VISUAL ARTS

Overall grade boundaries

Higher & standard level option A

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-10	11-25	26-40	41-55	56-67	68-82	83-100

Higher & standard level option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-12	13-24	25-39	40-54	55-67	68-82	83-100

Please note that, in order to achieve consistency with standards in previous examination sessions, an adjustment was applied to the overall mark boundaries and to those for the externally marked components.

Introduction

The report sets out to provide information about the May 2014 examination session as well as to provide some advice to assist in improving the achievement of candidates in future examination sessions. Although the two components for each of the four visual arts course options are separately examined, the tasks that candidates undertake in developing and creating their work are integrated. For this reason, while the two middle sections of this report are dedicated to specific feedback on each of the two components, the first part and the recommendations for the teaching of future candidates refer to both components.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

It should be stated at the outset that the examiners and moderators commented on how wide-ranging the quality of work was, with some of it achieving very high standards, however, given the nature and purpose of this document, the focus of much of the first section is on the areas of weakness that appeared more evident during the May 2014 session.

Candidate statement and 1,000-word statement

In the May 2014 session, for the first time, candidates were offered the opportunity of submitting a 1,000-word statement instead of the interview. This in some cases appeared to be a successful choice, but there seems to have been a number of candidates who didn't understand the nature of this task and completed this document as if it were just an extension of the 300-word candidate statement.

Teachers and candidates are kindly reminded that, as detailed in the *Visual arts e-submission teacher guidance material* available on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC), the two documents are separate.

The 300-word statement is the candidate statement and should describe the candidate's artistic development throughout the course.

The 1,000-word written commentary replaces the interview and should therefore respond to the kind of questions that would have been answered in an interview, about the studio work submitted for assessment by candidates entered for option A or about the investigation workbook pages selected for assessment by candidates entered for option B. Care must be taken for students only to discuss work that has been submitted for assessment.

In order to better assist candidates and schools in differentiating between the 300-word candidate statement and the 1,000-word statement, from 2015, the 1,000-word statement will be referred to as the 1,000-word commentary.

The 300-word statement remains a mandated requirement of the course, and schools should provide students with the candidate statement template which is available on the Online Curriculum Centre.

As a replacement for the interview, the 1,000-word commentary could be completed following a conversation with the class teacher about the selected studio work if studying option A or about the submitted selection of investigation workbook pages if studying option B. The teacher could use open-ended questions to help elicit responses from the student that articulate how the sample work addresses the mark band descriptors.

Following the comments received by many examiners and moderators, it appears important to emphasize that for option B candidates, the focus of the 300-word candidate statement should be their investigation workbook. The critical analysis of their investigation should provide a précis of their investigation, consider the focus, concerns and content of their investigation, outline the sources used and provide some evaluation of the skills and techniques they have developed. Likewise, the option B candidate interview or 1,000-word commentary needs to focus predominantly on the investigation undertaken, rather than on the studio work completed, although it is very appropriate for option B candidates to make references to the studio pieces when illustrating the connection between the investigation and studio practice.

Photography

It was pleasing to see a growing number of candidates working with lens based media. However, a number of examiners reported that the digital photography portfolios tended to be simplistic and weak: submitting a series of simple digital photographs will not and did not achieve very highly.

In some cases photographic images were little more than holiday snaps, material to support these having little substance or understanding of the visual language, nor sufficient development from their original exploration/experimentation. When photographs are

predominately snapshots rather than an exploration into the visual qualities of the medium it is difficult to award high marks.

Similarly, the little video work that was submitted was not always experimental and in some cases tended not to explore the many creative options available in this art form.

"Meaning"

Examiners and moderators were very pleased to see a number of portfolios where evidence of inventiveness and a successful resolution was achieved, but they commented that, in many cases, students only focused on the use of the material and not on the idea or the content of the artistic work.

The work of stronger candidates showed evidence of good preparation before the final studio piece and some research and/or interesting approaches to the subject were included in their investigation workbooks.

Weaker students produced final pieces without really nurturing an idea and seeing it through to a meaningful conclusion. Some candidates attempted to explain or justify weak work by describing the hidden meanings of it: during the interview, these candidates attributed significance and symbolism to their art. However, without more evidence to explain and support these "meanings", this was seen as unconvincing. The studio work should show a synthesis of skill and concept and this means that all candidates should genuinely engage in a personal investigation, reflection and critical evaluation during the creative process.

Importance of observational drawing/working from direct observation

Examiner reports consistently placed emphasis on the usefulness of basic observational skills and many felt that weaker portfolios often reflected a lack of engagement in this area. Life drawing was referred to as a particularly useful exercise but almost any observational work was regarded as beneficial: visual exploration of the world through direct observation - drawing, modelling, first-hand photographs, etc - marked the better candidates and consistently led to work which was better resolved, extended personal boundaries and demonstrated confidence and inventiveness.

In some schools it was encouraging to see the range of work submitted, and to see connections between the depth of brainstorming and experimentation in investigation workbooks and the variety and inventiveness of many of the studio work outcomes. In these schools there appeared to be less use of secondary source images and a more widespread adherence to objective drawing and, most pleasingly, many examples of life-drawing, both as a starting point and as an end.

Use/misuse of digital media in the creative process

In the production of some pieces of studio work the candidate clearly utilized digital media but the process was not evident: some paintings were made by painting over digital photos that had been printed onto canvas or paper. This can look technically impressive at first glance but is not a demonstration of skill in the use of the paint medium or image planning. With the

increasing use of digital media, it is even more essential that the creative process is evident in the investigation workbook pages selected for submission. Candidates should always make sure that there is enough evidence of their technical development.

Appropriation and copying – the range and acknowledgement of sources

Examiners commented on portfolios that incorporated images in artworks as a form of appropriation. Appropriation in art refers to the practice of artists using pre-existing objects or images in their art with little modification of the original.

The reasons for using images in appropriation are complex and appropriation can be a valid and successful process when handled creatively and sensitively. The work of others is nowadays very accessible online, and candidates need to be aware that if they decide to use the work of others this should always be cited appropriately. Candidates need to be made aware that using and copying the work of others, if not citing it properly, constitutes plagiarism.

Apart from the practice of appropriation and homage, what is becoming more and more an area of concern is the widespread practice of copying downloaded images. In some schools the use of images downloaded and copied from the internet was all too frequently seen. Candidates who submitted work that was a quick, easy and direct copy of an image from the Internet are potentially plagiarizing and run the risk of not being awarded a Diploma. They are also failing to become involved in a creative developmental process: copying in this context removes the need for an engagement that is honest and born of a worthwhile candidate experience of the subject matter.

Teachers have a role in this context to ensure that submitted files are not simply copies of images found online by emphasizing the need for, and requiring evidence of, a developmental process. Teachers are encouraged to offer guidance to candidates on how to demonstrate modifications/refinements more effectively and to instruct their students on how to always properly cite source material.

Some portfolios presented direct copies of other artists' work. These may be a valid form of technique development or a way for students to become familiar with the work of some of the big masters; producing copies of artwork might also be a demonstration of technical competence, but it certainly shows no evidence of the confidence, inventiveness, or "informed, reflective judgment that challenges and extends personal boundaries". Therefore these works won't match the assessment criteria in the higher mark bands. Some candidates drew or painted in their workbooks the artworks under investigation and did not credit these, nor did they include photographs of originals. The consistent and correct acknowledgment of sources seems to remain for many an area that needs improvement.

Too often, information included in the investigation workbooks was copied verbatim from the internet: this is of no value and if not carefully acknowledged verges on academic dishonesty. Many examiners and moderators noted little other than secondary sources being used in the investigation workbooks, and a vast majority of web-based sources, often from sites with dubious academic merit.

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional

The theme

The issue of "the theme" is still misunderstood and there are still many schools that seem to believe that a theme is required – this is not the case.

Certainly working around an idea, theme or issue can help to generate a cohesive and coherent exhibition, and there were successful examples of exhibitions built around an idea or reflecting a journey - but for a number of candidates the theme was misunderstood and it became more like a straight-jacket.

In some cases it seemed that candidates erroneously defined and adhered to a theme for two years. For many candidates working within a theme was disadvantageous and led them to neglect artistic exploration. This inevitably resulted in a constrained and repetitive portfolio. Sometimes candidates chose very general themes such as "happiness" and struggled to interpret this in meaningful and creative ways. Where candidates produced investigative work about subjects such as "dance" and "gay rights" that was unrelated to visual arts, it was difficult to credit their efforts.

Exploration and experimentation

Many portfolios demonstrated the value of assignments that encourage exploration and experimentation: the productive use of open-ended assignments in the first year frequently gave candidates a good grounding in a variety of media and artistic concepts and allowed them to build on this to follow a more personal path in the second year. Some of the best entries reflected a clear and structured "journey" from original stimulus to final outcome. Results were most favorable when the candidate presented the idea, researched it, experimented with a number of approaches and techniques, showed processes and inspirations, then moved on to review the work and refined it in the final outcome.

Analysis and reflection

Candidates with access to museum visits and class trips to other cities, as well as those who have reflected on their creative work in their own time and/or over holiday breaks, generally submitted work that demonstrated more individualized approaches and responded to broader ideas. Some schools had limited outside sources but did not confine themselves to web-based research and class lectures. They created personal and reflective work from local sources such as a local political event, a personal and emotional event and the artwork of peers.

Candidates supported closely by their teacher and who were encouraged to reflect and explain their artistic choices while analysing and creating images and artifacts, tended to achieve in the higher mark bands. Often examiners and moderators observed that in the investigation books more effort was necessary to organize and synthesize research and investigation, with more reflection and analysis of candidates' own and others' artworks.

Understanding the course requirements and the assessment criteria

The examiners encountered examples of entire schools submitting for assessment good to excellent work and entire schools producing mediocre or naïve work. This suggests that the range, suitability and overall quality of the work of a whole school was in some cases determined almost entirely on how well the course requirements had been understood by teachers and candidates and that occasionally the candidates' results have been hindered mainly by a lack of understanding of the course requirements and assessment criteria.

Teachers must ensure that their students are appropriately prepared for the demands of the course. Candidates should be made fully aware of the assessment criteria against which their work will be assessed. Ongoing formative assessment processes are important in preparing the candidates to present their art work. A real understanding of how to incorporate in the course the learner profile is also absolutely critical to the candidates' success.

Some examiners reported that sometimes it seemed as though candidates choosing to study the Option B of the course were not fully aware of its demands and erroneously considered it simply an easy option for students who are weaker in their art making. It must be noted that the mark band descriptors for option B require a significantly higher level of critical thinking and sophistication to be demonstrated in the investigation workbook than at Option A. In the "B" options of the IB visual arts course, candidates should enjoy discovering, deconstructing, and analysing works of art. Otherwise, they should be directed towards the "A" options.

Work reflecting recommended course hours and amount of work required

It seems important to remind schools that the IB recommends 240 hours of teaching for the HL course and 150 hours for candidates opting for the SL course.

In a number of cases the examiners reported that whole schools didn't submit the minimum number of images or pages required. It is important that candidates submit the correct quantity of work as required for each option and each level in the *Visual arts guide – first examinations 2009*, p. 19: by doing so they have a better chance to fulfil all the assessment criteria.

It should be quite obvious that candidates who submit images for fewer than 12 studio pieces at HLA should compensate for this with the evidence of being engaged with complex, challenging, highly time-consuming art work.

Please note that in the case of the investigation workbook the guide refers to the number of single pages that candidates should submit. When two pages (or more) are reproduced in one screen, this counts as two (or more) pages.

Studio work higher & standard level

Grade boundaries option A

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-13	14-16	17-20

Grade boundaries option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-14	15-17	18-20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Examiners reported seeing a wide range of quality in work, varying from quite basic levels of competence to candidates that had reached a high standard of sophistication and skill with their work. A few candidates pushed boundaries to create consistently strong pieces. It was refreshing to see that some candidates drew on TOK, literature, music, artist workshops, and gallery visits for inspiration, though more expert guidance still seemed to be needed for candidates with a clear interest in video and animation.

Stronger portfolios often appeared to be the result of candidates being exposed to techniques and art first hand, being encouraged to making art through a process of investigation and experimentation and receiving clear direction about the course requirements and the assessment criteria against which their work will be judged. It is quite obvious that the performance of candidates was enhanced considerably when they had been guided in the development of personal skills and ideas, had been stimulated to thoroughly engage with creative projects, had been offered a structured approach to critical and contextual studies.

For both option A and option B, 2D works in painting and drawing were once again the most popular, while 3D work was limited. Digital-based work has continued to develop, particularly in photography.

Many 2D pieces were traditional in nature (eg drawing and painting), however it was pleasing to see also some exciting large scale pieces that were more experimental in nature, sometimes involving texture and/or abstraction, as well as some interesting digital images or videos. It might be worth mentioning that, although size is not specified within the assessment criteria, the choice of it sometimes might relate to some of the descriptors (ie confidence, risk taking, challenging and extending personal boundaries, understanding ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression).

Candidate performance against each criterion

Understanding of the ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression

Understanding the ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression was frequently the result of good and consistent integration between the investigation workbook and the studio work: exploring different ideas and techniques in investigative pages clearly influenced and informed studio work that showed evidence of understanding the ideas and techniques. This descriptor also reflects the importance of gallery visits.

Often the best work in the context of the ideas and techniques of artistic expression appeared in schools where the teacher taught concepts, contexts and skills and provided direction in the first year but became more of an adviser and guide in the second year.

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional

Some of the best work, achieving highly in this criterion, occurred in schools where there was a balance between exploring ideas and exploring techniques. Also it seemed particularly positive when, in addition to looking at the ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression in the work of others, candidates were given an opportunity to work in response to their findings, developing their own ideas and technical skills. Thus, they were encouraged to understand their own work within the broader context of visual arts.

Production of personally relevant artworks that show exploration of ideas reflecting cultural and historical awareness and artistic qualities

A number of teachers and candidates did not understand this admittedly complex descriptor.

Firstly, "personal relevance" was sometimes misinterpreted as being enough in itself to achieve the descriptor: the assumption seemed to be that if the work had personal relevance, then it was fine. This is not the case; for example there were several cases where candidates produced stock "sports-related" images because they liked sport or were themselves athletes. This interpretation ignores the more challenging "exploration of ideas" part of the sentence, and this absence often had a negative impact on the marks awarded.

There are three components to be explored: cultural awareness, historical awareness and artistic qualities. In the strongest portfolios, it was easy to see how this criterion had been fulfilled, with a variety of sophisticated approaches and artworks reflecting an intelligent response to artistic qualities, evidence of thoughtful historical awareness and creative ideas reflecting an understanding of culture.

Many candidates demonstrated a superficial and simplistic approach to culture. In the weaker examples candidates appear to have been assigned a culture to investigate and then create work that mimicked the researched idea. Many artworks relating to "culture" were not creative. Candidates need advice and guidance in this area and must appreciate that they need to research their ideas and clarify their focus to make works that are not superficial and clichéd.

Some schools worked in response to a "cultural theme" but this interpretation of culture was also in some cases superficial, leading to trite and stereotypical images. In other schools cultural references seem to have been provided as an afterthought ("this is my cultural piece" was heard in interviews).

Some schools were setting specific "cultural projects" in order to specifically meet this criteria, but knowledge and understanding was not fully integrated into investigations.

Some of the more successful pieces were produced in response to local issues or created through a more imaginative and creative exploration of idea and image. Pushing boundaries and arriving at more than one visual conclusion of an idea yielded more favourable results.

Many candidates favored exploring contemporary or recent art ideas and qualities rather than looking at a longer perspective when considering historical awareness, (although the impact of Pop Art and particularly Andy Warhol still seems rather disproportionate and these repetitive allusions were not always successful).

The most successful portfolios wove cultural awareness into personal expression, and traditional art forms or cultural ideas were referenced, but not copied to fulfill the requirements of an assignment. Cultural and historical awareness seemed genuinely at the heart of some of the work and some candidates were profoundly invested in their own and other cultures.

Personal relevance is not necessarily in contrast to "the teacher's assignment": in some cases the assignment was very open ended and encouraged the creation of personally relevant explorations.

Development of ideas and strategies for expression

In some cases the final studio works tended to look very much like the initial idea. Thoughtful progression and the ability to review, modify and refine ideas are areas of some concern. In terms of refinement, particularly, many candidates were content with an initial outcome of a studio piece.

In the interview, when asked where a piece of work/studio exploration would/might go next, some candidates appeared not to understand the relevance of this question, some argued about time management issues, while some were happy to take the opportunity to discuss potential developments. It seems that candidates who were more accomplished when analyzing the visual qualities of work of others tended also to be better at developing different strategies for expressing their ideas.

The examiners reported that some candidates used single sketches as the sole idea for a project, while other candidates created work with apparently no idea in mind, providing little evidence of working through strategies for expressing. Spontaneous art creation can sometimes be successful but will not be rewarded in this assessment descriptor.
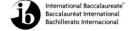
As mentioned in the previous section, weaker candidates often used images and ideas taken directly from the internet as inspiration for or as the subject of the work itself rather than going through a process of development. Stronger work had notes, sketches and experimentation documenting the process, and changes in response to the unexpected. The more inventive works sometimes involved images personally relevant to the candidates (eg of themselves, of their interior/exterior environments etc) as resources for developing their work.

Sensitivity to materials and their use. Review, modification and refinement of the body of work; resolution of ideas and medium

In a number of schools there was a tendency to experiment with a large number of materials and techniques. In some cases this tended to led to a lack of proficiency and seems to have hindered the development of meaningful refinement and resolution of ideas and medium: candidates using a wide variety of media are unlikely to master any.

It might be worth mentioning that, when examiners found there was evidence of profound sensitivity to materials, this was invariably the result of a sustained focus on the part of the candidate.

Technical competence

Technical competence was often closely linked to the candidate's opportunities to work extensively with at least one medium/technique. Some examiners also tied competence to an understanding of the importance of work from direct observation and basic drawing and painting skills.

Obviously, a "one-off" experience with a medium will not facilitate the development of skill in that medium, and more time with this medium could help candidates improve the quality of their work. It is also true that some of the candidates arrive at IB visual arts course as weaker candidates, and these candidates would benefit from continued instruction in basic technical skills all while developing ideas for expression.

Technical competence in digital media appeared also variable: in some cases strong technical digital works were presented with very good artistic awareness, but, more in general, it appeared that it was in particular digital and new media artwork that failed to show an accomplished resolution of ideas and medium. Simply altering the image brightness or contrast in Photoshop is not demonstrating technical competence. Candidates working with digital media need to remember that their creative process needs to be effectively documented.

Confidence, inventiveness

Confidence is misunderstood by some as being about how they present their work: unfortunately there were again examples of confident, enthusiastic and articulate candidate interviews when this confidence was not matched or justified by a depth of creativity, inventiveness or competence in the candidate's body of work.

Confidence in the IB visual arts course is related to competence and accomplishment.

Sometimes confidence was the result of candidates being directed by their teacher to maintain focus with a particular medium - and consequently gain refined technical competence. At other times this was the candidate's own direction.

The candidate's inventiveness was often the result of a good understanding of historical and cultural ideas as well as proficiency with drawing skills. In order to be inventive the candidates need to understand what has gone before: candidates submitting predictable images under the impression that they are imaginative or inventive are clearly unaware of the relevant art historical context. More time spent experimenting and developing skills with materials also resulted in more confident work.

Informed reflective judgment

It was very pleasing to see some of the stronger candidates being able to comment on their own studio works with both approaches and vocabulary gained from the research and analysis conducted in their investigation workbooks.

The examiners commented that it was good to see a number of portfolios that showed evidence of a thorough creative process with candidates being engaged and challenging their own personal boundaries while refining their artistic creations.

Investigation workbooks higher & standard level

Grade boundaries option A

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	18-20

Grade boundaries option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	11-13	14-16	17-20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

In general the examiners commented on how wide-ranging the quality of work was.

In many cases, the investigation workbook pages submitted for assessment demonstrated that workbooks were used in a sustained manner throughout the course. Exceptional candidates presented rich and personal investigations. In some cases, however, the investigation workbook pages examined read like a report on art class assignments and art lectures, without the necessary further personal reflection or analysis.

On occasion, the investigation workbooks seemed to have been completed in part retrospectively and, without much text, did not support the studio work that in the submitted photographs appeared as well-developed artwork. At times, the candidate statements indicated an investigative focus and organization that was not demonstrated in the IWB pages. Occasionally a number of apparent "tick box" operations happened, with candidates fulfilling requirements with little or no real comprehension shown. In some cases, the investigation workbooks presented did not meet the component requirements and needed improvement at all levels. Very poor submissions included examples of sketchbook-style workbooks with little or no annotation, which simply did not meet the assessment criteria. In weaker schools, workbooks were often identical, and showed very few hours of commitment, making it clear that appropriate course/teaching hours had not been applied.

Overall, the most successful candidates seemed to be those who embrace the IB learner profile. They are passionate about inquiry, and their investigation into other artists, styles, movements, artworks, cultures, issues emerging from culture and art-making practices and techniques informs, directs and motivates their art-making. They explore, develop and use a range of approaches and critical strategies in their investigation and art-making and their investigation workbook is their constant companion. It is used with regularity throughout their studio practice with sophistication.

As in previous years, in option A, the suitability and range of work submitted was very broad. Understanding and developing the role of the investigation workbook, both as a research tool and a place to show ideas and develop studio work, proved to be an ongoing challenge for

many candidates. Also the selection of pages for submission remained a problem at times. However, overall and encouragingly, a continued improvement was noted by the moderators.

Most investigations met the criteria to some extent, but some moderators commented that there seemed to be too little of the higher mark band quality of work. Most examples fell within the average range. As always, it was disappointing where candidates produced outstanding studio work but failed to achieve a similar standard of work in the investigation workbook.

In option B, the range of work submitted was generally suitable with an increase in quality in HL submissions at the highest levels and more disappointing results with SL at the lowest levels.

In both option A and option B, it was pleasing to see some very good examples of digital investigation workbooks. It must be noted that referencing in the e-workbook was at times very accurate but in some cases images taken from websites were not acknowledged.

Most candidates investigated at least some artworks. These were mainly exemplified by contemporary practice in Europe and North America. Favorites included Street Art, Pop Art, American Abstract Expressionism, Art Nouveau and early 20th century European masters like Picasso. However it is pleasing to see that contemporary artists in Asia and China are featuring more.

There was, as always, a lot of purely narrative, biographical information on artists, with little or no connection to candidates' own work. When the candidates' analysis of artworks tended to be organized just around artist biographies and formal analysis, the investigation often neglected to explore context and was lacking in critical consideration and reflection. Many unrelated, set projects were seen, with an overall lack of potential for depth or personal exploration. Cross-cultural comparison was rare but where this happened, it was sometimes very good.

In many workbooks, social issues (eg "for my social activism piece…") and topics explored had been researched in some depth but there was little visual art context or connection included, meaning criteria were not met. Personal experiences and views were more often the focus of the investigations, rather than cultural and historical studies within the field of art and design. Where candidates produced investigative work that was unrelated to visual arts, even if interesting issues were tackled, it was difficult to credit their efforts. In a few cases, the links with TOK critical thinking were refreshing.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Analyses and compares perceptively art from different cultures and times, and considers it thoughtfully for its function and significance

As usual, research was often focused on the 20th century "standard" artists, and the selection of what to include in the investigation didn't always seem to be the result of a reasoned personal choice by the candidate. Occasionally, the selection didn't present materials of appropriate cultural and/or artistic significance. Artists, rather than artworks, were often the

focus of the research and this is not what is required by the assessment criteria. Teachers must guide candidates in the selection of appropriate artists to investigate.

Where art from other cultures had been considered, it was often examined in isolation. There was rarely evidence of how different cultures and times had impacted subsequent artists, making for huge leaps, often from primitive to contemporary with no connections at all.

In higher-achieving candidates' submissions, the majority of investigation workbooks demonstrated a thoughtful analysis and comparison of art from different cultures and times, and usually a careful consideration for its function and significance. Other candidates reported on web-based only research with or without images and text. A few candidates presented a personal research, based on their experience and emotions with little or no reference to other artists or cultures. In the weaker samples, candidates only described their own work, without analyzing art from other artists, without connections with their own works or with cultural contexts.

The comparison and analysis of art from different cultures tends to remains a weak area overall. At times, moderators noted only some superficial references and some analytical studies: on the whole this was an unsatisfactory criterion for many centres.

Development of an appropriate range of effective skills, techniques and processes when making and analysing images and artifacts

The development of skills, techniques and processes when making art was mostly focused, but analysis in investigation often followed the same predictable format. Few (if any) candidates in option A chose to analyse artworks through practical exploration. Planning and process documentation was often seen with candidates writing in retrospect. Media exploration was a hugely under-explored area. Many colour "blobs" were applied to pages, being labelled as "media experiments", but sustained, properly annotated, experimentation was rarely seen.

Candidates achieving in the higher mark bands demonstrated the work in progress at different stages, including images, text and titles, integrating personal reflection and insight into the work and that of others. On occasion, material demonstrations of techniques and processes were without image or text, at times unrelated to candidates' studio work.

In option B, where candidates had the confidence to present skilled visual analysis, sometimes diagrammatically, occasionally as thumbnail drawings, the results were excellent. There were strong demonstrations of media development at the higher levels where students had deliberately engaged in extending interpretation through informed practice. Most candidates had managed to incorporate imagery from other artists into their displays but analysis still evaded the lower levels. More successful displays included good reportage of processes and not just reported end results.

Demonstrates coherent, focused and individual investigative strategies into visual qualities, ideas and their contexts, an appropriate range of different approaches towards their study, and some fresh connections between them

This area was variable and wavered between serious coherent focus on a limited range of themes that were given ample consideration to extremely liberal choices where there was little direction. Reliance on Internet as a singular form of investigation is still prevalent in many cases. This criterion looks towards an organised mind, not easy for those candidates who used the investigation workbook simply as a repository of random things seen and experienced.

Most candidates showed some degree of focus and organisation in their investigation but relied on only one style of investigative strategy. Stronger candidates demonstrated coherent, focused and individual investigative strategies and a range of different approaches with some informed connections between their work and that of others. However, the application of a range of different approaches using alternate visual qualities was weak in many cases and the investigations often showed lack of coherence. Examiners sometimes also commented on how limited the reflection and the critical observation were, and they occasionally were under the impression that modification happened after studio work was completed.

Investigative strategies in some centres were almost all the same and lacked practical exploration.

Demonstrates considerable depth and breadth through the successful development and synthesis of ideas and thoroughly explained connections between the work and that of others

In general, reasonable depth and breadth was shown and some connections were made with the work presented and that of others; the stronger candidates used this reflection to push the investigation further. Breadth was often more prevalent than depth, particularly amongst students with little focus who tried to cover multiple ideas. More successful students made extremely thorough, well thought out connections between contemporary practice and individual development. Meeting artists directly, field trips and museum visits almost always made an impact and should be highly encouraged practice as those who did not do this tended to lose these connections. The connections between candidates' studio work and the work of other artists was at times clear but candidates appeared too directly derivative. It was disappointing, on occasion, to see neither depth nor breadth demonstrated: candidates used phrases such as "I really like this artist's work" or "I would like to make a piece like that" often without explanation through text or image.

True depth was rarely evident when candidates wanted to show that they actually understood art work within the broader context. Analysis generally related only to formal elements and principles of the work at face-value. Where candidates had achieved breadth, depth and strong connections between research and their own work, and had used a range of approaches, the studio work was generally also stronger.

Effective and accurate use of the specialist vocabulary of visual arts

In most cases investigation workbooks were reasonably sufficient in this area and generally examiners noted improved vocabulary being used this year. Many candidates demonstrated some careful and accurate use of the specialist vocabulary of visual arts. It was evident that some teachers had actually taught candidates how to analyse artworks in an organized,

focused way, and to use specialised visual arts terminology. Nevertheless greater usage of critical vocabulary when analysing artwork might be a skill to be developed more thoroughly. The examiners noted that there seemed to be a number of teachers who decided that a formulaic approach to elements and principles was a good way to "cover" art vocabulary. While this succeeded at a superficial level, the pages could have been better used by connecting relevant elements and principles to the development of the candidate's own work.

The use of a specialist vocabulary stems from informed discussion, analysis and reading. Giving plenty of opportunities to the candidates to practice these forms of exchange and requiring them to occasionally read some art critics and more academic texts, as well as showing or encouraging them to watch some visual arts documentaries, could help developing specialist language. Students who scored low in the second criteria often scored lower here too.

Uses appropriate range of sources and acknowledges them properly

The examiners found that citation was generally better and more consistent this session, although disappointingly few candidates had been trained to use their school's conventional methods for acknowledging resources, just as in other subjects, which is of course the ideal.

Although there appears to be some improvements, acknowledgement of all sources is not consistent, especially with the use of retrieved imagery. More formalized emphasis and training is still necessary as is expanding the range to actual publications and direct exposure to the Arts.

Some examiners had serious concerns about plagiarism as some candidates appeared just to copy (or just copy and paste) images, not acknowledging any sources at all and some even copying art references word for word off web pages. Illustrations must be captioned correctly, and candidates should be reminded that websites need to be precisely cited: for example "Google Images" is not a source.

The range of sources drawn upon is not improving with a greater reliance on web-based sources. The use of scholarly texts and journals was still too limited. Gallery visits were pleasingly more common but not always clearly cited. Artist workshops or studio visits are seemingly in demise. More use of personal photography as a resource was apparent but this also needs to be better captioned.

Presents the work effectively and creatively and demonstrates effective critical observation, reflection and discrimination

In option A, the presentation of work was generally effective and showed creativity, some critical observation and reflection, and there were a few examples of superbly presented workbooks. Critical observation and reflection with discrimination was evident only in strong samples, but many candidates this year had reflected on their studio work to some degree. Stronger candidates presented carefully selected pages that appeared to be an integral tool in their art practice, including thoughtful critical observation, reflection and discrimination.

Many investigation workbooks were fairly creatively presented, but lacking in sophisticated

analysis. Some workbooks appeared to have been completed retrospectively with limited critical observation and did not support the studio work. The weakest performances generally centred around the lack of critical observation, reflection and discrimination of artworks.

In option B there was a very large variation with HLBs basically understanding the concept of creative displays much more than SLBs. Good examples included very strong interaction between presented information and individual development with a variety of materials. Weaker examples often stuck to writing commentaries, sometimes in illegible handwriting and provided imagery in box formats. Reflection was often present in most cases with less evidence of discrimination when regarding alternate solutions. It was very pleasing when candidates showed they were able to adopt a certain critical distance as they understood this aids observation, reflection and discrimination.

Both in option A and option B, there were cases where the work was partly or completely illegible – due to the use of a pale pencil, non-effective scanning, careless writing, over-decoration or poor general presentation. Candidate's research must be available to a reader, clarity therefore is important. Even if it is difficult for candidates excited by an experience to always write legibly, this is an imperative when submitting work for assessment. Some more checking of the quality of scanning is also recommended.

Close relationship between investigation and studio

In both options A and B, this was generally a secure area where most work presented was at least at the focused stage. Most candidates demonstrated that the workbook is an invaluable aid to work in the studio. However more emphasis on creating stronger evidence of work in progress rather than simply pasting images of finished work onto the samples would provide greater clarity and explanation to the pieces. It was obvious that only where genuine, extensive investigation was undertaken, students had the opportunity to demonstrate a close connection between their investigation and their studio work.

Most candidates seemed to put strong emphasis on meaning and symbolism in their works and in this way demonstrated a fairly close relationship between investigation and studio work. Strongest candidates, however, demonstrated connections and the development of ideas from one piece to another without necessarily having an overall theme in their work, which was impressive.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

These recommendations for the teaching of future candidates follow the well-established pattern of recommendations in previous subject reports.

Be fully aware of the course requirements and familiar with the assessment criteria: it is quite an obvious recommendation, but it is vital that all teachers are familiar with the course and its objectives and assessment criteria. As already stated, teachers must ensure that their students are appropriately prepared for the demands of the course. Consulting all the materials available on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC), attending DP visual arts teacher training workshops and participating in the OCC visual arts forum are all ways for teachers to keep updated.

Teachers are kindly reminded that the assessment process is holistic and that it is rare that one piece of studio work fulfills all the assessment descriptors, but that overall a range of different pieces showing different approaches and ideas can more easily meet the course expectations.

Promote "assessment criteria awareness": without wanting to "teach to the test", it should be remembered that failure to address the criteria can mean the candidate losing marks, or being placed in a lower mark band. A better understanding of the assessment criteria is crucial for candidates to be able to finalize the best selection of their pieces of studio work to submit for assessment. In the investigation workbooks a collection of notes on a random selection of artists and the repetition of prescribed visual language exercises indicates a lack of knowledge of the criteria. Introduce the assessment criteria to the students at an early stage of the course and keep referring to them all during the course.

Give advice about level and option choice: candidates need to be counselled into choosing the best level and option of the visual art course.

Plan the course carefully: the visual arts course should facilitate experience of a range of media and techniques, allowing candidates time to experiment within this media, and develop proficiencies; the course should also offer them guidance on how to investigate, analyze and reflect on the work of other artists and cultures as well as on their own work, and help them develop strategies and techniques to undertake this independently. There is a balance to be struck between broad explorations and sustained focus.

Although candidates should be encouraged to explore a variety of media and techniques, technical competence is acquired through the experience of sustained application.

Plan the course to allow for skill development over time. Experimentation/exploration with different media and techniques should be done in the first year, so that by the second year candidates should be able to know where to focus and how to orient themselves conceptually in their work. Use the planning process to develop familiarity and knowledge of the basics of the selected media/technique (eg paint media including watercolour, oil, acrylic, etc) prior to working on final pieces.

Candidates should avoid submitting one-off final studio pieces with little or no evidence of a process and teachers should demonstrate how to work through an idea. Start guiding candidates in how to work through an idea in a sequential way, including review and modification.

Candidates with little prior learning in visual arts have to be guided carefully and supported and receive positive teaching to ensure that they understand and develop good practice. It is important that teachers teach, advise, demonstrate and guide candidates, both in terms of art-making and analyzing skills: candidates do not become independent and productive by being left alone. Even after the initial period return to reinforce or develop skills or teach new media.

Assignments given should be specific to each candidate and should help or complement the candidate's work in their own most promising direction. Candidates should have ample time to develop their own ideas in a challenging yet supportive environment.

International Baccalaureate
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional

Allow time for ongoing formative assessment processes: these are crucial in preparing the candidates to better analyze, review and present their work.

Give the course a structure: it might be beneficial to offer a well-structured first year including a number of teacher directed assignments and some adventurous productive guidance, with this transitioning to a second year that encourages more personal responses, while still monitoring the level of candidates' awareness of art ideas, their technical progress and their understanding of the objectives of the course.

At an appropriate time (possibly towards the end of the first year) candidates might be allowed/encouraged to develop their own work in consultation and with the guidance of their teacher. Themes, though not necessary, can be a way of focusing and uniting a candidate's body of work, providing the issue is handled sensitively. Some schools wrongly require that candidates have a "theme" to their work. This is not the case and can constrain ideas and creativity and hinder a successful submission.

Guide, teach and support but do not become too prescriptive! Allow your approach to the course to evolve and consider changing your approach between first and second year.

Give advice about thematic choices: candidates should be carefully guided and advised on their thematic choices, taking into consideration the possibilities for appropriate investigation, which contains cultural and historical referencing as well as depth of understanding. Teacher guidance should be open enough for candidates to follow their own interests within a specified area. Discourage candidates from choosing a very specific, confined theme - on a particular sport, or social issue, for example - which has limitations in terms of contextual research. Remind candidates that researching "social issues" in depth with no relevance to artistic ideas and imagery is unproductive for investigation and assessment. Teacher-prescribed subjects should be avoided, especially later in the course.

Create opportunity to exhibit artwork: exhibitions are vital experiences for the development of the candidates as artists. Teachers do not need to worry about finding a dedicated space or about sophisticated arrangements; the important thing is that candidates regularly have the opportunity to display their studio work. Art exhibitions can also build a school culture and pride: it is good for candidates to celebrate their achievements of being artists and for their work to merit public display. Regularly exhibiting their art works gives the students the opportunity to develop their curatorial skills and helps them to become more aware of how their work is perceived by others. Make the effort to offer all the candidates the opportunity to regularly exhibit a selection of their studio works.

Encourage candidates to see real art: candidates with little art experience who only saw images/art through the Internet could not always discern between good and poor quality art. In schools where candidates had visited art galleries, museums or had workshops with professional artists, there was generally a more informed body of work. Direct experience is a motivating factor and it provides very good stimulus for the production of art work. Make the effort to create enough opportunities for your students to directly experience art.

Facilitate a better knowledge of world art and cultures to inform candidates' studio and investigation work. Encourage candidates to look at a variety of artworks/artists from their

own culture/country, from the country they are living in (if this is different) and globally to learn about art, to develop their tastes and help them develop an eye for understanding what works, what doesn't and how that relates to their work.

Encourage candidates to look at a variety of artworks/artists from different times/contexts, not just recent and contemporary art.

Teach drawing: drawing techniques can strengthen and equip candidates with the tools to express their ideas artistically in visual terms. Drawing should also form part of the thinking process. All sorts of materials / media should be made available to candidates and they should be encouraged to explore and experiment on different levels and venture out of their comfort zone. Basic drawing and compositional skills are a foundation for creativity. In learning to draw, candidates develop confidence, inventiveness, and a way to think in visual terms, as well as a way to document experience and develop ideas. Encourage your candidates to work from direct observation, and if the candidate wants to work from a photograph, encourage him/her to use own photographs.

Develop sensitivity to different media and technical competence: candidates should develop the ability to make appropriate choices in the selection of the media, materials and techniques in order to produce a body of resolved and unresolved artworks as appropriate to their intentions.

Teach the techniques for a variety of traditional and contemporary art making tools and media but encourage students to achieve high levels of proficiency in at least one medium. Avoid as much as possible limitation of media and format size.

Help candidates draw on their individual strengths. They should avoid encouraging candidates to keep persevering at a medium when they are weak in it, but instead find an area in which they can flourish. Media tryouts and exploration in the investigation workbooks should be encouraged, with appropriate annotation.

Encourage quality work in photography: encourage that candidates do much more than just taking and submitting spontaneous snapshots. Candidates using photography must realize that the work must be supported by strong and relevant photographic contextual research, good documentation of ideas and strong concepts, and generally show sufficient work to constitute recommended coursework hours.

Encourage more effective documentation of work with new media: candidates engaging in the production of new media based studio works need to be encouraged to be always accurate and effective in demonstrating their understanding of the ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression as well as in providing evidence of the development of their ideas and the refinement of their works during the creative process.

Create opportunity to develop critiquing: candidates should have ample opportunity to reflect upon and critique their own work and the works of others. Time should be spent on developing critical skills in order to help candidates to become more fluent with the use of specialized vocabulary in talking about art.

Provide opportunities for candidates to critique their own work and collaborate with peers and mentors as they progress with their work to help them identify any room for improvement and make the necessary amendments. This should be strategically scheduled with an appropriate timetable so as not to affect normal work schedules. Try to incorporate regular candidate presentations and feedback and encourage free discussion of art and cultural issues. Theory of Knowledge issues might also generate discussion.

Promote academic honesty and the use of a wider range of sources: please beware of over-reliance on the Internet, but in general warn students about the importance of not simply using (plagiarizing) images when producing artwork or texts when completing the investigation workbooks. Too often, information included in the investigation workbooks is copied verbatim from the Internet: this is of no value and if not carefully acknowledged verges on academic dishonesty. Leaving candidates to research art-making techniques on the web is no substitute for teaching investigative skills firsthand.

Allow time to specifically address the issue of academic honesty in visual arts. Teachers should provide guidance for accurate acknowledgement and referencing of sources, just as in other subjects.

To broaden the range of sources they access, candidates could be encouraged to read monthly publications and have class visits to the library for example.

Candidates should be encouraged to use primary sources, not relying exclusively on secondary sources, wherever possible. Exhibitions and gallery visits are crucial and have a huge impact and should be implemented wherever possible. When feasible, opportunities for visits with local artists or University art students, or local workshops should be facilitated and movie-video material could also be used as source of inspiration and investigation.

Explain to candidates that sources – both texts, images or any other art work of others - should always be acknowledged and appropriately referenced following the protocol of the referencing style chosen by the school.

Teach how to conduct investigation, analysis, comparison and evaluation: candidates should be taught how to correctly:

- annotate – ie make short notes explaining or clarifying a point or drawing the viewer's attention to something of relevance. Context must be considered when annotating own work and that of others.
- analyze – ie to look closely and in detail at an artwork, noting down a number of points about the piece including eg: composition; the use of colours/tones; media used (oil paint, photography, pastel); mood or emotion created; content/narrative (what's happening in this artwork? Is there a story? Message/issues covered (eg historical, political, social, religious issues?)
- compare and contrast – ie to analyze two or more artworks at once, focusing on the similarities and differences between them.
- evaluate – ie to make informed, personal judgments about artworks (not just artists) and to back up their opinions.

Candidates would benefit greatly from being encouraged to avoid biographical facts and pure description, but develop skills in abstracting information relevant to the work being investigated. Own opinions should be encouraged, with research informing their comments.

Encourage the effective demonstrations in investigation workbooks of how candidate's work is created in their workspace over time, through images and text and a crossover/balance between these.

Encourage higher-level critical thinking/analysis of artworks. Links to TOK and other areas of knowledge should be strengthened.

Prepare for the digital upload: teachers are kindly reminded that a description and some guidance about the various elements of the visual arts e-portfolio that candidates need to electronically submit can be found on the OCC in the document *Visual arts e-submission teacher guidance material*. Also the document *Frequently asked questions - Visual arts upload interview/statement element* can be consulted on the OCC forum.

Throughout the course candidates/teachers should be encouraged to keep an organized digital record of work: for example maintaining individual digital folders for studio and for investigation work. This will avoid a rush to assemble materials at the end close to upload time.

Reproductions of studio work to be included in the e-portfolio must be clear, and 3D works could be documented with either a video or more than one view of the work. Please, do not upload images of studio work which when viewed, are sideways, upside down or blurred.

Clarity of scanning of presented investigation workbook pages is paramount. Where handwriting is unclear, candidates should type their annotation. Review and check submissions and the quality of uploaded materials, for legibility, correct orientation and appropriate amount of pages.

Check that candidates respect the option requirements and submit the correct number of files for each component at each level. Examiners are instructed to only consider up to the maximum number of pages/images. This appeared particularly problematic in the assessment of investigation workbooks, where between 2 to 4 pages were reproduced on one single screen. Please remember that, as stated in the *Visual arts e-submission teacher guidance material*, each separate page reproduced on a screen is counted as a page. This can severely impact a candidate's results, particularly if their stronger work is found later in the sample. Also for studio work it must be noted that if more than 12 files are uploaded for an SLA candidate, only the first 12 will be considered.

Teachers and candidates should make sure that the selection of images of studio work for the e-portfolio shows some relationship between the quality and the quantity of work and that what is submitted reflects the teaching time suggested for the visual art course (240 hours for HL, 150 hours for SL).

When entering additional information and labelling their art works, candidates should be reminded that referring to materials as "mixed media" is not helpful. Please encourage

candidates to be more precise, as this will help the examiner to understand the finer points of techniques and processes used.

Check the candidate statement and written commentary: please check that the 1,000-word commentary (originally called the 1,000-word statement), doesn't get confused with the 300-word candidate statement and correctly fulfills the requirements.

There is a dedicated section of the upload for the candidate statement, while the written commentary must be submitted in the same upload section of the interview (this has been adapted to accept text files).

Correctly record the audio/video interview: if opting for the audio or video interview, remember that there is a maximum time limit of 15 minutes. Examiners might stop listening to candidates' interviews after 15 minutes.

In order to avoid bias, neither the teacher nor the candidate should be visible in the video interviews.

Ensure that the interview is recorded in an undisturbed area with no background noise.

Encourage candidates to submit the 2 exhibition photographs: even if not mandatory, it is highly recommended that two photographs of the candidate's exhibition are uploaded in the dedicated section of the e-portfolio for option A. These pictures considerably help the examiner to understand the visual impact of the candidate's works, their scale and proportions and how they were displayed. Where candidates had included photographic evidence of their exhibitions it also helped to place the work in context for moderation.

International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
Bachillerato Internacional