

VISUAL ARTS

Introduction

This report is for the November 2011 examination session and includes reference to the performance of candidates in HLA, SLA, HLB, and SLB courses. The report sets out to provide information about the examination session as well as to provide some advice to assist in improving the achievement of candidates in future examination sessions.

Although the two components for each of the four visual arts courses are separately examined and so reported upon, it can be difficult to separate these components when discussing the outcomes of the session due to the integrated nature of the tasks that candidates undertake in developing and creating their work. Consequently the information contained throughout the report may be relevant to either or both components.

Resources on the Online Curriculum Centre (<http://occ.ibo.org/ibis/occ/guest/home.cfm>) provide teachers with access to:

- subject reports
- the current *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*
- extended essay reports
- the *Visual arts subject guide* (for first examination May 2009)
- the *Visual arts teacher support material* (for first examination May 2009)
- the *Assessment clarification, June 2010* (replaces and includes the document published in November 2008)
- the visual arts online virtual gallery

It is essential that Diploma Programme visual arts teachers regularly consult with these documents, regardless of previous experience, and make appropriate information available to candidates during their course.

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

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level option A

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 13	14 – 28	29 – 43	44 – 58	59 – 70	71 – 85	86 – 100

Higher level option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 12	13 – 27	28 – 42	43 – 57	58 – 67	68 – 82	83 – 100

Standard level option A

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 13	14 – 28	29 – 43	44 – 58	59 – 70	71 – 85	86 – 100

Standard level option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 12	13 – 27	28 – 42	43 – 57	58 – 67	68 – 82	83 – 100

Studio Work**Higher level option A**

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 14	15 – 17	18 – 20

Higher level option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 14	15 – 17	18 – 20

Standard level option A

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 14	15 – 17	18 – 20

Standard level option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 12	13 – 14	15 – 17	18 – 20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Examiners reported that the work submitted for assessment was predominantly two-dimensional this session. It was often commented that the work was produced using a narrow range of media and forms with painting tending to dominated the portfolios of candidates. Drawing, mixed-media, printmaking, sculpture and fashion design followed in descending order of frequency. Figurative work ranked a very popular genre with some still life and landscapes/cityscapes also popular. Again there was an over-reliance on teacher directed art making activities, and a lack of integration between studio work and investigation.

Where photography and digital media forms were selected, examiners felt they were often done as an "easy option" for candidates whose other work suggested they lacked drawing or

other art-making skills. Some candidates who labeled digital photographs as examples of 'digital manipulation' appeared to be confused about the medium they were working with. It was commented that the terms seem to be wrongly interchangeable in the minds of some candidates, as many of the concepts and techniques that relate to photography are different to those of digital manipulation.

Some candidates continued to rely heavily on sources such as internet and print imagery to create artworks rather than developing their own original compositions. Apart from this being an easy and/or lazy option there is the serious academic honesty issue of plagiarism.

Examiners reported that some candidates who worked in installation or other time-based works failed to provide sufficient evidence of the development of the works in their investigation workbooks.

At the top end of the mark range, many candidates explored a wide range of media and forms, and used these opportunities to develop skills in using the materials. They often found that a theme, ideas or concepts emerged from their work, leading to a coherent body of work (rather than imposing a theme and then trying to 'fit' work into it). This work was supported by thorough, individual and integrated investigation into ideas, artists, artworks and their contexts.

Weaker candidates tended to exhibit a more limited range of work demonstrating an approach that was frequently completely candidate directed with little evidence of any teacher guidance. This work tended to lack the depth of inquiry that could have led to an improvement in skills. Examiners commented that the lack of teacher involvement also meant that the studio work produced was often predictable and, for example, an expression of emotions, rather than conceptually challenging ideas.

Echoing the comments of many previous visual arts subject reports, it was commented that candidates need to develop greater technical skills. Examiners stated that they rarely observed work where the candidate's technical skills were stronger than the intended conceptual content of their work. Throughout the mark range it seemed that no matter where the work fell this was true.

Examiners were again concerned at the number of candidates who appeared to have been left to their own devices without any positive teacher direction, feeling their frustration at being unaware of how to expand and develop their work. Conversely at schools where candidates were able to access the higher markbands, examiners noted that it was very often clear where the teacher had offered guidance and/or direction.

Candidate performance against markband descriptors

Candidate performance against the holistic markband descriptors reflected the diversity of the candidature. Comments from examiners in relation to some specific bullet points follow:

This session it was usually the case that the weakest candidate performance aligned to their development and strategies for expression, and ideas reflecting cultural awareness. Examiners commented that there was a surprising lack of awareness of their own culture amongst some candidates in some schools.

It was stated by some examiners that the candidates' understanding of the ideas and techniques that underpinned their own work was sometimes superficial or limited, with their

analysis tending to be subjective, emotional and descriptive rather than objective and analytical. Comments included that candidates were weakest in understanding, relevance and investigation of the conceptual underpinnings of artistic expression; even when technical competence was satisfactory, inventiveness tended to be lacking.

The significant difference that the approach of the individual art teacher made on the candidates' ability to access the bullet points in the markband descriptors was noted by examiners this session. It was observed that where greater emphasis was placed on technical ability, candidates predictably scored higher on technical competence, sensitivity to materials and the like, whereas candidates performed better with the more conceptual and idea criteria in schools that placed greater emphasis upon ideas that underpin artistic expression.

With regard to developing ideas and strategies for expression, some candidates had little supporting evidence by way of investigation, media practice and/or the development of ideas. There was sometimes insufficient focus.

There were some examples of very successful digital art that showed an excellent understanding of the ideas and techniques that underpin artistic expression, and demonstrated an excellent exploration of ideas reflecting cultural and historical awareness and artistic qualities. There were, however, also disappointing examples of digital and new media artworks that did not show such an accomplished resolution of ideas and medium. Simply working with digital and contemporary/new media technologies does not guarantee access to the higher markband descriptors. Some of this digital and new media work did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge or understanding of the requirements of the visual arts assessment criteria markband descriptors.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Again this session examiners commented that teachers must teach. Comments were made relating to examiner's surprise at the lack of any apparent teacher involvement, the number of candidates who appeared to have been left to their own devices and the frustration of others that they had not been helped to know how to expand or develop their work. Particularly where candidates begin their course with little, or no, prior learning in art there is a need for them to receive positive teaching and not left to fall by the wayside.

Concern was expressed that some candidates had no evidence of purposeful teaching showing up in any aspect of the work undertaken throughout the course. Conversely, successful exhibitions invariably reflected where and how the teacher had offered guidance and direction, and the candidate consequently benefited from this advice. Some teachers obviously worked very hard to ensure their candidates were able to achieve at the top end of the markband scale.

In order to create a balance between teacher-directed activities and candidates exploring their own projects, examiners recommended that teachers should develop initial instructional units of work that address specific aspects of the markband descriptors early in the course, and provide different models for engaging with other artist's works. Having provided specific teaching, teachers are then recommended to gradually and appropriately move to provide opportunities for candidates to explore their own visual language toward informed though independent, rather than 'common' teacher directed projects.

Candidates working with digital and new media technologies should be guided towards achievement in response to the assessment criteria: it is not enough just to present artworks that have been designed and created using recent and contemporary technology without reference to the objectives and nature of the course.

Some examiners noted that although resources and equipment can be an issue for some schools, three-dimensional work does not have to be made out of expensive materials and there should/could be more emphasis made of its importance in contemporary visual works. Resources and equipment are sometimes an issue.

Some examiners noted that the approach of the schools administration could be an important factor in candidate achievement: teachers need support from their school administration, and their DP Coordinators, who, through the IB regional offices can provide access to professional development opportunities.

Candidate record booklets from some schools did not include photos of the overall exhibitions and examiners recommended that teachers should continue to encourage candidates to include these exhibition overview photographs.

Other teaching-related recommendations included to encourage candidates to:

- explore different media and experiment with techniques that extend their skills with drawing and painting
- explore and identify their own local cultural context as a starting point in their art making
- visit galleries and, where possible, first-hand contact with artists
- use first-hand stimuli rather than incorporate and/or rely on images simply found and copied from the Internet
- have access to at least a basic range of art-making materials across a range of forms.

Investigation workbooks

Higher level option A

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

Higher level option B

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 2	3 – 5	6 – 8	9 – 11	12 – 13	14 – 16	17 – 20

Standard level option A

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Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 – 2	3 – 5	6 – 8	9 – 11	12 – 13	14 – 16	17 – 20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

A wide diversity of work was submitted, most of which was appropriate and in line with requirements. The strongest submissions showed depth of study and a sustained development and realization of ideas, often across different fields of practice and demonstrating strong, purposeful exploration of ideas reflecting candidates' personal concerns and interests. The best work was thoroughly supported by investigation into relevant artists, movements, theories and art from other cultures: documentation was thorough and the pages showed intelligent and considered reflection about the work produced and how it related to and was influenced by candidates' investigative studies.

The strongest candidates developed a range of strategies, techniques and investigative processes which integrated well with their studio work. These candidates tended to have a personal connection to their investigation and explored an idea or theme from multiple perspectives through a variety of media and by connecting to different artists throughout the course, which deepened the investigation. Their work reflected a good understanding of the procedures supporting the art-making process. In many cases an understanding of relationships, continuity of thought processes, links and on-going dialogue between the IWB and studio work was demonstrated. A broad range of concepts and ideas, the use of a variety of different media, individual investigative strategies and the support of appropriate source material were evident in these more successful candidates' submissions.

Weaker candidates lacked depth and insight into the production of personally relevant artworks, thus tending to produce limited submissions that demonstrated a very low level of skill and understanding. Some of the weaker submissions did not reflect the quality and depth of study expected at this level, and showed a lack of an analytical approach or logical development. This resulted in work lacking substance, which although at times aesthetically pleasing, presented a mediocre or poor development of ideas. Some candidates developed few effective skills, techniques and processes in investigative pages. They explained the processes purely through written language, instead of incorporating visual explorations. Weaker candidates had often locked themselves into superficial themes that did not allow for growth. Some of these candidates focused on the perceived easy option of presenting random photographs with superficial investigation and limited cultural context. This contrasted greatly with those candidates who used the photographic and digital medium to its best potential. Where schools seemed to offer only photography, both practice and investigation were very limited, especially for the weakest candidates.

Film/digital photography and digitally-manipulated imagery all require in-depth documentation of the processes used, with associated investigation and explanation of the hardware, tools and software involved and some step by step documentation of the processes. Photography and digital work can be viewed as easy options without substantiating evidence and teachers and candidates are urged to follow the requirements as detailed on page 6 of the CRB.

A number of examiners were concerned that even some very good candidates did not adequately explain the choice of concept, and its significance to themselves or on a broader scale. Weaker candidates showed a limited understanding of the complete process, beginning with very limited investigation into art from different times/cultures that was more descriptive than analytical. Generally there was too much reliance on random images sourced from the internet with no apparent relation to candidates' own work.

Examiners found submissions from quite different regions to be very similar. Some felt that there are still schools who have not grasped the full implications of the current criteria and descriptors, with continuing reference to 'Research Workbooks', as opposed to 'Investigation Workbooks', on occasion. Overall the sample material reflected very high standards of creative production in some cases and some very limited submissions in others, which is to be expected.

The majority of submissions were well-presented, easy to read and examine, with carefully selected and representative pages which aided marking and gave candidates the best possible opportunity to perform well. Others were more difficult to follow and some were weak in the selection of work

Candidate performance against each criterion

Candidate performance against the holistic markband descriptors reflected the diversity of the candidature. Comments from examiners in relation to some specific bullet points follow:

Examiners reported that the analysis and comparison of art from different cultures and times and the consideration of its function and significance was again the most challenging for candidates. Culture was not obviously addressed in many candidates' IWB pages and when it was, it tended to be dealt with almost in passing.

It seemed the main difficulty lay in the interpretation of what is meant by 'culture'. Art from different cultures and/or times often consisted of a couple of short descriptions of another culture, usually with little relevance to the candidate's own artwork. Some of the better candidates showed thoughtful analysis and comparison between arts, design and architecture from different cultures and time and analysis in depth of some contemporary human issues. They connected their ideas with social and cultural aspects and with the work of different artists and showed self-direction. This descriptor was sometimes addressed by weaker candidates, but rarely linked with "different cultures and times". Overall this was the area needing most improvement with a considerable number of candidates lacking breadth and depth when investigating art from different times and cultures and some submissions presenting no material relating to art from other cultures and times. Function and significance were often only addressed by candidates achieving against the highest markbands.

Many examiners observed that candidates often took a social studies approach in investigating other cultures, without considering the art aspects. The area of "function and significance" appeared to be challenging for many candidates as artists and artworks were

not placed in context, therefore the importance or significance within any given society or on a global level was not fully understood.

Most candidates demonstrated some effective skills, techniques and processes leading to interesting studio works, but the approach and development of ideas were sometimes basic or mediocre. Often there was only token influence from other art on the candidate's art-making, with a good deal of work submitted which was close to copying. The highest achieving candidates demonstrated excellent skills, techniques and processes whereas weaker candidates presented predictable work showing limited ability and little variation in media use. Analysis and comparison were poor in some cases. Too many candidates' submitted pages that contained descriptions of their own work, recounting the physical process of making an image in a medium. Many candidate's pages showed sketches and media experimentation or images with no annotation that explained their relevancy.

Generally the submitted material demonstrated the development of effective skills and techniques, resulting in the production of some very interesting and resolved artworks. The demonstration of the actual process was often neglected. In many cases only end products were presented and at times only text was used to describe the process, with no visual support material relating to the development of the process and in turn the work under investigation. This was often the case when producing lino cuts, other forms of printing, digital manipulation and the making of clay and sculptural images.

Most candidates demonstrated some level of organization and focus in investigating visual qualities, although this investigation was somewhat limited at times. In those cases, it was obvious that teachers had not pushed the parameters and guided candidates towards alternatives to pursue. Stronger candidates demonstrated clear strategies with more than one approach. Weaker candidates showed limited investigation, usually with just one approach and work was therefore limited and one-dimensional. Sometimes candidates went off at a tangent with their investigation, which seemed to lack any real connection with their studio work and not to lead anywhere in particular. In these cases they read more like teacher-driven exercises produced in an effort to cover the criteria.

Some submissions evidenced as many as twenty artists or art movements studied, which showed breadth of investigation, but not necessarily depth nor relevance. Weaker candidates made random choices, with little investigation into ideas, related artworks or variations in media and often copied random images with little or no justification. At times a random image was selected and directly copied and presented as artwork, without any further development and without any acknowledgement of the source, other than that it was accessed from the internet or a magazine. This method resulted in very little evidence of depth and breadth in the development of concepts and investigation into related visual qualities. It should be stressed that all candidates must consider more than one approach and go beyond a simple copy. Some candidates did not investigate their topics soundly and developed a repetitive pattern of work. They didn't take risks and kept in something of a 'safe' zone: in consequence, the development of ideas seemed at times a little unadventurous.

The use of specialist visual arts language was often mediocre at best. 'I liked this piece' was too often as far as it went. Weaker candidates simply scattered around the 'elements and principles' terms without much real thought. Top candidates demonstrated very sophisticated and articulate use of specialist vocabulary indicative of an in-depth understanding of their subject and related processes. Less focused candidates presented a casual approach using

slang and at times, even inappropriate language that could be termed as offensive. Quite often a generally satisfactory use of the specialist vocabulary of the visual arts was demonstrated.

A range of appropriate primary and secondary sources were included in the stronger candidates' pages, with material fully referenced and acknowledged. In weaker submissions, the range of sources used was limited and poorly acknowledged, if at all. There were few connections with the work and few opportunities to use primary sources were demonstrated in these cases. Some candidates searched information from the Internet that showed interest and focus but they did not demonstrate that they could process or apply this information. Top candidates selected appropriate resource material directly related to their area of investigation from the internet, books and other sources. More limited candidates used borrowed material, at times randomly chosen or lacking significance/relevance. There was general, continuing concern among examiners at the lack of properly-acknowledged source material and persistent, widespread over-reliance on the Internet. Some candidates were happy to use search engines or collections of images like google.com or flickr.com, almost exclusively, which naturally limited their potential and was not in the spirit of genuine inquiry.

Critical observations were sometimes few and far between; subjective responses were more usual. The majority of the work was creatively and effectively presented. At the top level, unique, inspired and exciting presentations were made, with satisfactory critical observation and reflection demonstrated. Conversely, there were some full, uninspired presentations in the lower mark ranges. In most cases there was evidence of some reflection and simple critical observation, albeit limited at the lower level. The poor quality of handwriting made some submissions difficult to read, as did dark-coloured and patterned backgrounds, writing without headings, sub-titles or dates and writing with light coloured pens, pencils or even charcoal, which smudged. Better submissions presented pages with a good balance between visuals and text. Bad photocopying resulting in faded writing in some cases, and reduced pages often rendered the writing too small to read or cut off vital words from the page.

Examiners' impressions of the relationship between investigation workbooks and studio work varied from 'most work submitted supported the studio work', to comments on a lack of connection between the two facets of the course. Stronger submissions demonstrated clear relationships; weaker presentations were superficial, lacking in-depth investigation into the process of the accompanying art-making. These candidates lacked a focused relationship between investigation and studio work with few explaining connections between their work and others.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

The balance between guidance to produce individual creative responses from candidates as opposed to producing formulaic class responses is a delicate one for weaker candidates, but a learning structure has to be in place and this was not evident in some submissions. Teachers are encouraged to initially guide candidates, demonstrating the process of art-making from initial concept through the assessment criteria markband descriptors, concluding with the production of studio work. As candidates become more confident, teachers should allow them more independence to plan and investigate without defined boundaries.

An appropriate language of visual arts needs to be fostered. This should include the elements and principles of art, attitudes to art and a 'template' of how to discuss, compare and contrast

art works. There must be some teaching of skills in media and techniques in the studio but also in how to *investigate* so that the investigation is relevant to the studio work and the candidate. The teacher must be active throughout the course to push the parameters of individual candidates ever wider.

Guiding candidates to choose appropriate art to investigate would help some candidates who clearly have little knowledge of art history or current artistic trends. Discussion about the nature of developing a real investigative approach in the workbooks, as opposed to a sketchbook or diary format would also help some candidates. Candidates should be encouraged to explain visuals in terms of both concept and technical processes.

Formulaic, class approaches to investigation and practices are to be discouraged. Candidates should be encouraged to produce individual responses, investigate media and images of their choice, to solve problems experienced as well as incorporating media and techniques presented within the learning process.

There are a considerable number of candidates writing about themselves, their lives and evaluations of their artwork which are highly personal and not based on an understanding of accepted art practice. Teachers need to help them realise that much more than their own personal opinion and likes and dislikes is expected in their IWB pages.

As this subject is based on the production of visual images, candidates must be encouraged to utilize sufficient visual material in relation to their investigation. Investigation should not be only in text but accompanied by supportive visual material. This may range from analysis of an artwork, with appropriate accompanying visuals, to the description of a process with apt visual support.

Examiners commented on the additional responsibilities required for visual arts teachers when teaching candidates whose mother tongue is not English.

Candidates should be aware of and informed about the requirements of the markband descriptors from the start of their course. Teachers should continually remind their candidates about the importance of addressing all the requirements, highlighting the importance of relevant investigation into art from different cultures and times, and the scope and importance of art-making within a global context. At all times candidates should be encouraged to investigate areas of investigation that personally interest or concern them, which in turn gives more depth and individuality to the production and presentation of their artworks. Some works lacked links between the ideas. It is necessary make clear connections to keep the coherence and the focus of the purpose of the work.

Schools should provide a good cross section of materials and not just limit their candidates to one specialist area of study. Art history and other artists' work should be studied and investigated in conjunction with each candidate's chosen interest and not in isolation. When visits to museums take place candidates should learn to relate the experience to their work.

Other teaching related recommendations included to encourage candidates to:

- learn to apply clear guidelines for investigation to their analytical thinking in order to be relevant to their own work
- cite sources and art terms in their selected investigation workbook pages

- explore ideas, issues, artists and artworks in greater depth and breadth to develop conceptual awareness in art-making in the studio
- look beyond the aesthetic qualities of artworks for inspiration and investigate the cultural context of the work, avoiding tokenistic studies (for example African masks, aboriginal 'dot painting', cave painting) if it is not relevant to their own investigation
- present enough examples of all aspects of the markband descriptors, choosing the pages for assessment wisely
- ensure that the pages submitted are captured at the highest quality
- be creative in their presentation of pages and information and to present relevant work that reflects or supports their work in the studio and addresses the markband descriptors
- work from primary sources, visit local galleries, and analyse public art within their own environment, avoiding too much reliance on random internet source material, seeking a variety of relevant material including well-known contemporary and historical artists and artwork as well as little-known examples
- document processes from conception to conclusion visually and in text rather than describe the process on a superficial level. Problems encountered should be discussed and visually documented
- fully document all photography and digital manipulation work as per the requirements stated in the candidate record booklet.