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VISUAL ARTS

Introduction

This report is for the November 2010 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 examination sessions.

Although the two components for each of the four visual arts courses are separately examined and so reported upon, 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 throughout the report may be relevant to either or both components.

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 *Assessment clarification, June 2010* (replaces and includes the document published in November 2008)
- 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.

Candidates should have access to the assessment markband descriptors at all times.

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

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

In studio work the examiner is looking for evidence of:

- experimentation and the development of ideas in artwork leading to successful resolution
- the selection and use of a variety of artistic and cultural strategies, media and styles
- an ongoing process of review, modification and refinement
- inventive approaches to experimentation and exploration using diverse strategies, ideas, techniques and media

- the ability to select and employ materials appropriately leading to coherent use of materials

- the development of a sense of self in relation to other people, places and times

- cultural and historical sources being used appropriately to inform and construct artwork

- knowledge of how to make informed reflective, critical judgments, and use the when evaluating their own studio work (HLA/SLA) or the ability to pose questions and work towards solving their own problems (HLB/SLB)

General comments

Although there were many instances of outstanding work being produced by motivated, creative and conscientious candidates, the following pages will tend to focus on areas of weakness, in the hope that this information will be most helpful to teachers.

As has been the case at each assessment session for this course, examiners identified technical competence as an area which proved difficult for candidates. Feedback suggested that when candidates began their Diploma Programme visual arts course with limited or no prior knowledge, and were not exposed to a programme of teaching to develop skills and technical competencies, the result was often that ideas were unsuccessful when interpreted as art because the candidates lacked the ability to make them work.

Some examiners reported that the most basic skills had not been taught, including once again observational or drawing skills and that the most limited development in any medium had taken place evidenced by a collection of works, each in a different media, where the lack of developed skills had not allowed the candidates to progress with development of techniques or ideas.

A lack of knowledge of the process involved in creating an artwork was another issue that raised concerns with examiners. It was reported that there was a tendency to start on a piece of studio work before any exploration or experimentation had taken place. Where candidates worked straight from their first idea toward a finished piece without experimenting with materials and techniques and/or investigating other artists, making critical analysis of their work the finished product tended to be superficial or simplistic.

Using technology was an area of weakness for some candidates. One examiner reported candidates to have been "*mesmerized by the effects available in image-software and are satisfied with the most basic effects available".* Candidates who have not investigated the possibilities of the software were not able to access the higher markbands.

Once again it was reported that images had been downloaded from the internet and then copied to create studio work. One examiner who commented on this said, "*Candidates were often reliant upon found images which often led to studio works with little development".* Where candidates have not been taught how to correctly use found images and/or how to incorporate copies of other artwork into their own studio work, examiners correctly acted

cautiously and raised these potential academic honesty problems for further investigation. Visual plagiarism is of equal concern to plagiarism of any other type.

Candidates are not required to select a theme or to produce work towards a declared theme. It is vital that this frequent misunderstanding is corrected. It is disappointing to hear from examiners that candidates had been challenged by the perceived need to select a theme and had spent much of their course without ideas on how to satisfy their choice resulting in a hurry to complete works at the end of the course, of those who had got tired of a declared theme and were stuck for ideas on how to proceed, and those who wished to follow other threads of investigation but felt they should not because the resulting work would not rest within their theme.

The guide makes no demand for a theme in relation to studio work, but on page 13, within the investigation workbook information, states: "Teachers should encourage candidates to make creative connections in the work they do through open-ended exploration and experimentation. For example, candidates might initially begin their investigation by working through an idea, theme or issue, then making comparisons, cross-referencing, and thinking laterally. This can give the work a sense of unity and continuity. One idea, theme or issue may be the connecting thread throughout the course or may naturally promote the investigation of another or others". Due to the integrated nature of the course a candidate who has used the approach of connections leading to unity and continuity in their investigation will probably also display this through their collected pieces of studio work.

Examiners reported concerns with weak work that had been undertaken in an attempt to address the markband descriptor relating to an exploration of ideas reflecting **cultural and historical awareness.** It was also commented on this session that there were candidates who concentrated on different cultures, but they did not take into account their own.. It is important that candidates understand the purpose of making and communicating connections between their own artwork and their own culture.

Some candidates did not demonstrate enough independence and individuality in their submitted work, and relied extensively upon 'generic' work created in response to 'whole class' tasks that did not facilitate personal exploration.

Time management proved difficult for some candidates who should work consistently throughout the course to cover all criteria and extend their skills. Candidates ought to consider planning in time to create and assemble the candidate record booklet, ensuring that they select the work that best satisfies the requirements of the markband descriptors, that the work is well photographed and printed. Care should be taken to record work in digital media, animations or installations in line with requirements rather than to make assumptions on how to do so. The examination and moderation process for visual arts must be as stringent and robust as for any other Diploma Programme subject.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

Examiners reported a range of attainment in relation to knowledge, to understanding and to the skills demonstrated by candidates. Examiners reinforced that some candidates lacked

even basic knowledge of the ideas and techniques, and exhibited very poor drawing skills with poor figurative work evidencing the amount of challenge many had faced and reported that there was limited ability to create balanced, original compositions. Examiners commented on the lack of relationship between levels of investigation and studio knowledge and stated their concern where candidate knowledge, acquired through seemingly interesting investigation, was not transmitted to studio work, or enthusiasm for a particular idea or subject was not fully taken advantage of.

On the other hand some examiners reported that candidates were able to demonstrate very good technical skills supported by sound knowledge and understanding of elements and principles of art, and that skill and visual arts knowledge levels demonstrated could be very high with clear knowledge of the requirements of the course. Where visits to art galleries and/or art exhibitions had taken place examiners reported that levels of knowledge and understanding were enhanced with candidates using the artists whose work had been viewed within their field of reference during the course. A further benefit was that these candidates usually understood their work and used it as a way to raise audience awareness of a range of social and political issues and felt that their work could make a difference.

Strengths and weaknesses identified

Examiners reported that many candidates had obvious difficulty discussing the technical aspects of their work and limited their comments to the supposed 'meaning' behind the images created, or aspects of the ideas and concepts they had explored, but that often did not show up in their art. During some interviews, it became apparent that candidates' expressions of confidence in and satisfaction with their work were unfounded as these candidates were unable to make a realistic assessment of their own art. Many had created work they were proud of, had learned to express themselves through the visual arts, explored new media, and received positive feedback from peers; but work selected for assessment was still mediocre. Other candidates were able to demonstrate a strong personal connection with their work, and could speak at length about it in philosophical, emotional or spiritual terms, but found it more challenging to discuss the work in visual terms.

Other candidates, however, spoke well about their work and development, many inspired by the ideas and concepts they had worked on throughout the course. Examiners noted that it was often candidates who achieved marks within the higher markband descriptors who were quite prepared to discuss in depth many aspects of their development with much thought and reflection, thus complementing the knowledge, understanding and skill evidenced in their studio work and investigation.

As has already been noted weaker candidates demonstrated a lack of technical skill and ideas that were barely developed, leading to visual qualities not being explored. These candidates often showed a lack of confidence and independence, and had a limited knowledge of cultural and historical references that could have had a useful bearing on their work. In some cases, there was a poor connection between the studio work and the investigation workbook.

Strengths identified by examiners included candidates exploring their areas of interest independently and rigorously, often leading to informed judgment; working in a personal and successful way. Stronger candidates often demonstrated an informed confidence and inventiveness; they used a variety of processes and techniques for expression, applied appropriate strategies and developed ideas that showed a clear connection between their investigations and the studio work.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- A variety of approaches to the course should be discussed with and explained to candidates from the start, and the assessment criteria shared with them in order that they are aware of course expectations

- Teachers should construct their course so that candidates are encouraged and able to work independently: candidates need to have acquired a good understanding of concepts and skills by the time they move towards making more personal responses.

- Structure lessons to develop technical skill and equip candidates with knowledge and ability in various techniques they could use for expressive purposes. There should be an emphasis on the importance of drawing, especially from observation, and demonstrations of techniques and use of media.

- Provide experience in working with a variety of media but to work in depth with at least one in order that a greater degree of competence can be achieved.

- Organize visits to museums and art galleries and/or invite artists to the school. Candidates should see as many artworks as possible: the scale, space and surface qualities are essential aspects of artworks.

- Encourage stronger connections between candidate work and cultural and artistic traditions.

- Hold class discussions to support candidates in how to talk about art using appropriate vocabulary as well as how to ask relevant questions and to encourage deeper learning.

- Teachers should help candidates to become familiar with the criteria and be specific in their guidance in order that candidates understand what is expected of them.

- Ensure that candidates are aware of academic honesty issues including appropriation and plagiarism of images wherever found.

- The CRB process should be carefully planned: selecting and photographing the work to be included for examination and documented in the candidate record booklet takes time. The photographs of the studio works need to be good quality photographs, not low quality computer printouts that hinder moderation.

- Please remember that throughout the moderation process, only one photograph per space will be considered. Candidates who include more photographs than required may be disadvantaged as examiners are instructed only to consider the correct number.

- Use the OCC as it provides useful information and has sample works that can be used and discussed in the classroom. The teacher forums are also useful as valuable information is shared with other teachers worldwide.

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

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

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

In investigation, examiners are looking for evidence of:

- depth and breadth of ideas in relation to exploration of arts in historical and cultural contexts
- coherent, focused and individual investigative strategies into visual qualities
- the use of diverse strategies for investigating artworks through theory and practice, examining visual qualities, ideas and contexts
- the ability to use vocabulary and language accurately in relation to discussing art and art making
- clearly communicated ideas presented via text and image in an effective and aesthetic manner
- work presented articulately, thoughtfully, coherently and comprehensively
- a range of primary and secondary sources included in the sample pages and fully referenced

- practical use of varied skills, techniques and processes, using experimental and sustained approaches in order to develop art-making ideas

- the application and use of a variety of skills, techniques and processes when writing, discussing, interpreting and responding to artworks and presenting reasoned opinions

- the practical application of studies of selected topics both in depth and in breadth

- connections between the candidate's work and the work of others

- a variety of skills, techniques and processes that demonstrate the relationship between investigation and studio.

The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated

Among stronger candidates a very good level of knowledge, understanding and skill was demonstrated, with strong, natural relationships and integration between investigation workbooks and studio work apparent. These candidates provided good continuity of ideas and related technical skills and linked their own concepts to cultural and artistic research with informed, well-expressed personal analysis, good investigation of techniques and media and thoughtful reflection on final artworks. In the best investigation workbooks, research into artistic ideas and processes was very impressive and showed close links with studio development. Some very high quality investigative work was seen, worthy of the highest marks against the top level of markband descriptors. These stronger candidates showed clear self-direction in their works, achieved good depth and breadth and could effectively connect their investigation with a wide range of cultures and artists: they demonstrated strong critical and analytical skills, showed a strong development of their processes and used and acknowledged correctly a wide range of sources. Most of these candidates showed a very good understanding of the visual arts and expressed this knowledge through mature reflection and critical comment, with correspondingly effective development and connection of ideas, processes and artistic production. Generally, stronger candidates were equally able to express their ideas by using specialist vocabulary of the visual arts appropriately.

In stronger candidates, it is obvious that the investigation workbook has become an integral part of their studio practice. They engaged with a range of artists, from a variety of times and places, and focus their investigations on different aspects of their art making practices. Some investigations focussed on the material practice of the artists investigated (the techniques and strategies employed, the materials used) and were used to inform the candidate's own studio practice. Other investigations focus on the conceptual practices and thematic approaches which other artists may take in their art making. This has then been used to inform their own studio work, often leading to greater sophistication and resolution in their own art work, but also creating a strong integration between the investigation workbook and the studio work.

An increasing number of candidates used a visual organizer to undertake investigations into other artists, artworks and artefacts, such as Venn diagrams, mind maps and concept webs. When done well, these could communicate a wealth of information and demonstrated very clearly the level of understanding that a candidate had attained through the myriad of connections made between artists, artworks, ideas and theories.

As has previously been the case, average- and lower-achieving candidates did not appear always to understand the relevance of looking outward and choosing artistic and cultural investigations which related to their own concepts and might influence or inspire the direction of their work. In many cases, these candidates also provided little personal analysis and consideration of the function and significance of art from different times and cultures, and often struggled to develop and visualize their own artistic ideas. Investigation into ideas lacked breadth and depth and choices sometimes appeared random, with no alternatives provided and little insight into thought or technical processes. It is important that the development of work has a clear purpose, with candidates finding a personal direction and focus, with some explained connections between the candidate's own work and that of other artists, as discovered through genuine investigation. Many candidates *described* their own ideas and processes but didn´t *analyze* visual qualities and significance in their work or that of others. The weakest investigation workbooks resembled personal diaries or sketchbooks. Weaker candidates often used bullet-point biographies of artists/characteristics of movements as the major content of their contextual research.

A number of candidates' workbooks are filled with obviously teacher-directed and common investigative/analytical tasks across all candidates in a sample, which, while addressing some aspects of the mark band descriptors, fails to allow candidates to develop integration between their investigative and studio practices or to gain the independence required in the higher ends of the mark band.

Examiners found that for a significant number of samples, a limited range of strategies or approaches was demonstrated when candidates engaged with artworks from other artists and cultures. Predominantly, candidates tended to write from a highly subjective position, responding to what they liked and did not like. Other sources were rarely used to support or enhance their understanding of the work, or were poorly acknowledged. The significance of works within the culture they were created or from the culture in which they were viewed, was rarely comprehensively considered.

In some cases the development of work was limited by the skill level, especially in drawing and this led to weaker outcomes overall. Where the selected work of others was narrow, the connections made with other artists were naturally limited. Generally even where weaker candidates had covered all the assessment criteria to some degree, the outcome was less mature with less substantiated thought processes which lacked substance. In some cases candidates had selected themes and had not looked at the most obvious critical references which would have complemented their own work. Presentation was often poor and workbook pages lacked continuity.

A majority of IWBs demonstrated some organised investigative strategies into visual qualities and some successful development of artistic ideas. With notable exceptions candidates did a better job of exploring their own artistic processes and ideas than of describing and analyzing images and artefacts produced by others. The failure to document image sources adequately is an ongoing source of concern. In some cases it impacts negatively on an otherwise excellent performance.

Some candidates presented the topics with critical comments and reflections that were well connected with their own culture. However there was often little reference to or investigation of themes in other cultures and little analysis of art from different times and places.

In some cases, there was a lack of integration between studio work and the investigation workbook: - tasks completed seemed disconnected from candidate work and apparently undertaken to "tick the boxes" to address the mark band descriptors. Otherwise, insufficient work had been undertaken in the investigation workbooks for candidates to draw upon when selecting their samples, so earlier, more teacher-directed class activities had been included, which could disadvantage the candidate's potential for higher marks.

Strengths were evident where candidates explored ideas in depth and followed alternative ideas which were modified and refined. It was pleasing to see some exploration into different printmaking techniques and investigation into digital media.

An increasing number of candidates used digital photographic images and in some cases all the work was photographic. In these cases, some appeared valid, presenting proof sheets, with the necessary investigation into the images, processes used in manipulation, consideration for composition, light sources and some analysis on the results. In some cases, however, it appeared to be selected as an "easy option" without relevant back-up material presented as an integral part of the investigation workbook.. Photography is a recognized art form but can often be chosen by candidates with time management problems, or who lack sufficient interest in the subject. A thoughtful, well-guided and measured approach in the investigation workbook can enhance these candidates' submissions greatly.

Examiners noted that the quality of work from candidates following the HLB/SLB course rarely seemed to exceed the quality of the stronger investigation workbooks from candidates following the HLA/SLA course.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers should provide a structured programme at the start of the course, which provides candidates with specific skills and techniques for working with a range of media and materials. They should offer systematic instructional strategies for investigating, describing and analyzing artworks. Candidates should comprehend the purpose and nature of an investigation workbook and the ways in which it differs from an artist's sketchbook or a visual diary. (Candidates benefit greatly from visits to exhibitions in galleries and museums.)

- Teachers need to impress upon candidates the relevance and advantages of seeking out cultures and artists that are pertinent to the ideas they are investigating. This should give them greater understanding of how others see the same concept and may influence a different approach or direction.

- Teachers should encourage the ongoing dialogue between historical referencing, concepts, influences, choice of media, processes and thoughtful analysis and reflection on the resulting artwork.

- The range of sources used continues to be predominantly web-based, which while often providing appropriate information, needs to be balanced by other scholarly sources, but most importantly by first hand experiences with art at galleries, museums and artist studios. Teachers should monitor and advise candidates on the appropriate use of internet imagery and its justification and appropriate acknowledgement.

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- Illegible writing in investigation workbooks is a recurring problem. Legibility and effective, creative presentation in investigation workbooks needs to be encouraged. Well-balanced pages with an appropriate mixture of verbal and visual content are often the most successful. Drawing skills need to be addressed in some cases.

- Teacher comments should be individual, objective and specifically focused upon the assessment criteria and descriptors, for the most part.

- While it is highly desirable for teachers to provide and model a range of strategies to engage with art, it is essential that candidates undertake a sufficient amount of independent investigation into artists and artworks that may inform their own studio work. Teachers should therefore foster independent investigative work that moves beyond the subjective and descriptive: - more analysis, comparison, interpretation of function/s, consideration of significance within the culture within which art was created, is now viewed or its significance to the candidate's own studio work.

- Candidates need guidance in selecting relevant artists and craftspeople to compare. In some cases candidates had selected themes and had not looked at the most obvious critical references which would have complemented their own work. Candidates benefit from having teachers who are able to provide a rich variety of approaches, strategies and scaffolds from which to engage critically and analytically with artworks. This promotes inquiry and independent learning that is not guaranteed when using the conventional art class slide show and exposition while candidates take copious notes.

- Schools need to ensure their academic honesty policy includes an appropriate guide for referencing in the investigation workbooks – particularly when acknowledging images.

Further comments

Some examiners felt that it would be gratifying to see candidates present the production of one artwork from concept to conclusion, which might constitute six to eight pages of the investigation workbook material submitted for moderating. This would give a very good overall idea of the candidate's ability. The other pages could be chosen on a random basis to ensure the requirements of all markband descriptors are met. At times the choice of a selection of unrelated pages made it difficult to assess the overall ability of the candidate. The majority of teachers used the criteria and descriptors appropriately. In some cases teachers' comments were poorly phrased and it was difficult to tell understand the teacher's justification of the mark awarded and how they distinguished between levels.

It is important that all candidates submit carefully prepared candidate record booklet samples for moderation, complete with the required number of carefully selected investigation workbook pages and, in the case of the internally assessed component for HLA/SLA, with the teachers' marks and appropriate comments attached. Copy quality needs to be good, to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged.

Schools are reminded that the OCC contains a range of helpful support material for visual arts teachers and reference to these is strongly recommended.

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