VISUAL ARTS

Introduction

This report is for the November 2013 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.

The visual arts subject report is organized into the following sections:

1. The studio work component

2. The investigation workbook component

3. Recommendations relating to IB procedures, instructions and forms

Although the two components for each of the four visual arts courses are separately examined, 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)

- Visual arts candidate interview assessment trial outcome

- Visual arts e-submission teacher guidance material and four accompanying videos

- Upload process for Visual Art material guide

- 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 and 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

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

It was pleasing to see that many schools managed to submit a wide range of work in terms of concept, media and technical skills, with schools showing variety of media, including drawing, painting, collage, photography, digital media, three-dimensional works, some experimental works and

installations, with a variety of levels of achievement in terms of technical and conceptual skills. There was in this session evidence of a wider range of techniques being on display, with some candidates exploring digital and emerging media such as decals, laser and 3D printing, digital etching on Perspex and multi-layered photography. Other candidates worked in more traditional forms - for example, raku ware/firing, painting, drawing, collage, and other clay forms. What examiners reported as still quite limited is the submission of large or medium scale sculpture/3D studies. Some examiners once again had to report that in some schools most of the submitted work was 2D.

The examiners commented on the size and scale of some of the work, saying that creating work on a large scale was not only impressive in visual terms but that this also worked as a way to push the candidates´ boundaries.

In terms of suitability in some cases the candidates' work appeared to be too teacher directed: in some schools many candidates produced similar work, rather than exploring more independent, individual directions. Other examiners reported the opposite, concerned that a lack of teacher direction was letting candidates down by leaving them too much to their own resources.

A clear link between candidate achievement and a coherent and sequential course structure seems to be recurrent: in the cases where the performance was very good it seemed that the teachers knew the essence of the Visual Arts Guide well and began by directing learning through a structured approach, teaching skills and guiding candidates through initial assignments, encouraging then the students to follow their own path. It must be noted that some examiners reported that the weakest results were encountered often when the focus was on an idea or concept rather than the quality of work. What was seen in these cases is that a good idea was sometimes let down by poor execution and weak technical competence. However there have been many positive comments from examiners that saw a wide range of media being employed with evidence of good technical skills in painting and drawing, with much painting showing a series of explorations which were modified and refined and deconstructed, making the work richer.

There were favorable comments in response to candidates exploring their local context, CAS trips and some family/social issues.

For what concerns exhibitions it might be worth reminding teachers and candidates that it is important to bear in mind the markband descriptors and that there is more to show than a collection of works that reflect a theme. Examiners reported that some exhibitions reflected a theme, and the selected pieces showed sustained work in a particular medium, or style, or were linked to a particular idea, and sometimes this was successful, although the feeling was that some teachers seemed to focus more on having a theme than on addressing the markband descriptors, and this ended up hindering the candidate's marks.

Candidate performance against each criterion

As Visual Arts is assessed against holistic markband descriptors and not individual criteria, the bullet points within the mark band descriptors have been treated individually as far as is possible in the following section. Some crossover is inevitable.

Exhibits understanding of the ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression

Overall, examiners recorded variable achievement relating to this criterion, and success was often closely linked to the quality of work in the investigation workbook: candidates who extensively

investigated, analysed and compared the ideas and techniques of artistic expression frequently created strong studio work expressing understanding of these ideas.

Demonstrates the production of personally relevant artworks that show exploration of ideas reflecting cultural and historical awareness and artistic qualities

In general, achievement in this descriptor was variable and some candidates struggled to incorporate cultural awareness in meaningful ways. Examiners agreed that candidates who explored cultural and historical awareness in relation to their own culture, country or context or to the culture of their environment often achieved more than those whose work was more superficial and/or was linked to an exploration that had no personal link, sometimes a seemingly random response to a class assignment. Where candidates made work that was closely linked to their own cultural heritage, environment, or personal interests, it generally had more depth than work that did not have this focus.

The descriptor is quite complex and in some cases examiners noted that limited historical awareness remains an issue and felt that this had a negative impact on some of the studio work they had examined.

Also it still appears that this descriptor has once more been misinterpreted when it mentions 'personal relevance': candidates seemed to be often tempted to overdo the 'personal' and underestimate the 'exploration of ideas reflecting cultural and historical awareness and artistic qualities'. Where this happened it led to rather insular work which was personal but not showing very much exploration of ideas. Examiners felt that in many cases it would be more beneficial if the candidates were encouraged to spend more time "looking outwards" and considering what artists have done rather than adopting an inward-looking approach.

Development of ideas and strategies for expression

It has been reported by examiners that many candidates didn't employ all the strategies that could have helped them to develop and express their ideas in the best way. It appears as if not enough exploration around ideas was carried out and this often resulted in work that was both conceptually and technically weak: it is important that candidates explore and develop different strategies for expression because simply having a good idea is not enough. The Investigation Workbook has an important role to play in the most successful development of ideas and teachers need to encourage students to use it in order to explore and experiment more. The IWB should be seen as a crucial tool to find ways of representing concepts that are visually sophisticated. Examiners regarded it as a positive feature when candidates revealed the ways in which they developed their ideas during the interview.

Technical competence

Levels of achievement in technical competence were varied. Work that was the result of a sustained process of refinement was, predictably, more successful and fully resolved in terms of both concept and medium.

Where there was a focused approach to the teaching of techniques candidates frequently achieved very good levels of understanding in this descriptor. These techniques included sophisticated digital and lens-based media as well as woodcut, batik and ceramics. Examiners sometimes commented that candidates who had structured drawing and painting tuition early on in the course often ended up with the best outcomes in this descriptor.

As already observed in the past, some schools still encourage candidates to submit work in too many media and/or to explore too many techniques and this doesn't seem to help them to create the best quality of work. Although it is important that candidates are exposed to different art-making opportunities it is also important that they are encouraged, and given enough time, to acquire skill and go in depth when developing their technical competence.

Demonstrates confidence, self-direction and independent judgment

It is important to remind teachers that there is an art-educational balance to be struck between the degree of self-direction and independent judgment as opposed to the extent to which work is created in response to teacher assignments.

In some schools there seemed to be a 'formula' with candidates following a set number of topics leading to work in a specific technique and making the exhibition areas of the candidates quite similar, with little evidence of a more self-directed personal development of ideas.

As has been noted in previous reports, some candidates appear to have confused the concept of confident and assured art-making with being confident during the interview. The bullet point descriptor 'demonstrates confidence and inventiveness' is referring to the studio work, not the candidate.

It is also important to note that where candidates worked to challenge and extend their personal boundaries the artwork resulted in original and often outstanding outcomes and teachers should be aware that they can play an important role in questioning the candidates' choices, especially when they seem to fall in the use obvious or familiar subject matter.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers should ensure that candidates are familiar with the programme aims, objectives and assessment criteria *from the start of the course*.

- Teachers must ensure that their candidates are appropriately prepared for the demands of this component through careful planning and delivery of relevant ideas and strategies

- Teachers should begin with teacher directed assignments but the objective must be to encourage the candidate to demonstrate the production of personally relevant art works developing from their own ideas and research as the course progresses

- Candidates need instruction and must not be left to their own devices. This instruction should include such things as the practical creative potential in various techniques and media, the nature of contemporary art and elements of art history in different times and cultures.

- Making studies (copies) of other artworks can be a valid way of learning techniques but this should lead onto more individual approaches, exploring and understanding the ideas and techniques of artistic expression.

- It is important that candidates experiment and explore techniques so that their skills develop (through application, manipulation and refinement) to reach the highest level of technical competency in the chosen media

- Teachers should encourage candidates to evaluate their own work in order to understand their strengths, and teach them how to overcome their weaknesses

- Teachers should encourage candidates to present both their studio work and selected work from other artists to the class, in order to encourage sharing of information and greater confidence when talking about art.

- Encourage candidates to refer to local culture or their own culture rather than selecting a 'random' culture to explore. The cultural element should not result in a one-off 'cultural' piece but be integrated into the teaching and learning.

- Many teachers still suggest or require that candidates have a "theme.": if it arises naturally it may contribute towards a successful exhibition, but a theme is not a requirement and can hinder creativity.

- Encourage inventiveness from the candidates so that there is less reliance on predictable and stereotypical imagery.

- Ensure that candidates do not simply copy images from the Internet. One way of doing this is to require evidence of process, with candidates documenting and explaining the development of their ideas and techniques as the concept evolves through to final realization.

- Time-management: structure the course so that the teacher has enough time for providing assignments and instructions and the candidates have enough time for exploration and following a more independent direction (but these are not mutually exclusive)

- Teachers should encourage the process of review, refinement and modification. This process is often at the heart of the most visually and conceptually resolved work.

- It's vital that candidates demonstrate the ability to effectively select work for assessment. Including weaker work may have a negative impact on the mark: for example, for an HLA candidate it is not necessary to submit 18 pieces just because there are 18 available spaces for the upload.

- The Online Curriculum Centre is a valuable resource for teachers. Teachers should check the OCC periodically to read the latest published resources and Subject reports, engage in the Forum and make use of the Teacher Resource Exchange.

Recommendations for teachers resulting from the electronic submission pilot

- Teachers need to refer to the OCC and try to always check for updates. Also Coordinators can find updates and news about the e-submission on IBIS Library.

Things to remember:

- Photographs of studio work need to be the right size so that the examiner can fully appreciate the submitted piece.

- Interviews should be recorded avoiding background noises (e.g. music, traffic, bells, people talking). The quality of sound is crucial to allow examiners to make the most of what candidates want to say about their work.

- Candidates should pay attention and talk in their Interviews only about studio pieces that were included in IBIS submission.

- In Audio interviews the candidate needs to clearly identify the single pieces of work being discussed referring to them using their title.

- Video interviews should not show the candidate or the teacher in shot.

- In both Video and Audio interview the teacher should not lead the conversation with closed prompts or questions.

Investigation workbooks higher and 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

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

The range and suitability of the work submitted

As usual, during the November 2013 examination session, the range and suitability of the work submitted varied considerably depending on candidates' levels of understanding and interest in the subject - and on the quality of teaching/guidance received. Overall some very impressive work was submitted, with a majority of solid middle-band achievement and only some weaker submissions. It is worth observing, in this regard, that in some cases candidates entered at Higher Level might have been better suited to Standard Level.

While there are different valid approaches to maintaining an investigation workbook (IWB), and a variety of these might be successful in meeting the requirements, it must be noted that there are still some schools that presented candidates' works that showed a repetitive structure, as all candidates had to follow the same processes and analyse art in the same way and this didn't really take them to the best results. Where teachers allowed and encouraged candidates to expand their individual investigations and creativity, submissions were more successful. Although a theme is not required, more successful bodies of work reflected work created in response to broader themes, often defined by the candidates, developed over a series of related works. This cyclical process allowed for candidates to develop as artists rather than just completing tasks. Project briefs should be open-ended and teachers should find a balance between managed assignments and candidates' freedom to choose. Candidates who show more understanding in the subject should be encouraged to explore

personal concepts and ideas whilst candidates with less understanding and skill may need more direct guidance and support.

IWB pages submitted by high achievers usually documented a personally relevant journey, informed by appropriate investigation and expressed through appropriate language and terminologies. Middle mark band candidates generally showed promise but sometimes failed to establish continuity in the investigation process. Candidates who worked only from their emotional premise and made limited use of more informed sources often found it difficult to infuse in-depth understanding and meaning into the development of their artworks.

Most candidates demonstrated good or average levels of knowledge, understanding and skills. Pleasing numbers achieved marks in the highest range and this was sometimes true for a whole cohort in schools where teaching was clearly of a high standard. Low achievers had often done little work, their IWBs consisting of disconnected images and scrappy notes, with little or no evidence of artist or cultural studies, and a very limited range of sources evident.

Drawing skills in IWBs varied considerably but were sometimes poor and over-reliant on copying photographs or other artists' original imagery. Some elaborately designed and decorative pages showed little substantial content.

Candidates mostly researched contemporary Western art and artists – together with many Australian and Chinese. Street Art and Pop Art were favourite art movements. Recurring artists included Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Kathe Kollwitz, Damien Hirst and the ever-popular Banksy: there continued to be a predilection for dripping eyes and melting wax crayons, with the continuing popularity of Marion Bolognesi and You tube videos on melting crayon art.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Analysis/Comparison/Function & Significance

Analytical skills varied considerably but most schools appeared to be offering candidates a systematic approach to studying artworks. In some schools, candidates analysed art better than making it because they had limited practical skills.

Real analysis of art was often lacking with purely descriptive or biographical pages or superficial copying of techniques/ideas, rather than an attempt to make any genuine connections, with a discussion of function and significance. Comparison was often absent. Consideration of function and significance, really contextualising work, was only done well by the highest scoring candidates. Less mature candidates described rather than analysed or merely made brief comments on function and significance or symbolic elements.

Investigation into art from different times and cultures

Studies of artworks were satisfactory for a majority of candidates and in some cases very good. Recurring weaknesses were a lack of contextual research, cross-cultural comparison and studies of art of other times. Where candidates performed poorly, it seemed to be because this criterion is still not always well understood. In some cases too much focus was placed on "cultures" as opposed to artworks from those cultures. Some candidates seem to select cultures or social issues to investigate at random, or in a prescribed way, rather than purposefully. Cultural investigations linked to candidates' own heritage or environment/country, focusing on appropriately art-based subjects, made

for stronger outcomes. Some weaker candidates developed personal topics that lacked connections with different manifestations of arts from different cultures.

Development of skills/ techniques/ processes

Many workbooks *presented*, but failed to document the actual *development* of skills, techniques and processes from initiation to completion e.g. etching, lino printing, digital manipulation etc. Many candidates presented images of finished artwork, and then discussed the method of production. It's important to realise that IWBs are not purely process journals - this aspect did dominate at times in some centres. Stronger candidates demonstrated clear development of good technical/ skills/ processes and related these to artistic influences, without purely imitating other artists' imagery.

Investigation into visual qualities/ focus

The range of approaches to investigation included sketches, storyboards, mind maps, artist studies, brainstorming and reflecting upon ideas and writing up experiments with media, techniques and materials. Some candidates using digital media failed to document processes and explain decision-making properly. A majority of IWBs demonstrated organised and focused, but not necessarily individual, investigative strategies. Weaker candidates often relied too much on writing and failed to investigate visual qualities. Drawing on personal travel as a source of stimulus often resulted in a superficial 'tourist' approach. Generally this appeared to be a fairly strong area with candidates investigating different approaches/media in relation to their concepts. Some candidates presented only one approach, stronger candidates reflected on choices and developed work accordingly.

Some candidates would have benefited from investigating artists whose work related more closely to their own. Randomly selected artist biographies still appear a lot and are pointless unless explained connections are made to candidates' own work.

Depth/ Breadth/ Development of Ideas

This criterion was largely related to the level of understanding/intellectual ability of the candidate. Weaker candidates focused on more sentimental/superficial personal concepts, making less use of more informed source material. Social Issue-based investigation pages are still most common: global issues, such as fair trade and animal rights, poverty, anorexia and environmental issues are often included, not always with mention of artists who work on similar themes. However, stronger candidates investigated personal/ social/ political/ global concerns, and investigated related artworks which informed or influenced the production of their own work. A majority of IWBs demonstrated some successful development and synthesis of ideas and some explained connections with other artists. Teenage issues, interests and cultural identity were dominant themes in many schools. Some lower-achieving candidates attempted to pursue "big ideas" that were difficult to visualise. Others searched too many artists and appeared over-reliant or dependent on this. There were some interesting remixes of 'old master' paintings, but the strategy of appropriation often led to a formulaic, derivative approach.

Use of Specialist Vocabulary

Most candidates demonstrated a reasonably accurate use of the specialist vocabulary of visual arts. At the highest level candidates presented a sophisticated use of specialist vocabulary whilst candidates with lesser skills used more basic terminology, which was limited at times. As ever, some candidates seemed to just scatter the 'elements and principles' terms around in the hope that these

would be enough to convince the reader. Candidates' formal artistic vocabulary was mostly satisfactory or good. However there were recurring superficial interpretations and misunderstandings of art concepts and styles. This was especially the case with writing about abstraction and popular 20th century art movements, such as Pointillism, Fauvism, Cubism and Action painting.

Use/Acknowledgement of Source Material

Candidates achieving at the highest level utilised a variety of appropriate source material including the internet, books, interviews, visiting artist sessions and gallery visits to support their personal themes and investigations – and mostly acknowledged these properly. Additionally they chose sources more carefully. Middle-level and lower-achieving candidates' sources were mainly internet-based and this is understandable to an extent. However, candidates should at least try to cross-reference their internet research with other sources and one good way of doing so is looking, researching and discussing art work they can access locally or for example contacting local artists. Often too little use is made of primary source material and in many cases random images from the internet are still preferred. Candidates do need to be more discriminating (with teacher guidance) on whether sources/artists to investigate are appropriate. In some cases candidates directly downloaded and pasted information without personal comments or reflections. This, even with sources acknowledged somewhere on the page, constitutes plagiarism. Google and Wikipedia are consistently over-used and do not constitute 'an appropriate range of sources'. Most of the lower-achieving candidates sourced Internet images indiscriminately and produced clichéd images.

Whereas the Internet was the main inspirational source, candidates are increasingly using own photographs. Higher-achieving candidates made extensive use of gallery visits and artist workshops. Even if it was pleasing to see a slight improvement in systematic documentation of images, referencing and quotes, poor performance in this criterion too often still let down otherwise good candidates.

Creativity/ Effectiveness of Presentations; Critical Evaluation

In most cases, even weaker candidates demonstrated some degree of creativity/ effectiveness in their presentations. There were some extremely effective and creative submissions, which included in-depth investigations and technical explorations. Some pages were presented very effectively but some candidates overcomplicated their presentation to the point of illegibility, which was counterproductive. Too much and/or illegible writing were recurring problems.

In higher mark bands some excellent examples of thoughtful consideration, critical observation and reflection were demonstrated: in weaker submissions, this criterion was frequently poorly addressed; some candidates analysed their own works very effectively, but neglected to consider other artists' work to the same degree and draw connections/comparisons.

Significant numbers of candidates described their step-by-step processes of making in detail but failed to analyse their ideas and work. Evaluations of developing and finished pieces were often slight/superficial. Where candidates were required to consider audience response in planning for exhibitions, this was beneficial to their overall submission.

Relationship between IWB and Studio Work

Clear relationships were demonstrated at the top level with IWB pages supporting what was exhibited, while links were at times tenuous at the bottom of the scale, though it must be observed that most

samples were certainly connected to some degree. Some candidates presented explained connections between visual arts and theory of knowledge. Overall, it can be said that the relations with studio were mostly focused and, in many cases, clear and it is very positive to see that schools appeared to understand this criterion well.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Advice for teachers:

- Ensure that all candidates are completely familiar with the criteria and descriptors for assessment of the IWB component.

- Encourage concrete connections between the topics chosen by the candidates, the artistic movements and the art works analysed and the different cultures studied, to advance and improve their own creative process and development.

- Guide candidates to develop creative processes which show depth and breadth, are coherent and focused on visual qualities in different contexts.

- Introduce and practice with candidates different methods for analysing and comparing artworks.

- Teach practical skills and techniques, rather than relying on candidates researching them by themselves. Encourage drawing from observation, rather than reliance on photographs.

- Require candidates to undertake more in-depth investigations of the historical and cultural context of artworks and more cross-cultural comparison.

- Provide guidance on the selection of artists and artworks for study.

- Limit the use of appropriation as a way of developing ideas.

- Encourage more in-depth critical reflection and analysis, not just step-by-step descriptions of process.

- Advise candidates to consider audience and audience response in planning and exhibiting work.

- Encourage research into a wide range of possible topics. Candidates should not gain the impression that investigating their own cultural identity is the only appropriate focus or theme.

- The Online Curriculum Centre is a valuable resource for teachers. Teachers should check the OCC periodically to read the latest published resources and Subject reports, engage in the Forum and make use of the Teacher Resource Exchange.

Practical/Technical advice for candidates:

- Make pages more effective with good quality clear scans which are not cut off at the edges or blurred. Blurred, unreadable pages are wasted.

- Work visually, showing the investigative process rather than endless dull pages of text with technical or biographical information which is of little relevance.

- Strive for interesting, surprising and original artwork. Always avoid straight copies.

- Track the progress of the investigation as the studio work progresses. The investigation does not finish when the studio work starts. Think for yourself in order to produce interesting, personal, meaningful work. Make connections.

- Experiment with a broad range of media and demonstrate some complete processes from initiation to conclusion in both text and visual material. Explore more than one idea before deciding on a final piece.

- Source material: cite all images and ideas you've used. This is just as important an issue in Visual Arts as in all other subjects. Don't plagiarise! Reference information for all images/ text sourced at the time of accessing, and clearly identify this at all times in your Investigation Work Book. Use primary source material whenever possible. Be more discriminating about artists you research and also about your sources of information.

- Consider these questions: How has media experimentation informed my art making process? How can I further my practice in a particular medium? What is the historical and/or cultural significance of my work?

- Select investigation pages for assessment which connect with your studio work/exhibition whenever possible.