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 May and November 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 May 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, being May 2015 the last May session for the current visual art course, this report has been written aiming, where possible, to also 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; 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.

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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 May 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, 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, once more quite a small amount of 3D work was submitted.

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 are expected to experience working with 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.

The 1,000 word written commentary is an alternative to the interview and most candidates correctly focused on how the artwork they submitted for external assessment addressed the mark band descriptors.

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. 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.

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 beyond these 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 this required element of the portfolio for the new course, unlike the candidate statement or interview/commentary, will be assessed.

Technology and digital media

A growing number of candidates continue to explore photography but many fell in 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).

Some candidates did not seem to have access to specialized photography tools and equipment and showed poor knowledge and understanding of the various genres. 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 work harder to mark and the examiners found sometimes difficult to assess the work against some of the markband 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. Many candidates stayed within the 'comfort zone' of work based on the techniques and subject matter of small group of well-known and rather predictable artists (Warhol, Lichtenstein, etc - every session, many examiners see many variations of Warhol's 'Marilyn'). 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 and almost random copying of a very well-known style tends to imply 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 and the candidate runs the risk of not being awarded the Diploma.

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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. 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, 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.

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.

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 other criteria and it should be noted that a candidate following a theme for two years is not necessarily adopting the best approach.

Process, exploration and experimentation

As in past sessions, often the candidates' main idea was interesting but there tended to be insufficient evidence of depth and experimentation in visual development to achieve good results. This was frequently because the depiction of the idea was superficial and technically weak. The more interesting works 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.

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 as has been seen previously 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.

Please note that while so far there was no real minimum number of artworks required, because the requirement referred to the number of images documenting the candidate's work, in the course first assessed in May 2016 the requirements for the exhibition refer to the number of artworks.

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 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 (e.g. 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).

Much of the work submitted for studio for the May 2015 session would be acceptable in terms of range and suitability for the exhibition component in the May 2016 session (first examination for the new course), although it must be noticed that in 2016 the requirements will refer to the number of artworks and not to the number of images documenting the candidate's artworks. The number of artworks required for HL will be between 8 and 11 artworks 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 more 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 work in at least two art-making forms, each from separate columns of the art-making forms table on the *Visual Arts Guide - First examinations 2016.* For HL students the submitted work will have to been 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) to see the art-making forms table.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Understanding of the ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression

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. Seeing 'real' art through exhibition and gallery visits certainly helped this understanding.

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. In the new course, the exhibition component also asks candidates to consider conceptual qualities, including the elaboration of ideas, themes or concepts.

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

As has been noted in previous subject reports, this criterion refers to three aspects of the artwork: cultural awareness, historical awareness and artistic qualities. In the strongest portfolios, this criterion was achieved through 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.

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However, this descriptor continues to be 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 showed personal relevance in their works and integrated cultural awareness by examining their own and different cultures. Unfortunately, for many, making artworks that had personal relevance tended to lead to superficial pieces.

In some schools, whole class teacher dictated assignments throughout the course tended to limit the development of the personal element in the 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.

In the strongest submissions, studio images and IWB pages were infused with a powerful mix of independent, diverse and exciting research, alternative perspectives and investigation. Several schools focused predominantly on making the work seem 'personal' and most students want to produce work that is relevant to their interests and beliefs but the historical awareness was not always well covered.

Even if a number of candidates did produce works that were personally relevant, there was little evidence of contextual understanding with submissions relating to computer generated art and digital photography. 'My feelings and emotions' was still the most prevalent reason for the work presented and this was often general and shallow.

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.

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. Some drew their inspiration from random artworks found online without much discrimination while others were asked to look into a handful of famous artists (i.e. Picasso) without much opportunity to see other valid art history connections.

In some Option B cases excellent research and exploration of media was found that didn't unfortunately result in equivalent approaches to studio work. This may be due to time constraints or a lack of emphasis on the studio work maybe because it is worth fewer marks than the workbook. Some schools still show a disconnection between the research they do in the IWB and the studio work the students create.

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.

In other schools there was very little exploration of techniques and media, with candidates spending two years working with only one or two media.

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.

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 one of the exhibition criterion in the new course is "Coherent body of works," relating to communication of thematic or stylistic relationships across individual pieces and the candidate's stated intentions.

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.

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 samples of noteworthy drawing and painting skills.

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

Skill relates to practice in the use of the material and knowledge in how to apply it: 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. There should be a sufficient timeframe given for each medium explored to allow for a certain level of attainment. This also is dependent on the candidates' readiness to explore a particular material; more time might be required for those with less exposure and skills in a particular material. In some case the lack of understanding and grasp of fundamental design principles also affected the candidates' ability to know what to do with each material chosen.

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 and materials and formal qualities. Skills, techniques and processes are going to be assessed also in the process portfolio by 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 "The submitted screens must not include any resolved works submitted for part 3: exhibition assessment task")

Confidence and inventiveness

Confidence can be interpreted 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. Inventiveness in the use of unconventional media, and less obvious forms of expression was evident quite a lot this year.

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 artworks. Confidence and independent judgement stemmed from undertaking challenges based on informed experiments in artistic expression.

Demonstration of self-direction was apparent in candidates who had been given, in the first year training, open ended projects, or who had chosen their own theme or direction. On the contrary, the work from some centres consisted of a range of very similar outcomes as a response to a series of fairly specific projects set by the teacher. Here it was difficult to see how each candidate had been given the opportunity to develop their own ideas and approaches to their work.

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 continues to be a challenging component for many students. In part, this is due to the nature of the IWB in that is seeks to serve two masters. On one hand, it seeks to support and provide evidence that address 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 have had to choose their strongest 15 - 20 (SLA), 25-30 (HLA and SLB) or 30 - 40 (HLB) workbook pages that best show 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 is part of the nature of the task.

At the lowest end of achievement, submissions often consisted in a series of sketchbook pages, often 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) almost entirely consisted of pages of written or word-processed artist biography and descriptions of artworks that has 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.

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They may contain weak initial ideas and false starts, but these should not be seen as mistakes and can be used as a means of identifying a student's progress over the course." *[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. 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 more accurately, what fails to add value to a candidate's marks for the IWB component at option A or option B.

Countless pages of artist biography are often included in weak to mid-range submissions. While such investigation has merit and is often necessary for students to make an informed evaluation of the function and significance of a work in a given cultural context, it does not credit the candidate against any of the part B markband descriptors.

List of visual arts terminology with or without definitions does not address the markband descriptors about the use of the specialist vocabulary of visual arts. Examiners are looking for the ways the candidates use this metalanguage throughout their workbook sample, but also in the interview/commentary and statement.

Themes deviating from the visual arts realm, like 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 are 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. 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*, p 33) 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, Khalo, Warhol, Cubism etc) together with some investigation into more contemporary, popular and sometimes low-brow artists. Articulated comparison between artworks from different times or cultures was rare.

Quite a lot of candidates referenced their own and other cultures quite successfully in terms of the arts. Others tended to investigate more general global/social issues, without necessarily finding a visual arts connection/focus.

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, 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. Importantly, this was not uniformly achieved through text-based articulation, but was also accomplished through visual deconstructions and annotations of artworks as well as other visual organisers.

The comparison and analysis of art from different cultures tends to remain a weak area overall. At times, moderators and examiners noted only some superficial references and some analytical studies 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 art course and in particular these skills will be crucial for the successful completion of 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 more often seen only in retrospective writing. 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 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, although examiners suggested that this was potentially 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.

Investigative strategies in some centres were almost all the same and lacked practical exploration.

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 this is little evidence of this being actively expanded and developed through teaching. In the strongest examples, it was evident that the candidate was 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.

Like 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 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 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 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 properly and fully even 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 the candidate 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 that 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 with students that missing to acknowledge sources is potentially a failing condition.

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.

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 showed 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. There continues 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 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 include reference to some elements of the new visual arts course (first examinations 2016).

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 (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 the *Visual arts guide - First assessment 2016* (March 2014).

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. To predict grades in May 2016 teachers will have to refer to the *Grade Descriptors -Group 6* available on the OCC.

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 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.

Similarly, 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 is later in a submission

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 to 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.

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. 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 and help them understand how to write a curatorial rationale.

Encourage candidates to see real art: candidates with little art experience who only saw 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.

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.

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 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.

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, accompanying text, or research work. 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 first-hand.

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.

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. To broaden the range of

sources they access, candidates could be encouraged to read monthly publications and have class visits to the library.

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.

It is essential for teachers to appreciate and reinforce with students that missing to acknowledge sources is potentially a failing condition.

Teach how to conduct investigation, analysis, comparison and evaluation: candidates should be taught how to correctly annotate, analyze, compare and contrast as well as to evaluate the works of others and their own works.

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 the candidates' own work.

Encourage higher-level critical thinking/analysis of artworks. Links to TOK and other areas of knowledge should be strengthened.

Prepare 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.

In the case of visual arts, 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 own 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 artworks. 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.

Clarity of scanning 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 screens.

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 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.

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

For candidates re-sitting in November 2015 please remember that, if opting for the audio or video interview, there is a maximum time limit of 15 minutes. Examiners might stop listening to candidates' interviews after 15 minutes. Also, in order to avoid bias, neither the teacher nor the candidate should be visible in the video interviews. Please ensure that the interview is recorded in an undisturbed area with no background noise.

Submit the 2 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.

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