived lack of stiffness or harshness.⁴
- **Smoothness:** Absence of surface irregularities or roughness.⁵
- **Stiffness/Flexibility:** Resistance to bending or deformation.
- **Fullness/Body:** Perceived thickness and substance.
- **Drape:** How the fabric hangs and folds.
- **Liveliness/Resilience:** How quickly it recovers from deformation (e.g., wrinkling).
- **Warmth/Coolness:** Thermal sensation on touch.

Factors Influenced by Finishing:

- **Softeners:** Silicone-based, fatty acid condensates, or other chemical softeners are widely used to reduce inter-fiber friction, imparting a smooth, silky, or luxurious feel.⁶
- **Mechanical Finishes:** Napping, brushing, sueding create a fuzzy, soft surface.⁷ Calendering can impart smoothness and luster.⁸
- **Enzyme Treatments:** Bio-polishing (e.g., cellulase for cotton) removes protruding fibers, leading to a smoother, less fuzzy surface and reduced pilling.⁹
- **Stiffening Agents:** Starches, resins, or specific polymers can be applied to increase stiffness, body, or crispness (e.g., for formal wear or interlinings).¹⁰
- **Shrinkage Control:** Compressive shrinkage (sanforization) can result in a fuller, softer hand by increasing fabric density.

2. Colour Fastness

Concept: Colour fastness refers to the resistance of a fabric's color to fading or bleeding when exposed to various agents encountered during its manufacture, use, and care.¹⁴ It is a crucial indicator of color quality and product longevity.

Key Factors Affecting Colour Fastness:

- **Dye Type:** The chemical structure of the dye and its affinity for the specific fiber type. Reactive dyes on cotton form covalent bonds, generally offering high fastness.¹⁵ Disperse dyes on polyester have good light fastness.¹⁶

- **Dyeing/Printing Method:** Proper dye penetration, fixation, and washing-off of unfixed dyes are critical.
- **Fiber Type:** Different fibers react differently to dyes and various external agents.¹⁷
- **Finishing Treatments:** Certain chemical finishes (e.g., durable press resins, softeners) can sometimes negatively impact color fastness if not applied carefully or if they interact adversely with the dye.¹⁸
- **Presence of UV Absorbers:** UV absorbers can improve light fastness by protecting the dye molecules from degradation.¹⁹

Grading: Results are typically graded on a scale of 1 to 5 (or 1 to 8 for light fastness), with 5 (or 8) indicating excellent fastness (no or negligible change/staining) and 1 indicating very poor fastness.²⁴ Grey scales for assessing color change and staining are used for visual comparison.

3. Durability

Concept: Durability refers to a textile's ability to withstand wear, stress, and environmental exposure over time without significant deterioration, maintaining its physical integrity and performance. It encompasses resistance to various forms of damage.

Key Aspects of Durability Influenced by Finishing:

- **Abrasion Resistance:** The ability of a fabric to resist surface wear and tear from rubbing against other materials.
 - **Finishes:** Coatings (e.g., polyurethane, acrylics), resin treatments, and silicone softeners can improve surface lubricity and resistance to abrasion.²⁵
- **Pilling Resistance:** The tendency of a fabric to form small balls of fibers (pills) on its surface due to abrasion during wear and washing.²⁶
 - **Finishes:** Anti-pilling finishes (often resin-based), enzyme treatments (bio-polishing), and certain mechanical finishes (shearing) can reduce pilling.²⁷
- **Tear Strength:** The force required to propagate a tear in a fabric once it has started.
 - **Finishes:** Some durable press finishes can reduce tear strength, but certain reinforcing coatings or impregnation with elastomers can improve it.
- **Tensile Strength (Breaking Strength):** The maximum stress a fabric can withstand before breaking under tension.²⁸
 - **Finishes:** While primarily determined by fiber and yarn properties, some protective coatings or stiffening agents can marginally affect it. Excessive harsh chemical treatments can reduce it.
- **Dimensional Stability (Shrinkage/Stretching Resistance):** The ability of a fabric to retain its original size and shape after washing, drying, or steaming.²⁹
 - **Finishes:**
 - **Compressive Shrinkage (Sanforization):** Mechanical pre-shrinking for woven fabrics, especially cotton.³⁰
 - **Resin Treatments (Durable Press/Wrinkle Resistance):** Cross-linking cellulose fibers to prevent swelling and shrinkage.³¹
 - **Heat Setting:** For synthetic fabrics (polyester, nylon) to stabilize their dimensions at high temperatures.
- **Seam Slippage Resistance:** The resistance of yarns to slip out of a seam under stress.

- **Finishes:** Fillers or resin treatments can sometimes increase fabric friction and reduce seam slippage.

These quality parameters are interconnected, and a balance often needs to be struck during textile finishing. For example, some finishes that enhance wrinkle resistance might slightly reduce tear strength or affect handfeel, requiring careful formulation and application to optimize the overall product quality for its intended end-use.

Laboratory Testing Methods For Evaluating Finished Textiles:

Laboratory testing methods for evaluating finished textiles **cover a range of physical, chemical, and performance characteristics to ensure quality and compliance with standards.** These tests assess properties like strength, colorfastness, dimensional stability, and the presence of harmful substances, ensuring the fabric meets specified requirements for its intended use.

Physical and Mechanical Testing:

- **Tensile Strength:** Measures the fabric's ability to withstand pulling forces before breaking, indicating its durability.
- **Tear Strength:** Determines the fabric's resistance to tearing, crucial for preventing garment damage.
- **Abrasion Resistance:** Assesses how well the fabric withstands surface wear and rubbing, often using methods like the Martindale or Wyzenbeek tests.
- **Pilling Resistance:** Evaluates the fabric's tendency to form pills (small balls of fiber) on the surface during wear.
- **Bursting Strength:** Measures the fabric's ability to withstand pressure from within, particularly important for certain applications.
- **Seam Strength:** Evaluates the strength of sewn seams, ensuring they don't fail under stress.
- **Dimensional Stability:** Assesses how much the fabric shrinks or stretches after washing or other treatments, affecting garment fit.
- **Fabric Thickness:** Measures the thickness of the fabric, which can influence its properties and performance.

Chemical Testing:

- **Fiber Identification:** Determines the composition of the fabric (e.g., cotton, polyester, wool) using microscopy, chemical tests, or burning tests.
- **Colorfastness:** Evaluates how well the fabric's color resists fading or transfer due to washing, light exposure, perspiration, or other factors.
- **Formaldehyde Testing:** Checks for the presence of formaldehyde, a chemical that can cause skin irritation, and is often restricted.

- **Heavy Metal Testing:** Determines the presence of heavy metals in fabric or surface coatings.
- **Azo Dye Testing:** Assesses the presence of banned azo dyes, which can be harmful.
- **Other Chemical Tests:** May include testing for specific chemicals like PCP (pentachlorophenol) or PAH (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), depending on regulations and product requirements.

Standard Test Methods and Regulations:

- **AATCC (American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists):** Provides standardized test methods, particularly for colorfastness and dyeing properties.
- **ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials):** Offers a wide range of textile testing standards, including those for strength, durability, and other properties.
- **ISO (International Organization for Standardization):** Develops global standards for textile testing, covering various aspects of fabric performance.
- **EU Regulations:** Include standards for textile labeling, banned substances (like certain dyes and chemicals), and general product safety.
- **US and Canadian Regulations:** Also have specific standards and regulations related to textile testing and labeling.

Statistical Process Control (SPC) Techniques For Quality Monitoring:

Statistical Process Control (SPC) is a powerful methodology that uses statistical methods to monitor and control a process to ensure it operates efficiently, produces high-quality products, and minimizes waste. It helps distinguish between routine, expected variations (common causes) and unusual, problematic variations (special causes) that require investigation and corrective action.

The core idea behind SPC is to move from **detection-based quality control** (inspecting products at the end to find defects) to **prevention-based quality control** (monitoring the process in real-time to prevent defects from occurring).

Key SPC Techniques for Quality Monitoring:

The foundation of SPC lies in a set of tools, primarily **control charts**, supplemented by other analytical tools to understand process behavior.

I. The Seven Basic Quality Tools (7-QC Tools): These are fundamental to SPC and problem-solving.

1. Control Charts:

- **Concept:** The most important SPC tool. They are graphical representations of process data plotted over time, with statistically determined upper and lower control limits (UCL and LCL) and a center line (process average).

- **Purpose:** To monitor process stability, detect shifts or trends, and identify "out-of-control" conditions indicating special causes of variation.
- 2. **Pareto Chart:**
 - **Concept:** A bar chart that displays data in descending order of frequency or importance. Based on the Pareto Principle (80/20 rule), suggesting that 80% of problems come from 20% of causes.
 - **Purpose:** To prioritize problems or causes of defects, focusing improvement efforts on the most significant issues.
- 3. **Histogram:**
 - **Concept:** A bar graph that shows the frequency distribution of a data set.
 - **Purpose:** To understand the shape, center, and spread of a process's output. It helps visualize common cause variation and assess if data follows a normal distribution.
- 4. **Cause-and-Effect Diagram (Fishbone/Ishikawa Diagram):**
 - **Concept:** A diagram that helps identify, categorize, and graphically display all possible causes for a given problem (effect). Causes are typically grouped into categories like Man, Machine, Material, Method, Measurement, and Environment.
 - **Purpose:** Facilitates brainstorming and root cause analysis for identified "out-of-control" conditions or quality problems.
- 5. **Scatter Diagram:**
 - **Concept:** A graph that plots pairs of numerical data, with one variable on each axis, to look for a relationship between them.
 - **Purpose:** To identify potential correlations between two variables (e.g., dyeing temperature and color shade variation).
- 6. **Check Sheet:**
 - **Concept:** A structured form for collecting and analyzing data. It's a simple, paper-based tool that makes data collection easy and consistent.
 - **Purpose:** To systematically gather data on defect types, frequencies, or occurrences, providing raw input for other SPC tools.
- 7. **Stratification:**
 - **Concept:** A technique to separate data collected from a variety of sources or conditions so that patterns can be seen (e.g., separating defect data by shift, machine, operator, or raw material batch).
 - **Purpose:** To break down complex problems and pinpoint specific sources of variation, making analysis more effective.

Implementation Steps for SPC:

1. **Define the Process and its Critical-to-Quality (CTQ) Characteristics:** Identify what needs to be monitored (e.g., fabric GSM, color shade value, tear strength, number of defects per meter).
2. **Qualify the Measurement System (MSA):** Ensure that the instruments and methods used to measure the CTQs are accurate and reliable.
3. **Establish a Data Collection Plan:** Determine sample size, sampling frequency, and how data will be recorded. Rational subgrouping is key to ensure within-subgroup variation represents common causes and between-subgroup variation reveals special causes.
4. **Collect Initial Data:** Gather enough data points (e.g., 20-25 subgroups for control chart setup) to establish a baseline for the process.

5. **Select the Appropriate Control Chart:** Choose the correct chart type based on the data (variable or attribute) and subgroup size.
6. **Calculate Control Limits:** Use the collected baseline data to statistically calculate the Upper Control Limit (UCL), Lower Control Limit (LCL), and Center Line (CL) for the chosen control chart.
7. **Monitor the Process:** Continuously plot new data points on the control chart in real-time.
8. **Analyze the Control Chart for Signals:** Look for points outside control limits or patterns that indicate an "out-of-control" condition (special cause variation).
9. **Investigate and Take Corrective Action:** When a special cause is detected, immediately stop the process (if critical), investigate the root cause using tools like cause-and-effect diagrams, implement corrective actions, and verify their effectiveness.
10. **Maintain and Update:** Continuously review the SPC system, retrain personnel, and recalculate control limits if fundamental process changes occur.

Benefits of SPC in Quality Monitoring:

- **Proactive Quality Control:** Shifts from detecting defects to preventing them.
- **Reduced Variation:** Identifies and eliminates sources of variation, leading to more consistent product quality.
- **Cost Savings:** Minimizes rework, scrap, warranty claims, and the need for 100% inspection.
- **Increased Productivity:** Stable processes are more efficient and predictable.
- **Improved Decision Making:** Provides data-driven insights into process performance.
- **Enhanced Customer Satisfaction:** Consistent product quality leads to happier customers.
- **Continuous Improvement Culture:** Fosters a mindset of ongoing process optimization.
- **Process Understanding:** Helps gain a deeper understanding of how a process behaves under normal conditions.

By systematically applying SPC techniques, organizations can achieve significant improvements in product quality, process efficiency, and overall competitiveness.

Remedial Measures For Addressing Quality Issues In Textile Finishing:

Quality control in the textile industry involves systematic processes to ensure that textile products—ranging from raw materials to finished garments—meet predefined standards. In the context of quality control in the clothing industry, it encompasses testing, inspections, and corrective actions to eliminate defects and maintain consistency. Unlike quality assurance, which focuses on process improvement, quality control verifies that products adhere to specifications.

In the garment and apparel sectors, quality control in the clothing industry is vital to address issues like fabric defects, stitching errors, or sizing inconsistencies. By integrating advanced tools and software, manufacturers can enhance efficiency, reduce waste, and deliver superior products.

What is a QMS?

A Quality Management System (QMS) is a structured framework designed to standardize, monitor, and improve an organization's processes, particularly in areas like quality control in the clothing industry and quality control in the garment industry. By leveraging advanced QMS

software, businesses can reduce errors, enhance customer satisfaction, and comply with industry regulations. In the textile industry, a QMS ensures that every stage of production—from raw material inspection to final product delivery—meets stringent quality standards.

The Importance Of Quality Assurance In The Textile Industry

Quality assurance in the textile industry complements **quality control in the clothing industry** by focusing on preventing defects through well-designed processes. It involves setting standards, training staff, and continuously improving workflows. Together, quality control and assurance create a robust framework for delivering high-quality textiles.

For example, a strong quality assurance program ensures that suppliers meet material standards, while **quality control in the clothing industry** verifies that the final product aligns with customer expectations. This dual approach minimizes risks and enhances operational integrity.

Quality Control In The Garment Industry: Key Considerations

Quality control in the garment industry is a critical aspect of textile production, focusing specifically on the manufacturing of wearable clothing items. This process ensures that garments meet aesthetic, functional, and regulatory standards before reaching consumers. Quality control in the garment industry involves rigorous checks at various stages, from fabric selection to final assembly, to ensure durability, comfort, and visual appeal.

Key considerations for effective quality control in the garment industry include:

- **Material Selection:** Ensuring fabrics meet standards for strength, texture, and colorfastness.
- **Production Monitoring:** Regular inspections during cutting, sewing, and finishing to catch defects early.
- **Standardized Testing:** Conducting tests like seam strength, tear resistance, and shrinkage to validate garment quality.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** Adhering to safety standards, such as flame resistance or chemical restrictions.
- **Consumer Feedback Integration:** Using customer complaints to identify recurring issues and improve processes.

One of the most widely used fabric inspection methods is the **4-Point System**, which helps grade fabric quality by assigning penalty points to defects based on their size and severity. This system allows manufacturers to objectively assess whether a fabric roll meets predefined quality standards or should be rejected, ensuring only acceptable materials proceed through the production process.

By prioritizing quality control in the garment industry, manufacturers can reduce returns, enhance customer satisfaction, and maintain a competitive edge. Tools like the Tekmon QMS, with features such as automated inspections and real-time reporting, are instrumental in achieving these outcomes.

Essential Quality Control Checks In Textile Production

To achieve excellence in **quality control in the clothing industry**, manufacturers must implement a series of checks at every stage of production. Below is a comprehensive list of quality control checks that clothing must pass before reaching the final stage:

1. **Raw Material Inspection:** Verify the quality of fibers, yarns, and fabrics for strength, color consistency, and texture.
2. **Fabric Testing:** Conduct tests for shrinkage, colorfastness, tensile strength, and pilling resistance.
3. **Cutting Accuracy:** Ensure patterns are cut precisely to avoid sizing issues.
4. **Stitching and Seam Inspection:** Check for loose threads, uneven stitches, or weak seams.
5. **Dyeing and Printing Quality:** Confirm uniform color application and print alignment.
6. **Fitting and Sizing Verification:** Test garments for accurate sizing and fit across samples.
7. **Accessory Inspection:** Examine zippers, buttons, and labels for durability and functionality.
8. **Packaging and Labeling:** Ensure proper labeling (care instructions, size, brand) and defect-free packaging.
9. **Final Product Audit:** Perform random sampling using Acceptable Quality Level (AQL) standards to detect defects.
10. **Compliance Check:** Verify adherence to safety and regulatory standards, such as REACH or CPSIA.

By following this checklist, manufacturers can address potential issues early, ensuring that only high-quality products reach the market through effective **quality control in the clothing industry**.