

VISUAL ARTS

Introduction

This report is for the November 2009 examination session and includes reference to the performance of candidates in HLA, SLA, HLB and SLB courses. The report sets out to provide information about the examination session as well as to provide some advice to assist in improving the achievement of candidates in future sessions.

The report is based on feedback from visiting examiners, moderators of internally assessed components and team leaders, as well as observations made by the component principals involved in the moderation process.

The following table outlines the overall grade boundaries for Higher Level option A, Standard Level option A, Higher Level option B, and Standard Level option B candidates. This clearly communicates the mark ranges for the grades 1 – 7 that are awarded to candidates

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level option A

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 28	29 - 43	44 - 58	59 - 70	71 - 85	86 - 100

Higher level option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 12	13 - 27	28 - 42	43 - 57	58 - 67	68 - 82	83 - 100

Standard level option A

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 13	14 - 28	29 - 43	44 - 58	59 - 70	71 - 85	86 - 100

Standard level option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 12	13 - 27	28 - 42	43 - 57	58 - 67	68 - 82	83 - 100

Although the two components are separately examined for each of the four visual arts courses, it can be difficult to separate these components when discussing the outcomes of the session due to the integrated nature of the tasks that candidates undertake in developing and creating their work. Consequently the information contained in this report may be relevant to either or both components.

The report is organised into the following sections:

1. General introduction
2. The studio work component
3. The investigation workbook component
4. The examination process

General Introduction

As in previous sessions, examiners highlighted how important the role of the teacher is throughout the course to the achievement of candidates. Schools where the teacher begins the course by directing learning through a structured approach, teaching skills and guiding candidates through initial assignments, were again highlighted as displaying good practice. Few schools were reported in this session as having prescribed or directed all assignments through candidates' courses of study, a practice that limits development and makes it difficult for candidates to achieve the higher mark bands.

Examiners reported that many schools had recognised that the balance between the two components is important and should reflect the 60/40 split in time dedicated to teaching each of the components and study as well as the marks allocated to each component.

Many examples of further good practice where teachers had introduced and demonstrated a broad range of skills and techniques in relation to both the studio work component and the investigation workbook component were highlighted by examiners following the session. Candidates need to be taught strategies for coping with challenges in both components and have access to appropriate facilities, equipment and media in order to effectively undertake activities and projects that address the requirements of the course.

All Diploma Programme visual arts teachers need to be conversant with the markband descriptors at the appropriate level for the course they are teaching. Examiners reported this session that candidates in schools where teachers were very familiar with the markband descriptors were better prepared than those whose teachers were not. Where candidates had also become familiar with the descriptors, translated into the appropriate candidate language, attainment was again higher. Where the descriptors had been used to provide appropriate and accurate formative assessment feedback, examiners recognised that candidates were better able to fulfil their potential.

Resources on the Online Curriculum Centre (<http://occ.ibo.org/ibis/occ/guest/home.cfm>) provide teachers with access to:

- subject reports
- the current *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*
- extended essay reports
- the *Visual arts subject guide* (for first examination May 2009)
- the *Visual arts teacher support material* (for first examination May 2009)
- the visual arts online virtual gallery

It is essential that Diploma Programme visual arts teachers regularly consult with these documents, regardless of previous experience, and make appropriate information available to candidates during their course.

Examiners reported that the overall standards in the visual arts were similar to that in the later November sessions of the previous course. While many candidates explored and investigated personal artistic projects and activities, there were still some who did not push their boundaries past simple and basic work. The visual arts course should be used to freely explore new ways of working, of taking artistic risks in order to develop purposeful and creative thought beyond a superficial level. Candidates should not be fearful of failure or allow it to hinder the challenge of trying something new and demanding. The ability for candidates to reflect and express how they grew from these pieces and to exhibit interesting failures is an important aspect of the Diploma Programme visual arts course.

The change to the title of the investigation workbooks for this course reflected the intention that candidates should undertake personal investigation related to their studio works in development, as a working document that provides an opportunity for discovery, reflection, planning and for allowing key ideas to be shaped and to grow. Investigation workbooks should be personal documents reflecting the candidates' own interests. The candidate's workbook and the studio work should be well integrated.

The reinforcement of the status of the candidate record booklet as a piece of legal examination material was accepted by most schools. Teachers and candidates must be aware of the requirements for submitting work and follow the guidelines and procedures for doing so. The requirement for the number of photographs and investigation workbook pages is defined on page 19 of the *Visual arts guide* and this must be strictly adhered to if candidates are not to be disadvantaged through examination or the various stages of moderation. The visual arts examination must be subject to the same rigorous and robust procedures as an examination in any other Diploma Programme subject.

Examiners of both components in the 'B' option continue to advise teachers to carefully counsel each candidate to ensure they enter for the option that best suits their work in order to secure the most favourable grade.

Studio work

Higher level option A

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

Higher level 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

Standard level option A

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

Standard level 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

Candidates presented work for examination in a variety of media; drawing, painting, printmaking, collage, digital and black and white photography, digital media, three-dimensional works, glass, fashion design and production, experimental works in light effects, relief with nails, installations that involved the viewer and some vibrant three-dimensional works using recycled materials were exhibited for examination.

It was the case during this session that examiners remarked about the lack of technical skills demonstrated by some candidates, particularly in relation to drawing and design. This reflected in the presentation of work that was described by examiners as weak. Many examiners stressed the importance of knowledge and understanding in the production of studio work, gained from solid teaching of skills initially and reinforced where necessary throughout the course.

Examiners commented that where candidates relied extensively upon photography, some work was interesting, but not always adequate in depth and lacked individual exploration to reach the descriptors of the higher markbands. Candidates who achieved at the higher levels in photography had often benefitted from studying other disciplines, with knowledge of composition and design being demonstrated in their studio works, in the relevant pages of their investigation workbooks and through discussion with the examiner in the interview.

Examiners reported that where candidates demonstrated knowledge, understanding and skill in a range of forms and in using a range of media and equipment, this was beneficial to the outcome of the studio work component. Examiners praised candidates who did not rely on their first idea for a work, but built upon this idea by developing it through further investigation, and reflecting upon how the idea had been refined in their investigation workbooks. It was noted that some candidates struggled to discuss technical development both in writing and in person and teachers are recommended to ensure that these candidates have an understanding of how to use appropriate terminology accurately. It was seen as a great strength where candidates were skilled in discussing their ideas, connections between their ideas and those of other artists, and how these ideas were developed.

Examiners recommended that all candidates developed their skills of observation and noted that in some schools candidates relied upon found images which led to studio works displaying weak painting or other technical skills. They stressed the importance of knowledge and understanding in the production of studio work, recognising that good candidates can distinguish between strengths and weaknesses and express themselves more comfortably.

Examiners recognized the benefit on the production of studio works where candidates had taken the opportunity to develop their understanding of other cultures, learning how artists in other parts of the world work and what they produce, often looking at more than one other culture, genre, and/or time. Examiners also commented when candidates were able to make connections between their own work and that seen in exhibitions by other artists.

Teachers and examiners have made comments relating to the quantity of studio work that was required to be undertaken during the course. As with the previous guide there is no minimum number of works that must be produced by a candidate over the duration of the course. Where candidates have produced fewer works than would be reasonable for the amount of time devoted to the component, taking into account the media worked with, the result is likely to be that these are self-limiting as it would be difficult to reach the higher markbands without using the full amount of time.

As previously stated, the requirement for photographs representing the studio work is stated on page 19 of the *Visual arts guide*. Those candidates who present fewer works for examination than the required number of photographs may use the additional spaces to show detail. Candidates who produce more works than the required number of photographs should select the works to be examined which best meet the requirements of the markband descriptors. Only one photograph per space will be considered during moderation; there is a risk to candidates who include more than one photograph per space. Candidates are recommended to include up to two photographs of their exhibition wherever possible.

Examiners reported that some schools had not managed to schedule extended time periods in order for candidates to work unhindered in developing their work. Time management among other candidates was also mentioned, particularly in relation to the assessment descriptor that refers to reviewing, modifying, and refining work as it progressed.

Strengths and weaknesses identified

The most comment strengths identified by examiners were:

- Candidates who were able to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skill in a range of media
- Development of work strongly driven by well considered conceptual concerns, including innovative ideas and imagery
- Production of work that was very personal
- Demonstration of a good exploration of ideas, with well-developed ideas and strategies for expression
- Schools where teachers worked with candidates towards a meticulous connection between the investigation and the development of final studio pieces.

The most common weaknesses identified by examiners were:

- Lack of technical skill
- Candidates who found strategies for expression challenging and were not supported in solving this issue
- Over-reliance of found images rather than observational skills when producing studio works
- Weak digital photography submissions including collections of photographs which were not supported by investigation or developmental material
- Candidates who were unable to made adequate connections between studio work and investigation, including technical practice or exploration.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates:

Again this session examiners stressed that the stronger candidates come from schools where there is a good balance between teacher-led assignments and self-directed work that has been developed with on-going teacher advice or guidance when required. Teachers are recommended to build from starting point class-based projects aimed at developing observational and media skills. It is recommended that candidates are taught to draw with their confidence in their ability to do so, built upon by practise on a regular basis.

Where candidates specialize in photography, either traditional or digital, they may benefit from experiencing other art disciplines.

Candidates should be encouraged to look at artwork from more than one culture, genre, and time as well as seeing how others work outside of the western art paradigm in order to benefit from further opportunities for variation in studio responses.

Teachers should ensure that candidates have regular access to visit artists and artworks through gallery and studio visits wherever possible. Visits of this sort are recommended to

develop insightful critical investigation. Exposure in the visual arts through visits to exhibitions, from visiting artists, and from reading texts and journals will enable teachers and candidates to be aware of what is happening globally in the visual arts.

Investigation workbooks

Higher level 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

Higher level option B

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

Standard level option A

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Standard level option B

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

Whether following an A option course or a B option course, the investigation workbook is an important aspect of candidates' study of the visual arts. Many similar comments were made by examiners who examined this component as were made by those who examined the studio work component, due to the integrated nature of the course and the integrated nature of the tasks that candidates undertake when developing their work.

As has already been stated, examiners commented that schools where candidates are taught how to use their investigation workbook and follow teacher directed assignments at the start, moving towards teachers providing guidance and advice as candidates seek to answer their own questions raised through the development of their work, displayed good practice that was transferred into the examination results.

Examiners reported candidates successfully using their investigation workbooks to explore, experiment, thoughtfully analyse and compare the work of other artists who had worked on similar themes, for example, in realising their own ideas. Candidates who successfully used

their investigation workbooks in line with the intentions of the guide were able to achieve higher markbands than those who filled their books with, for example, sketchy outlines of intended projects, or potted biographies of artists not related to the developmental work being undertaken towards a piece of studio work.

Typically candidates achieving in the higher markbands used their investigation workbooks to develop the process of creating work, planning, trialling, investigating other artists who had similar interests or who worked in ways that were relevant to the intended work, and to reflect on their own practices and the connections with the work of others. These candidates ensured they had investigated cultural or historical aspects of their intended work, refined their ideas, and then selected pages that linked these processes to the studio works when presenting for examination.

As with comments in relation to visits to galleries, exhibitions and/or artists made in relation to the studio work component, examiners who marked the investigation workbook component commented that these were invaluable, encouraging candidates to find links between investigation and studio work, and having knowledge and understanding of other artists' approaches.

Examiners reported that a good diverse range of work was submitted, which included a substantial amount of interesting, personally relevant preparatory work. Successful candidates investigated a range of cultures in depth, fully cross referenced their learning in different cultures, made comparisons between cultures and artists and fully acknowledged the sources they used. Some examiners noted there appears to be a growing focus on art from different cultures and times, and that teachers are encouraging students to recognize its importance in their creative growth and understanding.

Some candidates' investigation workbooks were exemplary and provided ample evidence of developing a strong learner profile. The best investigation was coherent, connected, focused and constituted a natural consequence of the candidates' interests.

Investigation workbook pages from some schools demonstrated good use of appropriate specialist visual arts vocabulary and use of a good range of sources which were acknowledged properly in line with requirements. This was not always the case and even some strong candidates in this component failed to properly acknowledge their sources. It is an IB requirement that Diploma Programme candidates in all IB World Schools, whichever subject(s) are being studied, acknowledge their sources. Further information can be found in the *Academic honesty* document (published July 2009).

In many cases work was appropriately effectively and creatively presented, and there was a focused relationship between the two components.

Strengths and weaknesses identified

The most common strengths identified by examiners were:

- Candidates who were well informed and engaged with underlying motivation and belief in artists and the cultural forms they are interested in
- Candidates who continue to develop their investigation through subsequent projects rather than provide more investigation at the same level
- Investigation work that supported the development of studio work as is intended by the course
- A pleasing amount of B course candidates' work fulfilled all the assessment criteria and demonstrated very good depth of investigation as well as breadth
- Candidates (often in the B course) who were able to display a high level of critical thinking.

The most common weaknesses identified by examiners were:

- Pages that were constructed after the production of the studio work rather than supporting the development of it
- Candidates who did not give investigation adequate importance
- Candidates who were weak in using appropriate visual arts terminology/vocabulary
- Investigation workbook pages that were descriptive rather than critical, analytical or working towards conceptual development
- Investigation workbook pages that consistently provide information, not thought about or dissected with little development throughout the course of study
- Study of cultures or other times not to sufficient depth or rigour giving a 'holiday brochure' interpretation to the material.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates:

- Ensure candidates understand how to approach work in their investigation workbook from the perspective of each component
- Ensure the move from teacher guided investigation workbook projects to independent candidate led work is at the appropriate time of a candidate's development
- Teach candidates how to undertake good critical analysis of their own work in order to lead to greater development of ideas and techniques
- Ensure that candidates undertaking the B option courses understand the need to develop their ideas and investigate into artistic expression in order to meet the requirements of the upper markbands

- Ensure that candidates undertaking the B option courses understand the need to analyse their own work and that of other artists to ensure good evolution and development of ideas
- Ensure formal and rigorous assessment formatively throughout the course for all candidates and summatively at the end of the course for A option candidates

Issues related to the examination process

Examiners reported that many teachers had worked with candidates to advise them on how to select works for exhibition and how best to photographically represent those works in the candidate record booklet. These candidates were at the best advantage, both for the visiting examination and the moderation procedure. Where teachers had not worked with candidates in selecting works that best answered the requirements of the markband descriptors, examiners were disappointed to see works that had been left out that would have received a more favourable mark. Through moderation it is the intention to be able to uphold the visiting examiner's mark for the externally examined component from the evidence available. Where studio works have not been well photographed, or the photographs are not produced at the best possible quality, candidates are not presenting themselves to their best advantage for that process.

Likewise it is important that candidates are carefully counselled on how to select investigation workbook pages that best answer the requirements of the markband descriptors. It is only the pages that have been selected that can be considered for examination, whether by a visiting examiner or the teacher, and the reproductions of these pages that are considered during the moderation process. Where pages were poorly reproduced, or had been presented in black and white when colour projects were selected, the moderation process became more difficult to undertake.

Examiners reported that when candidates were able to refer to their investigation workbooks during the examination visit for studio work it provided insight and context to the work being assessed. The integrated nature of the course requires that studio work and investigation work between the two components are tied together. It has already been stated that candidates who were able to accurately use appropriate specialist vocabulary were better able to express themselves. Examiners recognized that candidates who were being examined in a second, or sometimes third, language were often able to express themselves in appropriate visual arts vocabulary and that this was due to good teaching practice in the classroom.

Once again some examiners reported that candidates had presented a prepared speech referring to their work. This is not the intention of the visiting examination. Where candidates freely exchange dialogue with the examiner, explaining their creative process and the development of their studio works in connection with their investigation work, a better understanding can be gained by the examiner.

The majority of visual arts teachers were aware of the guidelines for preparation of candidate record booklets and were able to advise candidates appropriately. However, there are still

some schools who include too many photographs of studio work or too many investigation workbook pages, practices which can disadvantage the candidate during moderation.

Candidates who submit more than the required quantity of investigation workbook pages for their option and level put themselves at risk of not fulfilling all requirements of the markband descriptors for the component, as the additional pages will not be considered during moderation. When advising candidates regarding the selection of pages for submission to be examined by the teacher, and moderated if part of the sample for moderation, candidates should be fully aware of this requirement. Page 19 of the *Visual arts guide* indicates how many A4 or letter-sized investigation workbook pages are required to be presented for examination. An A4 or letter-sized page means one investigation workbook page. If a student reduces an A3 investigation workbook page to A4 it is counted as one A4 or letter-sized page; if an A3 page is presented it will count as two A4 pages from the total allowance. Where pages have been reduced to include multiples on an A4 sheet, only the correct number of investigation workbook pages will be examined. As an example, in the case of a candidate who has copied 50 investigation workbook pages on to 25 A4 or letter-sized sheets, only the first 30 pages may be examined in line with the requirements of that page in the guide.

It was noted that on occasion candidates and teachers had signed and dated the declarations after the date of 10 October, the latest date for internal assessment marks and predicted grades to be entered via IBIS. Candidates are required to sign that the work presented is the final version, ie that no changes of any sort will be made to the studio works and investigation workbook pages selected for examination, prior to the teacher marking the internally assessed component and the mark being entered on the deadline of 10 October. As such, all work must be final at that date or before when the examination visit takes place earlier.

A few examiners reported that the teacher's checklist on page 4 of the candidate record booklet had not been completed by the teacher prior to despatch to the examiner.

The following recommendations are made in order that candidates present photographs of their work in the best way for the moderation process:

- Photographs of studio work are of the best quality possible, taken with care and produced on photographic paper whenever possible
- Photographs are securely attached and information regarding artworks are properly completed in the candidate record booklet, including the size and title of the work
- Candidates take advantage of the quantity of photographs permitted (only one per allowed space) for their course and option, using spaces to the maximum allowed to show complete studio works and detailed views of large or complex works
- Wherever possible one or two photographs of the candidate's own exhibition are attached to the later blank pages of the candidate record booklet in order to provide an overview and context for the studio pieces during the moderation process

In order that candidates present investigation workbook pages in the best way for the moderation process:

- The quality of the investigation workbooks should be the best possible, produced with care to ensure whole pages are presented and in colour when concepts or media experiments dealing with colour are undertaken
- Selection of investigation workbook pages should ensure that pages related to the development process of studio works are included, including the critical and contextual study of influences on that work
- All investigation workbook pages are numbered and pages selected for examination are annotated with the candidate number, see page 14 of the *Visual arts guide*
- Actual whole pages must be submitted, not those created after the event or by merging parts of other pages
- Pages must be submitted in line with page 19 of the *Visual arts guide*

Examiners who commented on the candidate statement generally acknowledged its value in providing an insight throughout moderation at the candidate's critical analysis of their work in the visual arts over their course. Some examiners commented that candidates responded to each of the key words, which are intended only as triggers for writing the statement rather than points for response. Excellent candidate statements explained what the candidate set out to do, how they went about it, and how they felt about their achievements.