

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 in both the May and November 2014 sessions and in the May 2015 session 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 2015 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 the whole course.

Please note that, November 2015 being the last examination session for the current visual arts course, this report has also been written aiming, where possible, to offer advice for a smoother transition to the new visual arts course first assessed in May 2016.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

As with previous sessions, examiners commented on how wide-ranging the quality of work was, with some of it achieving very high standards.

There were predictably varied responses in terms of range and suitability. It was pleasing to see a number of fairly strong submissions with a broad range of media used creatively and

with good conceptual foundations, however, given the nature and purpose of this document, the focus of much of its first section is on the areas of weakness that appeared more evident during the November 2015 session.

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. Examples of work in ceramics, lino-printing and dry-point etching were also seen. Overall, once more, quite a small amount of 3D work was submitted.

Candidates exposed to techniques and art first-hand and being encouraged to make art through a process of investigation and experimentation 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; 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.

In some schools the candidates explored only one medium throughout the two year course. However, even though some candidates spent two years using one medium, their work was still barely satisfactory and did not meet the standards that would be expected. For example, it is difficult to do well with an HLA submission of just 12 small (if competent) ceramic pots or 12 simple 'snapshot' photographs.

These teachers/schools will have to change their approach when working on the new course because in the process portfolios candidates are required to explore more than one media/technique. Throughout the visual arts course all students will be expected to experiment and work in a variety of art-making forms.

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 and this was generally not confused with the 300 word candidate statement. There were a few cases where candidates did not seem to realize that if entered for option B they should talk about their investigation workbook.

As with previous sessions there were a few cases of the commentary or candidate statement exceeding the maximum number of words (300 or 1,000) and a number of interviews that were longer than 15 minutes. Schools are reminded that there is no expectation that examiners will read/listen/watch submitted materials beyond the prescribed maximum limits.

In the new course, there is no requirement for a candidate statement or interview/commentary. However, at both SL and HL there is a requirement that the exhibition component includes a curatorial rationale where the candidates will have to justify the selection, arrangement and presentation of a prescribed number of artworks in their

exhibition. HL candidates will also have to explain how the arrangements and presentation of works in their exhibition contributes to the audience ability to interpret and understand the intentions and meanings within the artwork exhibited. Schools must notice that the curatorial rationale, unlike the candidate statement or interview/commentary, will be assessed.

Technology and digital media

A growing number of candidates continued to explore photography but many fell into the weaker band as few appeared to engage with photography as a medium and seemed to lack knowledge and understanding of the specific techniques and artistic language of this art-making form (in some cases shooting completely on Auto). If digital manipulation software was used it frequently indicated a very superficial knowledge of digital techniques, with works showing very simple Photoshop effects. Clicking on “watercolour effect” to simply give a digital photograph the appearance of a watercolour painting is not showing a sophisticated enough understanding of the potential of digital manipulation. The lack of evidence about the creative process and the fact that there was often no reflection about the digital software/programs used made these works harder to mark and the examiners sometimes found it difficult to assess the work against some of the assessment descriptors.

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.

It was pleasing to see evidence that more candidates are showing that they are aware of the work of artists, although it would be better still if they did more than simply create a ‘one-off’ “in the style of” painting. Pop art remains very popular but candidates should be aware that there are other art movements that might productively be explored. Teachers and candidates need to consider that the simplistic copying of a very well-known style very often implies a too superficial level of cultural and historical awareness and a too-restricted exploration of artistic qualities.

The practice of simply copying downloaded images continues to be a concern. Submitting work that is an easy and direct copy of an image from the Internet without referencing the source is plagiarism. Every session a number of cases of malpractice are investigated and failing to appropriately acknowledge sources could potentially lead to an investigation for breach of regulation which could have serious consequences for candidates.

Furthermore, it must be noted that, 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.

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. Conversely, in some centres much of the submitted work was rarely larger than A3, was all 2D and featured extremely limited development of ideas.

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. It was good to see open ended-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.

Some schools consider the selection of a topic important but in some cases this limits the candidate's artistic production. It must be stressed that the choice of a theme often doesn't make a difference and if ideas are shallow it doesn't matter whether there is a 'theme' or not.

Even if working around an idea, theme or issue can help to generate a cohesive and coherent exhibition, in a number of submissions the choice to work on a theme was misunderstood and became more like a straight-jacket.

The studio assessment criteria of the 'old' course and the exhibition criteria of the 'new' visual arts course both refer to a coherent body of works. However, in both cases there are also other criteria and it should be noted that a candidate following a theme for two years is not necessarily adopting the best approach. The criterion about coherence requires evidence of relationships between artworks, but this can be achieved in a variety of ways.

Process, exploration and experimentation

As in past sessions, often the candidates' main ideas were interesting, but there tended to be insufficient evidence of depth and experimentation in visual development. The more interesting works were those that were developed 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.

Many schools are already using the screen format to present material for examination; but they have focused on decoration rather than substance. The layout of the pages tended to lean to the literal and descriptive rather than reflecting ongoing visual studies, experiments and preparatory ideas for planning future works and often referred in the past tense to work completed rather than in the planning process. Sometimes the work has been put together hastily without the sustained investigation strategies examiners are looking for. This reflects

misunderstanding on the continuous and purposeful manipulation of techniques and processes and the critical investigation that supports it.

Teachers and candidates will have to focus on carefully selecting the materials for the new course process portfolio component. These will have to provide evidence of the creative processes, of the experimentation, exploration, manipulation and refinement of a variety of visual arts activities as well as of the candidate's technical accomplishment and understanding of the use of materials.

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 submitted images for fewer than 12 studio pieces at HLA should have compensated for this with the evidence of being engaged with complex, challenging, highly time-consuming art work.

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, there was 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. These variations are to be expected in a studio-based visual arts course.

Weaker work tended to be rather derivative responses to prescriptive teacher-directed artmaking exercises, while at the other end of the scale there were accomplished independent and student centred bodies of work that developed from a thorough and sustained investigation into artmaking practice. This work frequently built on a structure provided by the teacher in the first year, but evolved into something more independent and creative in the second year.

A few candidates pushed boundaries to create consistently strong pieces and it was pleasing to see that some candidates made connections with other subjects, especially with TOK, and/or with other cultures.

Several candidates submitted photography as final studio works but few candidates elaborated these works considering creative or aesthetic qualities: in many cases photographic works were poor, with little evidence of development. Similarly, most submitted videos did not explore the creative potential of the medium. (Teachers might need to be reminded that any sound on the video is not assessed).

There was not a great deal of 3D work: the 3D pieces submitted were quite varied but many tended to present a poor quality of production. Ceramics is the most accessible 3D medium for some candidates, but many did not display a great understanding or worked with poor technical competence.

In some schools the size and scale of some exhibition artworks did enhance the holistic view and allowed for higher marks in some descriptors.

In general schools presented candidates' work very well, although occasionally the resolution quality of the submitted file was not sufficient to enable zooming in for a close-up

Some candidates used the art of others as a stimulating and successful starting point for their own artistic journey, showing a good understanding of some ideas and techniques, and submitting creative artworks informed by an awareness of the art of others. Some influences were taken in a literal and derivative manner, evidencing less personal interpretation. There is still too much copying from photographic sources.

For future reference

Much of the work submitted for studio for the November 2015 session would be acceptable in terms of range and suitability for the exhibition component in the May 2016 session (first assessment of the new course), although it must be noted that in 2016 the requirements will refer to the number of artworks and not to the number of images documenting the candidates' artworks. The number of artworks required for HL will be between 8 and 11 and for SL it will be between 4 and 7 artworks.

In the new course candidates are required to select for the exhibition the artworks that demonstrate their highest achievements regardless of the media, however, the range of work created will be crucial in the process portfolio and some of the candidates' work seen in May 2015 would not be sufficient to meet the formal requirements for this component in 2016: for example, it will no longer be acceptable for candidates to work in one medium for the two years. SL students in 2016 will have to include in their process portfolio evidence of work in at least two art-making forms, each from separate columns of the art-making forms table in the *Visual Arts Guide - First examinations 2016* (March 2014). For HL students the submitted work will have to be created in at least three art-making forms, selected from a minimum of two columns of the art-making forms table. Please refer to the *Visual arts guide - First examinations 2016* (March 2014) on page 20 to see the art-making forms table.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Understanding of the ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression

Once again, evidence of consistent integration between the investigation workbook and studio work frequently resulted in candidates showing that they understood the ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression. It was often the case that a series of outstanding workbook pages was reflected in a series of outstanding studio works. In the new visual arts course the visual arts journal remains crucial to develop the candidates' artistic expression.

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

In some schools there was very good 'exploration of ideas reflecting cultural, historical awareness and artistic qualities', especially when addressing aspects of their own culture. There was some good exploration of ideas and imagery that was personally / culturally relevant to the candidate, which was pleasing to see. Cultural awareness was seen more than historical awareness, although this did not always show sufficient depth of understanding. There continues to be some difficulty with the interpretation of 'personally relevant artworks'. Personal relevance by itself is not going to achieve highly: there needs to be evidence of the exploration of ideas reflecting cultural and historical awareness and artistic qualities. 'My feelings and emotions' are mostly too general and shallow reasons to present artwork.

In some schools, whole class teacher-dictated assignments throughout the course tended to limit the development of the personal element in candidates' work. While many students may benefit from 'scaffolding', teacher-imposed constraints limit stronger candidates and hinder their chances to follow their individual direction. Some examiners felt that it was difficult to see personally relevant work when the portfolio included too many teacher-led assignments. On the other hand, in some cases open-ended assignments encouraged the creation of personally relevant explorations: personal relevance is not necessarily in contradiction to teacher assignments when these are properly planned and designed.

There was little evidence of contextual understanding with submissions relating to computer-generated art and digital photography.

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 beyond a superficial degree, while the strongest work was informed, with innovative and personal approaches to developing and conveying ideas.

As 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.

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.

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

A significant amount of work submitted reflected contemporary artmaking practices and concepts: this was executed to varying degrees of success.

The more successful candidates tended to be those whose practices allowed for the reworking and refining of images, rather than discretely completed pieces that did not seem to contribute to further development of artistic skills and judgement.

True sensitivity to materials was primarily seen in the work of those candidates who already had more technically advanced skills. The review and modification of work as it progressed was more prevalent than refinement.

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 was 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.

Candidates achieving well in this descriptor invariably submit studio files that demonstrate a coherent body of work. There is obvious continuity with the new course here because criterion A in the assessment of the exhibition in the new course is *Coherent body of works*, relating to a coherent collection of works which fulfils stated artistic intentions and communicate clear thematic or stylistic relationships across individual pieces.

Technical competence

Technical competence in the submitted work seemed to be a fairly 'successful' criterion with many candidates performing beyond a satisfactory level this session. As in other sessions, the lack of technical skills did hinder some candidates' achievement.

Progress in technical skills was particularly visible where a large body of the work focused on one or two media, or a limited media combination/range. There were some examples of noteworthy drawing and painting skills.

There should be a sufficient time-frame given for each medium explored to allow for a certain level of attainment. This also is dependent on candidates' readiness to explore a particular material. In some case the lack of understanding and grasp of fundamental design principles also affected candidates' ability to know what to do with chosen materials.

Digital work showed little depth in the understanding of the technical use of the media and video studio work submissions tended to be superficial.

Technical competence also features in the assessment criteria in the exhibition component of the new course, asking to what extent the work demonstrates effective application and manipulation of media, materials and formal qualities. Skills, techniques and processes are going to be assessed also in the process portfolio in criterion A, so to avoid double-dipping, candidates entered for the visual arts course from May 2016 must not include the same resolved artworks in these two components (*Visual arts guide – First assessment 2016*, p 45)

Confidence and inventiveness

Confidence can be interpreted in a number of ways, from the use of large-scale and less conventional media to the development of a style or simply the ability to convey ideas visually. 'Confidence' in the ability to explain the work was often evident in candidates with fairly weak technical skills and ideas, but this is not what the examiners are really looking for. Inventiveness in the use of unconventional media and less obvious forms of expression was evident quite often this session.

Confidence, inventiveness and self-direction often appeared in the work of candidates who had benefitted from a well-structured first year, in schools with a teaching and learning structure that clearly supported and encouraged these things. These qualities were less evident in schools that provided little structure or, conversely, when the teaching was overly prescriptive.

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

The investigation workbook seemed, once more, to be a challenging component for many students. In part, this is due to the nature of the IWB in that it seeks to serve two masters. On one hand, it seeks to support and provide evidence that addresses aspects of the Part A studio work markbands, but on the other hand, the IWB has its own set of marking criteria in the form of the Part B investigation workbook descriptors. Throughout the life of this course, students had to choose their strongest 15-20 (SLA), 25-30 (HLA and SLB), or 30-40 (HLB)

workbook pages that best showed their achievement against the Part B investigation workbook markband descriptors, whilst at the same time, evidencing aspects of the studio work assessment that might not be readily observable in the studio pieces alone. Getting the balance right was part of the nature of this task, assessed for the last time during this session.

In November 2015 often the IWB pages submitted for assessment were organised but tended toward the descriptive rather than being used for personal enquiry, planning, investigating and seeking opportunities and ideas with which to experiment and develop studio work.

At the lowest end of achievement, submissions often consisted of a series of sketchbook pages, with little or no annotations, and very often at the minimum range of the quantity permissible for the option and level undertaken by the candidate. The sketches varied in quality from clumsy and poorly-executed thumbnails to skilfully-rendered drawings, but at either end of the spectrum described here, it is impossible for candidates to satisfy all if any of the Part B markband descriptors at the lowest level, with examiners often having to make best-fit judgements, referring to markbands that are not met, or only partially so.

Similarly, some other workbooks at the lower end (fewer in relation to the previous example) consisted almost entirely of pages of written or word-processed artist biography and descriptions of artworks that have no apparent connection with the studio work they have undertaken. At best, such examples may score partially against three or four of the eight markband descriptors, but not rate against the rest. Both of these approaches represent a fundamental misinterpretation of the intent of the workbook: "Workbooks are working journals that should reflect personal approaches, styles and interests. They are not simply scrapbooks, sketchbooks or diaries but may be a combination of all three..." [*Visual Arts Guide - First examinations 2009, (2007), p 14*].

The mid-range submissions presented a variety of approaches with candidates achieving sound outcomes against all or most of the markband descriptors. Typically, they were a reflection of the candidates' own interests in their art-making practices. They engaged critically with the works of other artists from a range of cultural contexts, they explored media and forms and they documented the development of ideas and the development and processes involved in the production of studio pieces.

The highest level of achievement showed a more significant number of candidates this session with some outstanding examples presented at both Option A and Option B. Candidates at this level are presenting rich and personal investigations that have often contributed to conceptually strong and technically resolved studio submissions. Their work is formed by broad investigation from a range of scholarly and reliable sources. Increasingly, these are web-based, but first-hand experiences of artists and artworks, through residency programmes, studio and gallery visits are common. Printed works and periodical journals are also referred to. Strongest students are conversant with a variety of methods and models to engage critically with the works of other artists whom they investigate, but also use similar models to evaluate their own art-making. Their investigations include in-depth research into the familiar heroes of art history, but also increasingly show an awareness of contemporary and emerging artists.

These critical investigations are not undertaken just to satisfy markband descriptors, but are the result of an inquiry that emerges from an ongoing art-making practice, where the candidates seek to sustain and enhance their own visual vocabulary by looking to the products of other artists to inform, challenge and extend.

It was felt that the strongest submissions might somehow have been already informed by the approach proposed in the new visual arts course and by the requirements of the comparative study component. If this is the case, it is encouraging to see the level of the research that some candidates submitted.

In considering the suitability of material submitted, it is of most value to indicate what is not suitable for submission, or what fails to add value to a candidate's marks for the IWB component at option A or option B: lists of visual arts terminology, with or without definitions, do not address the markband descriptors about the use of the specialist vocabulary of visual arts.

Where candidates produced investigative work that was unrelated to visual arts, even if interesting issues were tackled, it was difficult to credit their efforts. Students need to ensure that they articulate the relevance of such investigation to their studio practice.

Candidate performance against each criterion

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

Most students comfortably present and describe the work of other artists in their investigation workbooks. Few analyse successfully. Analysis is not just a question of identifying visual or formal qualities that are seen in an artwork. According to the "Glossary of Action Verbs" (in the *Visual Arts Guide - First examinations 2009*, p33) analysis involves deconstructing in order to bring out the essential elements, structure, underlying assumptions and any interrelationships involved.

The exploring of work from different cultures and times was neither always evident nor convincing. There continues to be a focus on the very familiar artists – most typically 20th century artists and movements (Dali, Picasso, Kahlo, Warhol, Cubism etc) together with some investigation into more contemporary, popular and sometimes low-brow artists. Well-articulated comparison between artworks from different times or cultures was rare.

Function or significance were often touched on, but rarely discussed in any detail in all but the strongest of submissions. Consideration of function and significance of others' artwork tends to be perhaps the least well-handled element here. It involves candidates needing to make an informed interpretation of the intent, meaning and purpose of a work, and evaluating the importance of the work in terms of the impact it had in the cultural context in which it was created as well as its significance for the students' own art-making practices. In higher-achieving candidates' submissions, this was achieved through text-based articulation, but was also accomplished through visual deconstructions and annotations of artworks as well as other visual organisers.

At times, moderators and examiners noted only some superficial references and it was felt that schools should focus more on the development of candidates' analytical skills. This is an important consideration as schools transition to the new visual arts course (first assessment in May 2016) and are now preparing students for the comparative study.

The ability to analyse formal qualities, to interpret function and purpose, to evaluate cultural significance, to make comparisons and connections and to use subject-specific language will continue to be required in the new visual arts course and these skills in particular will be crucial for the successful completion of the comparative study, where candidates are required to critically compare three works and, at Higher Level, to relate the works to their own art-making.

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

Planning and process documentation of studio work was often seen only in retrospective writing. Skills for making art varied enormously from school to school. The skills instruction available to candidates in class clearly had a significant impact on performance in making and analysing. 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 preliminary drawing and painting. Such studies would inevitably lead to more exciting and skilful studio work, as well as more satisfying IWBs.

As in previous sessions, this criterion was often achieved more successfully in terms of documenting making processes than demonstrating analytical skills. Both are required to achieve marks in the higher markbands. Practical media exploration could have been better used as a form of analysis, with more thoughtful annotation needed.

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.

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 and cohesion.

The majority of candidates demonstrated some organised, focused investigative strategies, although these were not always coherent or individual: some examiners suggested that this was perhaps a consequence of poorly chosen pages (or pages seen out-of-context). Less successful candidates relied too much on the written word (mind maps, brainstorming etc.) to develop ideas and failed to research visual qualities. Reliance on the internet as a singular form of investigation is still prevalent in many cases. Direct studies from observation 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.

As stated in previous reports, 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. As schools transition into the new visual arts course, first examined in May 2016, it is worth noting that the broader scope of the process portfolio component allows students to construct screens that evidence their development as artists. This will enable students to use extracts from several visual arts journal pages on one screen with annotations to facilitate more coherent and focused communication of their art-making processes.

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

Most candidates developed ideas effectively; the synthesis of these with the works of others into new forms differentiated the high achievers. The inclusion of developmental planning pages with a range of alternative outcomes through sketching and annotation aids the process of refining and reviewing ideas. This is a difficult skill, but when undertaken well demonstrated genuine learning on the part of the candidate.

Most candidates were able to explain the connections to their researched artists and those who made relevant selections were able to clearly show those connections. Where schools had delivered whole class lectures as a basis for artist research, achievement in this respect was low. Very good depth was only achieved when students were able to make informed connections to their relevant researched artists, and reflected a perceptive appreciation of the intent of the artist and the function and purpose of the works investigated.

Effective and accurate use of the specialist vocabulary of visual arts

Most candidates demonstrated a satisfactory and generally accurate use of vocabulary though there is little evidence of this being actively expanded and developed through teaching. In the strongest examples, it was evident that candidates were introduced to new terms through instruction or independent investigation, included definitions, and then used the language with increasing confidence and accuracy throughout the sample. This fluency was often evident in the interview too.

As when studying any new language, learning of the specialist vocabulary of visual arts is best accomplished in an immersive environment. 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 appropriate specialist vocabulary stems from informed discussion, analysis and reading. Giving plenty of opportunities to the candidates to practise 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 develop

specialist language. Students who scored low in the first and 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 has improved 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 properly and fully even the ever-dominant internet sources and/or verbatim quotations. Although examiners found that citation was generally better this session, few candidates had been trained to use their school's conventional methods for acknowledging resources just as in other subjects. Acknowledgements which are no more than a link to a website are insufficient, uninformative and difficult or impossible to conveniently refer to. In some cases, quotes were cited and acknowledged, but candidates did not provide an explanation to show their understanding of the quote, making it dismissible.

There was a heavy reliance on Wikipedia and most sources cited were from the internet. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this provided it is an active and considered response to the information as opposed to rote copying. There is an expectation for students to refer to a range of sources. This should include digital, printed as well as physical first-hand experience. The use of scholarly texts, journals and documentaries is still too limited.

Images must be referenced correctly and candidates should be reminded that websites need to be precisely cited: for example "Google Images" is not an acceptable source to reference. More use of personal photography as a resource was apparent but this also needs to be better captioned.

Schools must be vigilant and advise candidates not to share on social media work that is submitted for assessment; also, submitting for assessment images of candidates' artwork with watermarks of websites they have been using, must be avoided.

In cases where examiners had serious concerns about plagiarism these have been reported to the academic honesty department and investigated. It is essential for teachers to appreciate and reinforce the message that neglecting to acknowledge sources could potentially lead to an investigation for breach of regulation which could have serious consequences for candidates.

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

Many students had IWBs where the work was presented both effectively and creatively and had clearly been using their books in an authentic manner throughout the course. Sometimes pages were dominated by reproductions of art works or secondary photographic source material to the detriment of the student's creative responses.

While most candidates demonstrated some satisfactory observation or reflection, there were some that were able to make some thoughtful observations about their research and effectively reflect on their own work and process as well. However sophisticated analysis was often lacking. Some workbooks appeared to have been completed retrospectively with limited critical observation and did not support the studio work. The weakest performances generally showed the lack of critical observation, reflection and discrimination in considering 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, 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. There continue to be issues with work submitted where pages are scanned at an inconsistent resolution, and pages have not been correctly oriented for viewing by the examiner.

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 substantiation of 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, did students have 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 include reference to some elements of the new visual arts course (first examinations 2016).

Awareness of the course requirements and familiarity with the assessment criteria

It is vital that all teachers (and candidates) are familiar with the course and its objectives and assessment criteria. A strong understanding of the assessment criteria is crucial for candidates to be able to finalize the best selection of their artwork to submit for assessment.

Introduce the assessment criteria to the students at an early stage of the course and keep referring to them all during the course.

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 (both face-to-face and online) and participating in the OCC visual arts forum are all ways for teachers to keep updated. This recommendation is particularly important as May 2016 will be the first examination session for the new visual arts course. All teachers are advised to refer to and teach from the new *Visual arts guide – First examinations 2016* (March 2014).

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 *Teacher support material* and the Exhibition assessment criteria clarification available on the OCC to become more accurate.

To predict grades in May 2016 teachers will have to refer to the *Grade Descriptors - Group 6*, available on the OCC. Work must satisfy the component requirements. Work that is submitted in excess of the maximum allowed is not assessed. This can negatively impact a candidate's results, particularly if stronger work comes later in a submission

Recommendations for teaching the new course:

Structure the course: the Visual arts course needs to be structured and a series of assignments frequently forms a strong basis for students to have justified confidence in their skills and understanding when embarking on more independent work. Ideas and strategies develop when there is a structure that allows and supports this development. The material developed and used for each of the new assessment components should emerge organically from the investigation undertaken through the course using the Visual Arts Journal.

Give advice about level choice: candidates need to be counselled into choosing the best level of the visual arts course. A mandatory level is not always a good practice for all candidates.

Plan the course to allow for skill development over time: the new visual arts course requires candidates to experience a range of media and techniques, allowing candidates time to experiment within these 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 and teachers should demonstrate how to work through and refine an idea: a collection of coherent resolved works should be presented in the exhibition. Start guiding candidates in how to work through an idea in a sequential way, including review and modification. Evidence of experimentation, exploration, manipulation and refinement needs to be selected and presented in the process portfolio screens. Allow time for ongoing formative assessment processes: these are crucial in preparing the candidates to better analyse, review and present their work.

Challenge and support your students: 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.

Teach how to conduct investigation, analysis, comparison and evaluation: candidates should be taught how to correctly annotate, analyze, compare, contrast and evaluate the works of others as well as their own works. Encourage higher-level critical thinking/analysis of artworks. Links to TOK and other areas of knowledge should be strengthened.

Teach a unit in the first year of study that focuses on specific cultural and historical contexts for art-making: it would be beneficial for candidates to experience different ways of viewing, making and learning about the visual arts through the lenses of social, historical, cultural and political contexts.

Teach a unit in the first year of study that focuses on a comparative study of cultural and historical contexts for art-making: this will demonstrate to candidates the sorts of processes and possibilities they may consider for their own comparative studies. It would be beneficial for candidates to experience different ways of viewing, making and learning about the visual arts through the lenses of social, historical, cultural and political contexts where they focus as a whole class group on comparing artworks or even broader genres of art making through these lenses.

Focus on processes: teach a unit in the first year of study in which you engage candidates in inquiry that encompasses reading on the topic, visual exploration of and writing on the topic, in which you examine a specific genre of art, where, under the guidance of the teacher, candidates can experience collectively various ways in which they might engage in process-based inquiry that is focused yet open to possibilities, including the potential for visual exploration and visual studies, media experimentation, investigation of the genre itself, and enquiry into related cultural similarities and differences.

Create opportunities to exhibit artwork: 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 and help them understand how to write a curatorial rationale. In the new course it is important that candidates understand the rationale for the selection, arrangement and exhibition of a group of artworks within a designated space and how the exhibition conveys an understanding of the relationship between the artworks and the viewer.

Encourage candidates to see real art: candidates with little art experience who only see images/art through the internet cannot always discern between good and poor quality art. In general schools where candidates visit art galleries, museums or have workshops with professional artists, appear to submit more informed portfolios. 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 and globally, to learn about art from different times/contexts, not just recent and contemporary art. Encourage them to broaden their tastes and help them develop an eye for understanding what works, what doesn't and how that relates to their work, 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 be taught to 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.

Encourage the effective demonstrations of how candidates' work is created in their workspace over time, through images and text and a crossover/balance between these. Encourage reflection and refinement of candidates' own work.

Help candidates draw on their individual strengths. 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 try-outs 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. Ensure good documentation of the technical processes of digital manipulation like Photoshop, or analogue or digital photography. This evidence of process would occur in the 'old' workbook (or the 'new' visual arts journal).

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, accompanying text, or research work. 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. 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.

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. Diligence in referencing of sources is not only good academic practice, but is essential for success in the IB Diploma.

Preparation for the digital upload:

The new Ecoursework interface allows either coordinators/teachers or candidates to upload the work to be submitted for assessment. Please check the prescribed file formats and sizes.

Teachers should consider the educational value of candidates producing an e-portfolio during the two years of the visual arts course. Candidates should be encouraged to independently manage their own e-portfolio in order to become familiar with the process of digitally documenting their artworks as early as possible in the course. In this way they will acquire important skills and gain full ownership of the digital reproductions of their own works. Only when satisfied with the quality of their e-submission should candidates upload the files and submit their e-portfolio to teachers/coordinators for authentication and final submission to the IB.

Throughout the course candidates/teachers should keep organized digital records of the work produced: for example maintaining individual digital folders will avoid a rush to assemble materials at the end of the course, close to upload time. Reproductions of artwork to be included in the e-portfolio must be clear. Do not upload images of art which when viewed, are sideways, upside-down or blurred. Where handwriting is unclear, candidates should type their annotations. Review and check submissions and the quality of uploaded materials for legibility, correct orientation and appropriate amount of screens.

Teachers must check that candidates respect the level requirements and submit the correct number of files for each component. Examiners are instructed to only consider up to the maximum number of works/screens.

When entering additional information and labelling their artworks, 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 examiners to understand the finer points of techniques and processes used.

The audio/video interview: the interview is no longer a requirement for the new visual arts course first assessed in May 2016.

The exhibition photographs: the submission of two exhibition photographs will be a mandatory requirement from May 2016. These images provide an understanding of the context of the exhibition and the size and scope of the candidate’s artworks, and give the examiner insight into how a student has considered the overall experience of the viewer in the exhibition. Only the selected artworks submitted for assessment should appear in the exhibition photographs.