Visual Arts

Contents

Grade boundaries

Higher level overall

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 10	11 - 21	22 - 38	39 - 52	53 - 66	67 - 80	81 - 100

Standard level overall

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 10	11 - 21	22 - 33	34 - 50	51 - 64	65 - 80	81 - 100

Higher level exhibition

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 20	21 - 24	25 - 30

Standard level exhibition

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 30

Higher level comparative study

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 17	18 - 23	24 - 29	30 - 35	36 - 42

Standard level comparative study

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 22	23 - 26	27 - 30

Higher level process portfolio

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 22	23 - 27	28 - 34

Standard level process portfolio

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 15	16 - 20	21 - 26	27 - 34

Higher level and standard level exhibition

Range and suitability of the work submitted

2D work was predominant, with relatively few 3D artworks presented. Submissions also included videos and digital art pieces. Diversity of media is not required for the exhibition and exhibitions that contained a wide variety of media and techniques often did not achieve highly in terms of technical competence: time spent exploring a variety of processes and media, rather than focusing on depth in fewer techniques, may have hindered skill development. The strongest work frequently came from schools which had been able to devote time to building skills.

Many exhibitions attempted to follow a theme. Having an exhibition theme is not a requirement and, in many cases, the limited way in which the theme was explored hindered overall achievement. Many themes focused on familiar and obvious issues such as the environment, global warming, pollution, mental illness, racism, isolation/loneliness, identity, and body image.

These issues may be suitable for submission, but a predictable treatment of well-known issues tends to limit achievement, particularly in terms of conceptual qualities: exploring familiar 'big issues' sometimes generated work that was weak and predictable in terms of symbolism or imagery.

Some of the most complex and innovative exhibitions dealt with more subtle, local, personal, or nuanced themes and ideas rather than obvious issues.

There is growing familiarity with digital media and an increased technical skill and sophistication in using digital processes using a variety of programs. Photographic and video art are eminently suitable for submission, but achievement in many cases continues to be limited in terms of competence and/or concept. The most successful video work included evidence of thoughtful planning, composition, and tightly paced editing. At the other end of the scale some candidates are still submitting unedited footage of scenes from their daily life or travels. Videos with sound continue to be submitted. Sound is not considered when assessing the exhibition, only the visual elements are considered.

Some of the photographic work submitted this session was stronger conceptually than that seen in previous sessions. There were fewer occasions when photographs demonstrated only simple and basic digital photography skill and more evidence of creative editing and refinement.

Exhibition text, photographs and photographs of individual artworks

- The exhibition text "outlines the title, medium, size for each artwork" but it is also an opportunity to "provide an outline of intentions" (Visual Arts Guide 2017, 11). This is often crucial, especially when explaining concepts, intentions, or references in each art piece.
- In some cases, the 'medium' section was not correctly filled in. Just writing 'Sculpture' or 'mixed media' is insufficient and is not helpful. In the case of digital artwork, the name of the software program should be provided.
- In some cases, exhibition photos included shots of the space which principally feature those people viewing the exhibition. These are not required.
- Optional additional supporting photographs: when used properly these photographs can be helpful, for example, for viewing a 3D piece from different angles or to show details that reveal technical accomplishment. However, some candidates submitted almost identical views of an artwork. This adds nothing to the submission.

Teacher's supporting comments

- The most useful supporting comments made clear links between the assessment criteria and the qualities of the artwork.
- Some supporting comments praised the work and/or were overtly complementary about the candidate's passion for art. This is not relevant to the assessment process.
- Teacher comments in which the assessment criteria are simply copied and pasted do not assist in the moderation process.

Teacher's marks

- In many schools the teacher provided very high marks and subjective rather than objective supporting comments: generous marking continues to be an issue. Some teachers vastly overestimate candidate performance, awarding high marks for work that did meet the higher assessment criteria mark descriptors.
- Teachers should provide accurate formative assessment to their students throughout the course as well as explanations of both the assessment criteria and of how the descriptor levels are applied so that students have an understanding of which level they meet and how to improve in preparation for summative assessment.

Student performance against each criterion

Criterion A – Coherent body of works

"A coherent body of works" (Visual Arts Guide 2017, 59) does not simply mean that candidates should state a theme outright, which many did, but that their exhibition should demonstrate "thematic or stylistic relationships" across artworks (Visual Arts Guide 2017, 59). In addition, some predictable topics that appear every session, while important, are somewhat unoriginal (for example, mental health or environment crises) and treated superficially. The best exhibitions demonstrated coherence through relationships between the exhibition artworks. The examiner is looking for meaningful links between the artworks; these could be dynamic and surprising and could involve ideas about styles of artmaking. Choice of techniques and imagery should be appropriate to the development of these coherent connections. This is what is meant by "relationships across individual pieces" (Visual Arts Guide 2017, 59).

Criterion B – Technical competence

This criterion does not require a wide variety of different techniques; the assessment is of the candidate's ability to successfully manipulate materials, media and formal qualities. These skills are more likely to be developed through focused and sustained practice in a limited range of media. It is important that candidates demonstrate good control of the media. Good quality artmaking frequently comes from schools which have a programme that facilitates student's technical development.

The standard of digital painting and drawing has generally improved over the last few sessions. The strongest candidates use software such as Photoshop and Procreate among others and show a good understanding of the potential of the media, as they would traditional analogue materials.

However, some candidates simply trace, blur, smudge or apply filters to found photographs, rather than creating work that reflects a more skilful manipulation of the available tools and possibilities.

3D work was relatively rare in comparison to painting, drawing and photography. In addition, many 3D works were either very small in scale or unreasonably large and simplistic. These were often isolated one-off pieces, unconnected to other works and perhaps included solely to demonstrate a diversity of media, which is not required in the exhibition task.

While there are no scale requirements for the works of the exhibition, candidates in some schools tended to work consistently on an average, limited or midsize scale. In some cases, this reduced their potential to develop and present more technically and conceptually complex combinations of media, ideas, and imagery.

Criterion C – Conceptual qualities

Conceptual qualities should be demonstrated through the visual elaboration of ideas rather than written elaboration: some candidates may have assumed that a complex or ambitious written rationale would achieve a high mark. However, a description of intentions in the rationale that is not then demonstrated visually in the exhibition artworks will not meet the higher descriptor levels. The examiner is looking for visual elaboration of ideas and the subtle use of complex imagery to communicate intentions.

Conceptually effective exhibitions do not need to be about 'big issues', e.g. pollution, the environment, body image, etc. Looking at world issues and problems is no more likely to lead to a successful work than more personal, local or nuanced areas of consideration, and may indeed only lead to familiar, obvious and predictable images. The best examples of conceptual qualities often reflected a sincere, thoughtful and considered approach to a more personal or local issue.

Criterion D (for higher level and standard level) – curatorial practice

Candidate performance against this criterion was uneven. The curatorial rationale remains misunderstood in some schools and some candidates who performed well in other criteria had not properly understood the requirements of criterion D or the importance of the rationale as a means to justify their decisions. 'Justify' is a command term: it is defined in the guide as to "Give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion" (Visual Arts Guide 2017, 62). At standard level this criterion requires that, in their curatorial rationale, the candidate justifies their selection, arrangement and exhibition of artworks within a designated space.

While justifying intentions is important, some candidates seemed to be under the impression that this was all they had to do in the rationale. The rationale must also capture what is actually evident within the exhibition. It should not simply describe elaborate intentions without that evidence being present in the exhibition. At higher level, this criterion requires that candidates **also** reflect on how the exhibition conveys an understanding of the relationship between the artworks and the viewer.

There were some examples of excellent rationales: thoughtful, well written rationales can help the examiner understand the context and intentions in the artworks presented and inform the assessment process. In some of these, candidates also explained the arrangement but very few effectively articulated the relationship between the artworks and the viewer within the space made available to the candidate.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching the Exhibition component to future students

- Many teachers seem unfamiliar with the criteria and standards. The exemplar marked materials and the IA Exhibition assessment clarification document available on the programme resource centre (PRC) should be referred to by teachers to ensure accurate application of the level descriptors when assessing their students.
- Teachers should refer to internal assessment (IA) feedback provided by examiners from this and previous sessions to align to the standards in future sessions.

- Teachers should show examples of successful exhibitions to their students to demonstrate what a coherent exhibition might look like and to give an idea of effective conceptual qualities and of the level of refinement that is expected to reach the highest level of marks.
- Candidates should be provided with sufficient time, over the course, to develop their exhibition ideas. One approach to achieving this may be by engaging in direct instructional teaching in the first year and then encouraging greater autonomy in the second year.
- Candidates should be informed of their progress and achievement throughout the course. Teachers must provide honest and objective feedback as accurate formative assessment is vital.
- Teachers cannot be expected to excel in teaching all visual arts media. They can, however, utilize online video tutorials for candidates wishing to work in media they are less familiar with. Candidates weaker in drawing should be encouraged to explore media and strategies that allow them to achieve high marks for criterion B in different ways. This does not mean resorting simply to photography, but might include such approaches as installation, mixed media or 3D work.
- Teachers must remind candidates working on animation or video art that sound is not assessed: examiners are instructed to turn the volume off during the assessment of exhibitions.
- Encourage candidates to consider and explore art from different periods and areas. Many candidates seemed to be familiar only with recent 'protest' art.
- Provide workshops to give candidates experience of working with a variety of media/techniques.
- With regards to 'coherence', it must be remembered that mere repetition and use of similar images do not constitute coherence. Candidates can explore sub themes and related topics and produce works that explore a range of related ideas. For coherence, consider also the "selection and application of media, processes and techniques" as well as the use of imagery (Visual Arts Guide 2017, 59).
- Many candidates do not develop ideas and techniques in depth, leading to very predictable imagery and symbols to convey artistic messages or to poorly made work that fall short of communicating their ideas.
- Technical competence comes from continued practice. It is not a good idea to include artwork or first-time experience with a technique as a resolved exhibition piece.
- If the candidate wishes to explore digital photography, they also need to understand the potential of the medium and develop its applications. In many less developed cases, candidates' work consisted of digitally blurred, filtered, or painted over images with little other technical or conceptual development being evident. Submitting simplistic/basic photographs or photos with minimal development will not provide evidence of this understanding. Candidates should be encouraged and supported to pursue more sustained and structured use of digital media.
- For conceptual qualities, avoid predictable, obvious, or clichéd ideas and images. Candidates should understand that effective conceptual qualities require visual elaboration of ideas or concepts and "the subtle use of complex imagery" (Visual Arts Guide 2017, 60).
- For the curatorial rationale, ensure that candidates address all strands of the rationale as appropriate to the level (standard or higher) and that they do not merely summarise the candidate's intentions. Do not include photographs in the curatorial rationale.
- Visits to galleries and exhibitions, virtually or in person, can give candidates a better understanding of curatorial practice and writing for their own exhibition.
- Encourage candidates to independently manage their own e-portfolio to become familiar with the process of digitally documenting their own artworks as early as possible. In this way, they will acquire important skills and gain full ownership of the digital reproductions of their own artworks.

Academic Integrity

- Some artworks consisted of unacknowledged images frequently in the form of collages made up of photographs either torn from magazines or downloaded/printed from the Internet. Some candidates may have simply painted a copy of an image from the internet, which needs to be acknowledged. A failure to acknowledge a source will be treated seriously by the IB as an academic integrity matter.
- Teachers must ensure that candidates acknowledge all sources used; this includes original images such as photographic sources that had been used as inspiration. These should be referenced appropriately in the exhibition texts and there must always be a clear distinction between the candidate's own work and the ideas of the work of others.

Higher level and standard level comparative study

Range and suitability of the work submitted

Outstanding comparative studies were highly focused and effectively presented, with creative links between artworks, across cultures and across time. These engaging responses, at both higher and standard levels, developed contextual research to demonstrate an understanding of original purpose, as well as how the artworks are read by a modern audience.

Weaker responses often solely described the life and times of artists rather than evaluating the cultural significance of their artworks. Citing a fact, or paraphrasing content from a source, does not constitute analysis and hinders candidates from exceeding the mid mark level. Even for works for which sources are easily accessible, some candidates relied on conjecture, which suggests that they had not learnt how to select and evaluate their research in developing their analysis. The application of present-day beliefs and attitudes to works of the past is often evident, revealing an inability to evaluate cultural significance in relation to original context rather than through a contemporary lens.

In addition to the list of sources, in-text referencing is required throughout the comparative study; many candidates do not do this. Where text is cited, quotation marks have not always been used by candidates to indicate that the text has been copied verbatim. The use of AI as a source in the studies is allowed and has become increasingly common. But, like any other source, it must be cited both in-text and in the list of sources. For further guidance, please review the Academic Integrity Policy in the PRC.

Some candidates choose an overarching theme to link their selected works such as mental health, feminism, consumerism or the environment. Sometimes these personally motivated topics led to meaningful comparisons. Often, however, the introductions offer a promising approach to such themes that is then not developed through the rest of the study. Formulaic presentation of paintings by artists such as Picasso, Hokusai, Van Gogh, Edward Hopper and Frida Kahlo show little evidence of independent research and suggest that teacher-led work or downloaded templates have been used as shortcuts in place of personal investigations inspired by the students' own interests in an artist, which often result in higher marks.

Some candidates include material that is not relevant to the assessment criteria, such as artist biographies and broad descriptions of art historical periods.

Very few candidates recorded trips to museums, galleries or workshops where they interviewed artists. First-hand sources are extremely valuable, because this creates a direct experience which can lead to an emotional connection and a deeper understanding of the techniques used by the artists.

For higher level, there were many examples of exciting connections to the student's art practice, often demonstrating insightful understanding and strong personal voices. And yet, many also include lengthy, philosophical digressions or lengthy descriptions of processes that are of no value to the assessed task. Some described, or even conducted an in-depth analysis of, their own work without connecting to any of the studied works, while others superficially compared their works with the selected artworks but did not evaluate how they were influenced.

Student performance against each criterion

Criterion A – identification and analysis of formal qualities

In this criterion, examiners are assessing the analysis of relevant formal qualities to explain meaning. Subject-specific language should be used to identify the formal qualities. This vocabulary should be appropriate to the form of the selected artwork. For example, different terminology should be applied to photographs, digital works, fashion, installations, printmaking, and sculptural works than to paintings and graphic works.

Many candidates develop their analysis through detailed explanation and effective use of diagrams and annotations. Inaccurate diagrams, however, such as the misapplication of the 'rule of thirds' and generalised descriptions of processes and materials are common, as are digressions into symbolism and meaning which are relevant to criterion B and which detract from the identification and analysis of formal qualities at the heart of criterion A.

Criterion B – analysis and understanding of function and purpose

There are two aspects to the analysis of the function and purpose of the artworks: the first is a consideration of symbolism or iconography; and the second involves an exploration of the context of work's function, such as the social, expressive and political uses of artworks. There was an improvement in the understanding of this criterion this session. However, weaker answers digressed into conjecture and opinion; this criterion does not ask for personal interpretations or responses to the works in their own right. Rather, effective responses support investigations of function and purpose with cited research and the use of visual evidence to develop an informed reading of the artwork. Some candidates employed headings such as 'Historical Function', 'Symbolic Function', etc. While this can be a useful teaching strategy to introduce the task, such formulaic approaches to each artwork do not encourage meaningful evaluation. Many candidates made good use of quotations to support their analysis, but when these quotations were added without evaluation, they are of no value.

Criterion C – analysis and evaluation of cultural significance

To achieve a higher mark in this criterion, candidates need to evaluate the cultural significance of the selected artworks through their research.

The highest achieving responses established significant connections between the artwork in question and other artworks and genres as well as to the development of styles and cultural contexts. The difference between successful and weaker submissions was that the former concentrated on the context of the selected works, whilst the latter submitted generalized biographical or historical information without making any clear links with the selected artwork. Outlines of historical periods and artist biographies are best placed in the visual arts journal as they do not contribute to the assessment. Students should instead select only the research that is relevant to the evaluation of the selected artwork. The strongest candidates considered the original audience and purpose and, when appropriate, the significance of the artwork to a contemporary audience or its influence on the development of other artworks. There are instances when the artist's biography is relevant, but this should be justified by the candidate through explicit connections in the text to the selected artwork.

Criterion D – making comparisons and connections

In this criterion, examiners are looking for evidence of the candidate's ability to compare the similarities and differences between the selected artworks referring to two of them or to all of them at once.

Comparisons were mostly meaningful when the artworks selected have a connection, for example a similar subject from different times and cultures, or a shared visual quality. Indeed, in many studies, this was the strongest criterion with students developing considered discussion and evaluation of the comparisons.

While graphic tables and Venn diagrams can provide a useful summary of similarities and differences, they are not required and often do not encourage an evaluative comparison or discussion. Similarly, they should not be used to paste in repeated content from previous screens; the simple juxtaposition of information does not address this criterion.

Criterion E – presentation and subject-specific language

This criterion evaluates two skills: the use of subject-specific vocabulary and the presentation of research.

There were many examples of creative layouts that enhanced understanding through cropping as well as the juxtaposition of images and contextual illustrations. Readability is important; small font size, distracting backgrounds, distorted reproductions and coloured text on non-contrasting backgrounds still occur and are detrimental. Similarly, repetition of content and ideas do not lead to a coherent study and long, unstructured prose passages do not meet the requirement to clearly convey information.

While many responses used terminology effectively, others did not go beyond a general, unspecialised description, particularly when analysing installations, sculpture and photography. Some candidates employed templates with terms that are not understood or are irrelevant to the forms of the selected artwork, demonstrating limited understanding. Similarly, some common terms are not properly understood, particularly, texture, 'tone/value', saturation, hue and the often misapplied 'rule of thirds'. Process-specific terminology is rarely used and is especially lacking in the analysis of photography, printmaking and sculpture.

Criterion F (higher level only) – making connections to own art-making practice

This is a criterion specific only to higher level. In this criterion, examiners are looking for connections that the candidate has made between the studied artworks and their own artmaking. The teacher should guide the student in selecting artworks for the study that have significantly influenced their development and which will lead to meaningful connections.

In some studies, a clear personal voice emerged, especially when the study was used as an opportunity to engage with cultural backgrounds or with an issue of strong personal importance, such as gender identity or feminism in the context of both the selected works and in relation to their own artistic practice. These successful candidates made explicit how they were influenced by one or more of the selected artworks whether conceptually, stylistically, or technically and sometimes in a combination of all three. These candidates were also able to evaluate the impact of these connections to their development as artists.

The connections task does not merely ask the student to list similarities and differences between their work and the selected artworks, which some do, but to evaluate the influence of these artworks on the candidate's artmaking. There is no requirement to connect directly with all the selected artworks, hence this criterion can be effectively met by making significant connections between one of the candidate's artworks and one of the selected artworks. Some candidates believe they must make direct and obvious links with all the works studied, which often leads to superficial connections. Others made pastiches of the selected works rather than developing influences.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers should discuss the selection of inspirational artworks to ensure the student's choice will interest them and lead to meaningful comparisons. For higher level, this guidance should also consider the relevance of the selected works to the student's own artmaking.
- Teachers should demonstrate how to use research in the evaluation of the function, purpose and cultural significance of artworks. Spending time discussing the value of primary and secondary sources with the students during lesson times should help them to achieve higher marks.
- Candidates must be reminded that the task calls for a comparison of works of art, not a comparison of artists or historical periods.
- Teachers should introduce key command terms such as 'describe', 'analyse', 'compare and contrast', 'discuss', 'evaluate', and 'identify', to help students to better understand, differentiate and meet the assessment criteria.
- Candidates must be introduced to subject-specific vocabulary that is appropriate to the selected artwork and to different types of artwork, such as sculpture, photography, installation or printmaking.
- Teachers should guide students in discussion of the comparisons (criterion D) rather than facilitating them to repeat previous content in grids or Venn Diagrams.
- Candidates and teachers must ensure the readability of fonts and images chosen for their submissions.
- Teachers must ensure that students use in-text citation and quotation marks to differentiate text that is not theirs.
- Higher level candidates must be supported in their evaluations of the impact of the studied work on their development as artists for criterion F.

Higher level and standard level process portfolio

The 'Process portfolio' is a digital document that is submitted for assessment containing a curated collection of evidence of the artistic development of a student. This document is prepared for an external examiner to view on a screen and from which marks will be awarded in alignment with a published set of criteria. This assessment-related purpose should guide all decisions about the range and suitability of work that is submitted.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Process portfolios were effectively presented but were lacking in their emphasis on 'process'; admittedly the very feature that should be at the centre of the submission. Schools, teachers and students have a strong understanding of the mechanics and requirements of the task, yet because of this omission, candidates are performing at a lower level overall. In the assembly and presentation of the Process Portfolios, care was taken to superficially address each of the criteria. However, there was a lack of depth in the candidate's engagement with the exercise of art-making itself that is required in order to reach the higher descriptor levels.

A related trend is that students were not utilizing the 25 screens permitted at higher level or the 18 screens at standard level. Students are increasingly resorting to the minimum number of screens (13 at HL and 9 at SL). It is difficult, in these cases, to demonstrate the depth of engagement with art-making that is expected of high-achieving submissions.

Student performance against each criterion

Criterion A – Skills, techniques and processes

Portfolios that achieved the highest marks in this criterion presented assured and sustained experimentation and manipulation of a range of skills, techniques and processes. In these cases, quality was favoured over quantity through the candidates' selection of a manageable number of processes and the detailed presentation of their relevant experimentation. This successful approach stands in contrast to the documentation of every single work that was done over the course of the student's exploration of media and technique. A highly appropriate selection of materials consistent with stated intentions was also on display in portfolios that achieved higher marks. The choice of non-traditional media choices similarly led to more engaging and personal experimentation and, consequently, to stronger marks.

Apart from those adventurous portfolios, many portfolios demonstrated a consistent trend in reducing the range of art-making forms and limiting experimentation to two-dimensional drawing, painting, and printmaking or to screen-based digital illustration and digital photography. While art-making forms requirements may have been met, these practices resulted in portfolios that lacked an exploratory and experimental spirit and often did not provide students with enough visual evidence with which to achieve the highest mark levels.

In many of the low and mid-range portfolios the following aspects were identified by examiners.

- Superficial skill building exercises prescribed by the teacher such as colour wheels and texture studies. These exercises, while valuable classroom learning experiences, contributed to the process portfolio only when presented as part of a developing or on-going exploration of a medium or technique.
- Documentation of too many projects and media which led to portfolios that lacked purposefulness in the experimentation and manipulation of skills, techniques and processes. Examiners noted that higher

performing portfolios presented around 5-6 processes at HL and 4-5 processes at SL. By limiting the number of processes presented, students were able to demonstrate a greater depth in their engagement with and development of skills and techniques.

• Documentation of stages in the completion of an artwork without the experimentation and skill development that leads to an appropriate selection of materials consistent with intentions. While the documentation of the development of an artwork presented assessable evidence of the manipulation of skills and technique, it only partially fulfilled the mark level descriptors.

• Presentation of resolved artworks accompanied by a statement of intentionality that rarely addressed more than the lowest mark level descriptors. These images of completed studio work offered little evidence of the engagement with art-making processes.

• A lack of meaningful visual evidence to document the student's art-making process.

Criterion B – Critical investigation

This criterion has historically presented the most difficulty for students and continued to pose challenges this year. Biographical information was still prevalent in submitted work and was rarely linked to art-making practices. Portfolios in the lower and mid-levels of this criterion either mentioned artists but did not present an investigation or struggled to make meaningful connections to the candidate's own work. Portfolios at mid-levels either critically investigated other work but did not link the investigation in their own work, or links were evident but lacked investigation. Few portfolios achieved a synthesis of critical investigation that led to the creation of highly original work and few candidates were able to demonstrate a secure and insightful understanding of how the investigation impacted their own practices or helped to form their intentions. Portfolios that presented more meaningful investigation of other artist's artworks usually looked at established artists rather than focusing on artists who work solely through social media.

Criterion C – Communication of ideas and intentions

Portfolios at all levels of achievement included mind maps as evidence of ideation and this provided a base for understanding and assessing the formation of the candidate's ideas. Higher achieving portfolios used these as starting points in the development of meaningful ideas for works, and in parallel with material exploration which led to an organic and successful assimilation of skills, media and concepts.

In weaker portfolios, the mind map was the only evidence of idea development and did little more than identify areas of interest. These portfolios struggled to achieve higher marks in the criterion because they did not demonstrate how ideas or intentions developed, nor did they communicate how skills, media and ideas were assimilated.

Portfolios that did not include meaningful idea development and were assembled and written at the end of the course often conflated criteria C and D by presenting one long narrative reflective text that listed intentionality and explored ideas in hindsight. These portfolios lacked meaningful evidence of the developmental stages of forming intentionality.

The main barrier to achieving high marks in this criterion was the over emphasis on writing at the expense of visual evidence.

Criterion D – Reviewing, refining and reflecting

Most portfolios included some form of reflection on final outcomes. In low achieving portfolios, the reflections were descriptive of steps undertaken and superficial in assessing successes or challenges. It was notable that while superficial, these reflections also tended to be overly lengthy and appeared to be written retrospectively at the time of the assembly of the portfolio. As a result, the reflections lacked

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authentic evaluations of the candidate's acquisition of skills. Students particularly struggled with demonstrating the process of reviewing and refining. Often this was conflated with overall reflection and did not focus on the on-going development and refinement of ideas, skills, processes and techniques. The lack of visual evidence of on-going art-making made it particularly challenging for students to demonstrate their process of reviewing and refining and, as a result, there was little ability to determine and assess the kinds of decisions that were made during the process.

Criterion E – Presentation and subject-specific language

Many portfolios struggled to convey evidence clearly; these portfolios were marred by poor image quality, poorly scanned journal pages, overly crowded screens, overly decorated screens, text heavy screens and a general lack of visual evidence. Portfolios continued to demonstrate a higher text to image ratio and the text itself was best described as inconsistent or elementary in the use of subject-specific vocabulary. With the imbalance of text and images, the writing often did little to document the art-making process.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates should be diligent in recording and making visible all stages of art-making; include experimentation with a range of different materials and should allow for an interest in failures that are part of the process.
- Brainstorming and concept-creation should also be documented visually both through mind-maps, studies, sketches, thumbnails, technical trials etc., and through visually capturing the process of selecting concept-related techniques, symbols, images or forms. Visually recording a few alternatives that were abandoned may help in this respect.
- Associated text explanations should employ subject-specific language correctly and be concise and relevant; the aim being to demonstrate and to focus solely on links across the candidate's development. Lengthy, unstructured prose predominantly featuring description rather than analysis and connection-making often detracts from the visual documentation of the student's development.
- Candidates should engage fully and curiously with materials/media to understand limitations and possibilities, thus giving evidence of reasoning behind the choices they have made along their development.
- Candidates should be encouraged to pick artworks of other artists in which they feel a personal connection and, when possible, to attempt to engage with works of art that have been seen in person and not solely through a computer screen), perhaps choosing a local artist that they can meet or interview.
- Choices of imagery and symbolism should also evidence personal importance and originality.
- A demonstration of revision, refinement and reflection bolsters a candidate's presentation of their development and progress by underlining their personal engagement with techniques, concepts, related works by other audiences and with potential audience members.
- While experimentation and process is key, candidates reaching high marks were selective in their choices of media and concepts, choosing a limited range of both that could be explored and analysed at depth.
- The visual presentations of portfolios should include captions on all images, be well organised showing a clear chronological development and should not be too crowded or visually impenetrable so that the candidate's development is obscured.
- Evidence of experimentation in lens-based and electronic media benefits from more than just showing several images of the artwork in progress. Candidates may include contact sheets/proof sheets, test

sheets, outcomes of experiments involving changes in depth-of-field and/or shutter speed, darkroom experimentation, screenshots of screen-based work in development, photographs or diagrams of the studio or of lighting set-ups. Information should be provided about the editing program or effects used for digital photography and digital painting and screenshots of how tools are used and how images have been transformed.

- Candidates should be discouraged from including photographs that principally feature the candidate at work as these are only relevant in very rare cases.

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