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 the standards in previous examination sessions, the same adjustment as May 2014 was applied to the overall grade boundaries and to those for the externally marked components.

Introduction

The report sets out to provide information about the November 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 November 2014 session.

There were predictably varied responses in terms of range and suitability; some examiners saw fairly strong work with a broad range of media used creatively and with good conceptual foundations, while other examiners were less impressed.

Range of media/techniques

As usual, 2D works in painting and drawing were the most popular media, although digital-based work has continued to develop, particularly photography and videos. Some impressive 2D more traditional work was seen, with a fair amount of figurative drawing and painting, including life-drawing, often as part of a set of first-year assignments/workshops. Examples of work in ceramics, lino-printing and dry-point etching were also seen. Overall, a small amount of 3D work was submitted.

Candidate statement and 1,000 word written commentary and video/audio interview

In general, there was evidence of candidates having a better understanding of the 1,000 word commentary than previously. This element of the candidate e-portfolio is an alternative to the interview and should therefore respond to the kind of questions that would have been answered in an interview. It was pleasing to see that more candidates both in their interviews or written commentary discussed only the work that they had submitted for assessment, but it might be worth reiterating that candidates should focus on the studio work, if they were entered for option A, or discuss the investigation workbook pages they selected for assessment, if entered for option B.

The 1,000 word written commentary could be completed following a conversation with the class teacher about the selected studio work or investigation workbook pages. The teacher could use open-ended questions to help the student to understand that the commentary should focus on how the art work submitted for external assessment addresses the mark band descriptors.

In the November session it seemed that it was clearer to schools that the 1,000 word commentary does not replace the 300 word statement which continues to be a useful description of the candidate's artistic development throughout the course. The candidate statement remains a mandated requirement of the course and schools can provide students with the PDF candidate statement template which is available on the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC). It is once more worth reminding schools that the 300 word statement should focus primarily on work relevant to the option chosen by each candidate. Following the comments received by many examiners and moderators, it seems that many candidates don't realize that if entered for option B they should talk about their investigation workbook. The critical analysis of their work should provide a précis of their investigation, consider the focus, concerns and content of their Investigation workbook, outline the sources used and provide some evaluation of the skills and techniques; option B candidates should discuss their studio pieces mainly to illustrate the connections between their investigation and the studio practice.

With regard to the size requirements of the interview/commentary and statement it must be noted that there were a few cases of written documents exceeding the maximum number of words (300 or 1,000) and still a number of interviews that were longer than 15 minutes. Schools are reminded that there is no expectation that examiners will read/listen/watch beyond these maximum limits.

Technology and digital media

This session there was more video art, including stop motion, and overall more work involving computer technology, digital work / photo montage / manipulated imagery and "photoshopped" imagery. Some schools included work designed by the candidate but constructed using a 3D printer. These works do not easily fit in the visual arts current assessment descriptors: the increasing availability of 3D printers enables candidates to produce detailed sculptural forms from CAD type software. In order to allow an accurate assessment of technical competence, it is crucial that candidates make sure that the level of creative intervention is apparent in the work itself or include some evidence in the documentation.

Using art (appropriation and copying)

A number of candidates studied and/or imitated the techniques/use of media/compositions of other artists. When this learning process was successfully understood, it often benefitted candidates by giving them a wider artistic tool kit, providing them with more creative or conceptual options. However, in some cases candidates failed to integrate the ideas of others. Pop Art was sometimes unimaginatively imitated without evidence of contextual understanding; this simplistic and random copying of a very well-known style tends to show a superficial level of cultural and historical awareness and artistic qualities.

As has been noted in previous subject reports, apart from the practice of appropriation and homage, what is becoming more and more an area of concern is the practice of copying downloaded images. Even this session it was obvious that in some schools candidates copied images downloaded from the internet. Submitting for assessment work that is an easy and direct copy of an image from the Internet without referencing the source is plagiarism and the candidate runs the risk of not being awarded a Diploma. Furthermore, even when referencing their sources, candidates who copy images are generally 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.

The role of the teacher and scale / size of work

It was positively reported by examiners that with regards to painting, a number of large scale works were seen, and these were generally of good or very good standard.

Although the size of the work is not part of the assessment criteria, it was pleasing to see that some candidates were clearly encouraged to work on a large or ambitious scale. In a number of cases, candidates clearly extended personal boundaries and showed confidence and inventiveness with big, exhilarating and exciting work, creating work that started out as a response to open-ended assignments. It was good to see assignments fostering confident and inventive art-making.

The theme or topic

The idea of a theme is still misunderstood by some teachers and candidates and there are still many schools that seem to believe that a theme is required – this is not the case.

The issue of the 'theme' continues to provoke mixed reactions; some schools consider the selection of a "topic" important but in some cases this limits the candidate's production.

As has been previously noted, 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. It must be stressed that the choice of a theme often doesn't make a difference and if ideas are shallow it doesn't make a difference whether there is a 'theme' or not.

Process, exploration and experimentation

As in past sessions, again examiners commented that often the candidates' main idea was interesting but there was insufficient evidence of depth and experimentation in visual development to achieve good results. This was mainly because the depiction of the idea was superficial and technically weak. The more interesting works are always those that have been developed more thoroughly, for example with more than one or two sketches. In some cases, although there was an interesting development of ideas, a lack of understanding of formal elements and technical skills prevented a successful resolution of the works.

Reflection

It appeared that for this session very few candidates were strongly reflective on their processes and work. There was little evidence of candidates spending time evaluating, reconsidering, refining. In some cases examiners commented that it seems that candidates avoid this aspect of the requirements and this affects the general outcome of their work.

However, candidates who were able to experiment with materials and reflect on the processes were also more likely to show confidence; this could be seen both in technical competence and in the willingness to take risks.

Work reflecting recommended course hours and amount of work required

In assessment terms, quality is more important than quantity, but candidates in some schools submitted not only a very small number of pieces, but also poorly constructed artwork. The IB recommends 240 hours of teaching for the HL course and 150 hours for candidates opting for the SL course. In order to be successful, 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.

Schools sometimes seemed to not respect the requirements of each component. In the studio work component, for example, SLA candidates should upload up to twelve photos with images of their work. Twelve is the maximum number of permitted files for this level and component. Some schools uploaded more than this amount, but it must be understood that in these cases only the first twelve files are considered by the examiners and this could end up having a significant impact on the assessment.

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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. It must be clear that examiners are asked to assess only the maximum number of pages required for the option and level the candidate is entered for, and this could end up having a significant impact on the assessment.

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

As in previous sessions, examiners reported seeing a wide range of quality of work, varying from quite basic levels of competence to candidates that had reached a high standard of sophistication and skill. A few candidates pushed boundaries to create consistently strong pieces. It was pleasing to see that some candidates made connections with other subjects, especially with TOK, and/or with other cultures.

Candidates being exposed to techniques and art first hand and being encouraged to make art through a process of investigation and experimentation and receiving clear direction about the course requirements and the assessment criteria seemed once again to be the ones who achieved the best results. 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; higher standards have been achieved by candidates who had been stimulated to thoroughly engage with creative projects and had been offered a structured approach to critical and contextual studies. It is worth mentioning that this is very different from setting prescriptive assignments to all candidates during the duration of the course, as this, on the contrary, appears to hinder their personal artistic development.

For both option A and option B, 2D works in painting and drawing were once again the most popular, while 3D work was limited even if the use of 3D printers is becoming more and more popular. 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.

Most candidates demonstrated at least satisfactory understanding of artistic ideas and techniques, through evidence provided in the studio work and through the interview/commentary, investigation pages and candidate statement.

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.

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

This criterion refers to three aspects of the artwork: 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.

However, this is a complex descriptor and continues to be often misinterpreted by some teachers and candidates: once again, work that did not achieve well in this criterion may have had personal relevance but showed little exploration of ideas reflecting cultural and historical awareness and artistic qualities. In some cases personal experience was stressed far more than any cultural awareness.

Examiners were impressed when candidates did show personal relevance in their works and integrated cultural awareness by examining their own and different cultures. It was noted that historical awareness was largely covered through the inspiration and influence of other artists: Frida Kahlo, Warhol and Banksy remain quite prominent, but Australian/NZ candidates also seemed aware of indigenous arts.

Some open-ended teaching assignments enabled candidates to achieve a higher degree of personal relevance and a deeper exploration of ideas reflecting cultural/historical/artistic qualities. 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. An excess of teacher led activities, on the other hand, seemed in some cases to hinder the candidates' personal development, and some examiners felt that it was difficult to see personally relevant work when the portfolio included too many teacher led assignments.

Interviews and commentaries supported the candidates' submissions when they included discussion about their cultural sensitivity and showed that they were able to make connections between different cultures, art movements, artists and their own context. On the other hand, too many candidates demonstrated a superficial and simplistic approach to culture, and many continued to explore contemporary or recent art ideas and qualities rather than looking at a longer perspective when considering historical awareness.

Teachers and candidates should consider that not all art movements will necessarily inspire artwork that achieves highly in assessment terms: for example, submitting artworks that primarily show an exploration of ideas relating to conceptual art may not receive many marks for technical competence. Presenting artworks consisting of found objects certainly shows awareness of this artistic concept, but similarly may not achieve highly in other criteria.

Development of ideas and strategies for expression

There was a wide range of achievement levels in this criterion; in some cases there seemed to be little evidence of ideas being developed more than to a superficial degree, while the strongest work was informed, with innovative and personal approaches to developing and conveying ideas.

As it has been noted in previous reports, 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 still areas of some concern. In terms of refinement particularly, many candidates were content with an initial outcome of a studio piece.

Stronger work had notes, sketches and experimentation documenting the process and changes in response to the unexpected. The more inventive works often involved images personally relevant to the candidates (eg of themselves, of their interior/exterior environments etc) as resources for developing their work.

There were some cases of weaker candidates using images and ideas taken directly from the Internet as inspiration for or as the subject of the work itself: in these cases candidates completely missed out the process of development.

In many cases of studio work submitted for internal assessment in option B, although there was an interesting development of ideas, the lack of understanding of the formal elements and the lack of technical skills made the art pieces look unresolved.

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

Sensitivity to materials and their use is linked to sustained experimentation, try-outs and reflection, but in this session this review process including modification and refinement was only occasionally seen. It was noted that some candidates tended to use a variety of materials without fully understanding or mastering any of them. Variety has to be coupled with understanding and mastery.

Some examiners felt that many students wanted more or less immediate results, and these students struggled to review, modify and refine work as it progressed. There was a tendency to leave the work as it is once "finished".

There could be a number of reasons for this lack of process including time constraints, the fact that some candidates like immediate results, and insufficient or ineffective teacher instruction, but without some degree of review, modification and refinement, the final piece is likely to remain unresolved or partially resolved.

Technical competence

Levels of achievement in this criterion were mixed; some examiners commented that the work seen this session was technically very strong, while in some cases a lack of technical skill seemed to hinder the candidates' achievement.

Technical competence was often closely linked to the candidates' 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.

Confidence and inventiveness

The role of the teacher is sometimes misunderstood in relation to confidence, inventiveness, self-direction and independent judgment. Teachers can encourage all these elements in the work submitted. In this session it was pleasing to see that instruction in different media and an emphasis on experimentation often led to inventiveness and personal discoveries.

In some cases, candidates clearly benefitted from an environment that encouraged risk-taking and were able to take decisions about their own artistic direction. This confidence sometimes manifested itself in terms of ambitious, challenging and/or large-scale studio pieces. Some vibrant exhibitions were submitted for assessment.

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 and it was very impressive to see candidates being able to experiment with materials and reflect on their creative processes, eventually presenting resolved, challenging new proposals.

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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 option A the majority of schools submitted work of satisfactory to high quality, with much evidence of clear understanding of the course requirements, supported by experienced, sensitive and challenging teacher instruction and guidance. It was quite obvious that the best results were linked to good quality teaching and that the candidates who appeared to be left to their own devices scored worse against the descriptors. The best work reflected structured and instructional teaching; it is important to note that when teachers appeared to be over-prescriptive about the coursework this often hindered the candidates' results.

Overall standards in work submitted for moderation appeared quite high in this November session and encouragingly a continued improvement was noted by the moderators. A good number of candidates did achieve highly, although some teachers' internal marks still tend to be rather generous and are not always justified by appropriate comments which clearly reference the IA criteria.

More candidates apparently elected to study ethnic art and artists (both contemporary and traditional) this session; there was more fashion design and photography, more 3D work and a pleasing amount of printmaking too, with associated investigation work. The best work was informed by first-hand source material, while weaker candidates relied exclusively on the Internet.

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 submitted investigation workbook pages read like a report on art class assignments and art lectures, without the necessary further personal reflection or analysis.

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Many unrelated, set projects were seen with an overall lack of potential for depth or personal exploration. There was often too much biographical information on artists with little connection to candidates' own work. In some workbooks, social issues and topics explored had been researched in some depth but there was little visual art context included, meaning that criteria were not met. Personal experiences and views were more often the focus of investigations rather than cultural and historical studies within the field of art and design. The mistaken idea that a theme is necessary (relating to both components) still prevails.

In general, most candidates were able to discuss the development of their work with some confidence, even when the majority of the work was teacher-directed. In some schools candidates presented only teacher-directed projects in both studio work and investigation, thus hindering independent exploration and development of personal ideas. An increasing number of candidates are using digital media without going through a thorough investigation and in many cases without sufficiently documenting the support material.

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, art-making practices and techniques informs, directs and motivates their art work. 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.

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.

In option B, the range of work submitted was generally suitable with an increase in quality in HL submissions at the highest levels. The most successful candidates presented a well-rounded investigation supported by relevant comments in the interview and the candidate statement, which demonstrated sound awareness of the socio-cultural contexts based on research. The exploration of ideas and techniques through a sustained inquiry and cross-cultural comparison frequently followed understanding of their own work within the broader context of visual arts.

In least successful workbooks, themes deviated from the visual arts realm, (including occasionally non-visual investigation). Social, political and environmental issues (eg "for my social activism piece…") had been researched in some depth but there was little visual art context or connection included, meaning that criteria were not met. 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

Much can yet be done to improve this area of study. Historical and cultural awareness were neither always evident nor convincing. There continues to be a focus on "obvious" artists – most typically 20th century artists and movements (Dali, Picasso, Warhol, Cubism etc) together with some investigation into more contemporary, popular and sometimes low-brow artists. There was generally less first hand exploration, although some centres particularly had encouraged investigation into local artists or those related to candidates' own culture, visual traditions and background, which was pleasing to see this session.

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. Where art from other cultures had been considered, it was often examined in isolation. The investigations rarely presented evidence of how different cultures and times had impacted subsequent artists, and failed to explain the particular function and significance.

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 remain 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

Planning and process documentation was often only seen in retrospective writing. Practical media exploration could have been better used as a form of analysis, with more thoughtful annotation needed. Skills for making art varied enormously from school to school. In several schools where candidates worked with the same media and/or art form, they all had excellent technical skills. In others where they experimented with a range of diverse media and materials they had not developed or refined any technical skills. The skills instruction available to candidates in class clearly had a significant impact on performance in making and analysis. Studies to improve skills and techniques tend to range from rapid sketches to working drawings but the IWBs are rarely used as platforms for thoughtful, careful and

analytical drawing and painting. Such studies would inevitably lead to more exciting and skillful studio work.

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 the 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 demonstrated some organised, focused investigative strategies, although these were not always coherent or individual – since relatively few pages are sent for assessment, more careful selection of pages might improve this. Less successful candidates relied too much on the written word (mind maps, brainstorming etc.) to develop ideas and failed to research visual qualities. Direct studies from nature were in short supply.

Investigative strategies often lacked practical exploration. Some investigations were stand-alone and showed no clear links between the work of the candidate and the pieces being investigated.

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 were 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.

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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 in many cases tended to be 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 artwork 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.

Specialist vocabulary needs to be introduced at an early stage during the course so that candidates have the time to become familiar and master the use of this terminology. 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 criterion often scored lower here too.

Uses appropriate range of sources and acknowledges them properly

In both option A and option B, performance against this criterion is improving slowly. Candidates used a range of sources, including own photographs, poetry, popular culture, music, literature, and most often, art images. Sources were documented more consistently this session overall. However, a good proportion of candidates still fail to acknowledge even dominant internet sources and/or verbatim quotations, properly and fully. Acknowledgements which are no more than a link to a website are insufficient, uninformative and difficult or impossible to conveniently check. Gallery visits and work with visiting artists were pleasingly more common but not always clearly cited. In some cases, quotes were cited and acknowledged, but the candidate did not provide an explanation to show their understanding

of the quote, making it dismissible and risking plagiarism. More use of personal photography as a resource was apparent but this also needs to be better captioned. The use of scholarly texts, journals and documentaries is still too limited.

Although examiners found that citation was generally better and more consistent this session, disappointingly few candidates had been trained to use their school's conventional methods for acknowledging resources, just as in other subjects. Despite the improvements, acknowledgement of sources is still not consistent, especially with the use of retrieved imagery. Illustrations must be captioned correctly and candidates should be reminded that websites need to be precisely cited: for example "Google Images" is not an acceptable source to reference.

In cases where examiners had serious concerns about plagiarism these have been reported to the academic honesty department and investigated. More formalized emphasis and training is still necessary as is expanding the direct exposure to the Arts.

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 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 with overly decorative backgrounds that obstruct legibility. 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. Candidates' research must be available to a reader, therefore, clarity 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.

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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 fulfils all the assessment descriptors, but that overall a range of different pieces showing different approaches and ideas can more easily meet the course expectations.

Teachers need to be in line with the assessment criteria when assessing the IA, as there is a tendency to be quite generous. Please refer to the OCC "Teacher support material" to become more accurate.

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 arts course. A mandatory level or option is not always a good practice for all candidates.

Plan the course to allow for skill development over time: 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.

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 orientate 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.

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

Candidates with little prior learning in visual arts have to be guided carefully, 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.

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: there is no requirement for candidates to follow a theme, but where appropriate, 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 artwork. 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. When considering art from different cultures and times make connections that nurture the development of candidates' work. Sometimes students get "inspiration" from the work of others without understanding the contextual significance of the works they are considering. Many times students only emulate styles or in other cases, use 'conceptual' ideas in the creation of artworks with non-traditional materials like installations or videos that do not seem to develop from authentic critical observation.

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 their 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 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 candidates' 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 fulfils the requirements. Ensure the 1000 word commentary is precise and concise, and linked to the criteria; the commentary must explain key works in detail and depth; do not waste words talking about "how I love art" or "my journey, my growth or my life" unless pertinent to the message/process.

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).

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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.