Art history SL

Contents

Grade boundaries

Standard level overall

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 9	10 - 20	21 - 30	31 - 43	44 - 54	55 - 67	68 - 100

Standard level internal assessment

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 14	15 - 19	20 - 23	24 - 28	29 - 34

Standard level paper one

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 30	31 - 40

Standard level paper two

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 1	2 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 30

Standard level internal assessment

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Overall, the range and suitability of the work submitted for the May 2023 internal assessment (IA) was broad, with task requirements being met to different degrees throughout the submitted responses. Generally, speaking, this year's pool reflected continued advances both in the deepening diversity of works incorporated beyond the Western European tradition and in the ongoing improvement in meeting the specific submission guidelines. That being said, there seemed to be a larger-than-average pool of responses that did not meet the requested parameters.

Generally speaking across the response pool, the main issues demonstrated in these responses included

- Some disregard for stated guidelines: while seemingly greatly diminished from last year's pool, there were still a notable number of submitted essays that deviated from the requested task of comparative analysis. Often these were essays in which numerous artworks were listed with minimal accompanying analysis. The persistent nature of this issue suggests that perhaps there was not adequate time devoted to working individually with students to ensure that the IA guideline were clearly understood. These guidelines are provided to assist in helping students to frame their research and their development of these topic, so to overlook or ignore them is a significant disservice to students overall.
- Developing a broad research question: many students would benefit from a more careful scrutiny of their research question. Some authors attempted to scale a research question better suited for a comprehensive thesis rather than a 2,000 word paper, which again resulted in generalities.
- Minimal context: some authors overlooked the contextual consideration of the artists they chose to discuss, which resulted in more cursory observations that could have been enhanced had the contextual aspects been more fully explored. This seemed to be particularly the case where the student skimped on the art historical context of a discussed work.
- Overlooking formatting: part of the IA is assessing a student's capabilities to format an essay in a formal manner consistent with university-level papers, however, students still seem to inconsistently attend to the details of a well-formatted paper. Of particular note in this regard is the formatting and quality of scholarly works cited in the essay.

These issues will be further illuminated in the subsequent discussion of each criterion that follows.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

The highest marks for this criterion went to students who could fully contextualize the art and artists examined in their essay. This knowledge allowed these authors to position these artists in their cultural and historical era while also relaying the essential art historical significance that these figures held. At the same time, the ability to relay these contextual components often also coincided with the effective use of terminology as it related to the works at hand.

Lower scores were earned for this criterion when this context was relayed only in vague terms or was misconstrued on some way. For example, to identify an artists as part of the Baroque or Rococo era provides some context and also nods to included relevant terminology, but without further explication of what it means to make "Rococo" or "Neoclassical" art there is valuable context that is missed. This development of art historical context is essential as it scaffolds elements of the accompanying visual

analysis and demonstrates to the reader the student's digestion of these stylistic considerations. Generally speaking, though, students seemed more keen on incorporating contextual discussion in their essays and to concurrently use terms appropriately to illuminate observations.

Criterion B

Success for Criterion B hinges upon the development of a clear research question that results in claims supported by detailed visual analysis of specific art works. A clear research question sits at the crux of the entire essay's viability as it needs to be precise to the point that it can be argued effectively with a handful of works in a comparison/contrast format. Many of this year's candidates were able to draft such precise statements, but there was still a notable number of responses that offered research questions far too general to viably produce interpretative conclusion.

Success for Criterion B also depended on a careful visual analysis of these selected works. For many essays, description of works far outweighed the analysis of them; what was needed, rather, was a balance between these two components. Additionally, high marks for Criterion B can be achieved only if the author of the essay adequately engages with sources as a means of showcasing the ability to apply knowledge to the interpretation of selected art works. A subset of the 2023 candidates did well to select strong sources that they then wove throughout their text. Some of these students were able to engage with these sources full by effectively incorporating quotes from scholars into their essay. Others, though, relied on one or two sources; still others, relied upon weak sources that make the engagement with them in the essay more difficult.

Criterion C

Criterion C tasks students to go beyond source engagement to appraise the arguments made through robust interrogation. This element, though, was decidedly lacking in this year's pool of submissions. Often complicating this appraisal, however, was often the selection of less-than-academically reliable sources or general reference materials that don't necessarily provide an argument or theory that can resultingly be critiqued. This calibre of sources is to be assessed in Criterion D, so no more will be mentioned on the topic here. It is shared in this discussion, though, because without the foundation of these strong sources, the opportunity for appraisal also suffers. Given this issue, which was similarly prevalent in last year's pool, it seems that students would benefit from greater encouragement to challenge the ideas of scholarship and posit their own interpretations to go beyond simply citing block quotes or paraphrases from other publications. Greater input from instructors is essential here as well, considering that the young scholars writing these essays will be relatively new to such appraisal and thus might need a model for critique or assessment that they can apply.

Criterion C also places emphasis on the comparison between at two works of art, which is another parameter often missed or overlooked. Strong essays were able to clearly state ample similarities between two works of art. Others, though, focused instead only on differences or did not even attempt to note any points of intersection between the works discussed (this was most often the case in those essays where a series of works were covered very generally). Criterion C also grapples with conclusions that are being made. In addition to the need for valid conclusions, it would seem that numerous responses in the May 2023 cycle drew only general conclusions that were not based on their interpretive analysis of artworks. There was also the continued issue of the essay in which students myopically assessed art works to force fit a research question narrative, which often resulted in erroneous conclusions.

Criterion D

Overall, this year's submission pool seemed to better develop their essays to include all of the required components (title page, list of illustrations, works cited page, etc.), however, the challenges of formatting persisted. Inconsistent citation modes, tables of contents missing relevant information, as well as image captions were very prevalent, suggesting a greater attention to detail to these elements of essay packaging would be merited.

Nevertheless, issues with the research question scope persisted. Some research questions were simply too broad to accomplish within 2,000 words, and the peril of the broad research question is only further exacerbated by the tendency to respond to such questions with an extended series of works. Stronger essays focused on a specific facet and pursued that aspect really with at most two to three works, which gave students the opportunity to delve into rich comparisons and contrasts between them. Criterion D emphasizes these well-developed similarities and differences, so it is imperative that students can effectively relay these observations in great detail. Source selection also plays a large role in the assessment for Criterion D. The vast majority of submitted essays showed at least some effort to include a bibliography/works cited section, however, the selection of sources was at times concerning. These issues fell into several categories

- The first was the student who relied on subpar sources overall; in these instances, blog entries, opinion websites, or less-than-reliable online sources overwhelmed their bibliography.
- The second was the overemphasis of general reference websites, such as SmartHistory. Such sources provide primarily background information but do not typically offer the level of scholarly inquiry that will produce quality quotations for the essay or the space to appraise sources. These can be used in the bibliography, but sparingly.
- The third was the overemphasis on museum websites, which fall into the same general reference category below but also presented confusion as these links provided were discussing the works on which the essay focused. While it is beneficial for the student to credit the source of the image they are using in their essay, it is problematic when these image links are included in their source list (particularly when these general reference museum sites overrun the bibliography). This suggests that going forward (as some students did this round) there should be a clear distinction between image citations and scholarship citation.

While these represent different levels of proficiency, they all lack an attention to actual scholarship - argumentative essays that grapple with these works - that will thereby afford the student content they can appraise and critique (as part of Criterion C). This continued issue suggests that there is inadequate guidance provided for them to identify strong sources, where to seek out scholarly publications, and the like. Important to relay to students is that while these general reference sites can be a strong starting point, the final bibliography developed for this essay needs to pull together different types of scholarship, including a greater emphasis on peer-reviewed publications.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Considering last year's submission pool with the May 2023 IA cohort, it would seem that some improvements have been made (particularly as highlighted in the earlier sections of this report). That said, there are still some areas that could be addressed to help students to complete essays more clearly in line with the IA expectations. These include

- Review Rubrics and Guidelines: instructors should still devote more time to help their students understand what is asked of them in these essay.

- Rework Research Questions: instructors should guide students carefully as they begin to develop and refine a research question that will compare/contrast two works of art. Appropriate instructor insight can help students develop a research question that stays on task and that can effectively be accomplished in the space of a 2,000 word essay.
- Streamline Sources: instructors should demonstrate how to identify strong sources and should work closely with students to help them cultivate a bibliography that is balanced and that incorporates academically-discipline sources possible for appraisal.
- Exclude extra/extraneous examples: instructors should guide students to a smaller subset of works since high-quality analysis is a prime space for students to showcase their knowledge about the art, the context of its creation, and its relationship with another artwork or artist to often result in valuable and astute insights.
- Academic integrity: instructors should always underscore the need to cite all outside materials referenced in the text using complete and consistently-formatted citations. Students should also be guided toward quality sources that with enhance – not be a detriment to – their arguments.

Further comments

While improvements have been made, suggesting that instructors are already making strides to enhance their involvement in the development of these essays, more is still needed. particularly in the early stages of each essay's development. If a student is afforded the opportunity to build their essay on a foundation derived from the combination of a well-scaled research question and quality, diverse sources, students will have a toolbox at their disposal with which they can potentially craft an insightful and satisfying essay.

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Standard level paper one

General comments

This year marked the third year of exams in the new guideline (first exams 2020) and one that was undisturbed by pandemic circumstances. The number of candidates undertaking the Art History component remained at a strong and consistent level with last year's figures. Most candidates were well focused on the subject and achieved some encouraging results.

It was very positive to see that many followed the guidelines well and were able to answer two sets of five questions pertaining to **two** different topic areas. However, some still chose two adjacent topic areas (like Topic 1 and Topic 2, together), or compared examples from **two** different topic areas, in error. A small number of candidates answered brief responses for **all** questions in **all** topic areas.

Examiners concentrate their attention on the candidates' use of command terms and how effectively they are used in responses. Because of the hierarchy of command terms (low-to-high level), it is important for candidates to fully appreciate what is required of them in each question, and to be guided by marks allocated to them. Low command terms like 'identify' and 'state' do not require the same extensive consideration as higher-level command terms such as 'analyse' and 'discuss'. Sometimes candidates treat them with equal measure.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

There were many positive findings in this year's exam results, foremost the candidates' abilities to use their critical thinking, develop arguments and think creatively in their responses.

While true, there were still areas in the exam writing where students struggled. For example, in their use of art historical language/terminology. Some topic areas, and aspects of the syllabus like materials and techniques and stylistic approaches, encourage specialist vocabulary, but this was often overlooked, this year.

Use of art historical sources, quotes and/or references to support arguments always raises the level of candidates' responses but there were fewer instances this year. Also, using other artists/architects or examples of other works for comparative purposes, were not done regularly.

Overall, a trend was noted towards a lack of depth and detail in many responses, with some candidates analysing or discussing specific issues in generalist terms and shallow analysis. Linking works of art/architecture to the discussions and connecting them back to the work in question, would raise a candidates' response.

Finally, the use of contextual analysis was especially limited in responses this year. Even when candidates were aware and demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the works, there was an absence of contextualisation of periods, works and artists in many answers.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Higher achieving candidates were those who were prepared, with a deep grasp of subject knowledge and understanding and an ability to communicate them. Some students had considered potential questions

surrounding thematic ideas and issues and prepared arguments using relevant sources. Quite a few made essay plans or bullet points in their exam booklets prior to writing their 8-mark responses which helped them to focus their arguments and present ideas in a logical way. Successful candidates were those who demonstrated an understanding of formal analysis, elements, and qualities and what they entail and able to discuss them knowledgeably in relation to artworks.

The most successful responses were those which considered contexts and perspectives of the works and their creators in the discussions.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Topic questions 1 (Fallen Warrior) and 2 (Cubiculum at Boscoreale) were popular choices and there were some strong responses. Although in Topic 1, some candidates struggled with the question of how the sculpture 'fit within the architectural setting' and answered instead how the subject matter 'fit' the setting. While this was accepted, few candidates made any real connection between the subject matter of a fallen warrior and honouring Athena. Successful students identified the mythical Trojan king, Laomedon, and noted Homer's epic poem, The Iliad, in their narrative explanation. Demonstrating how stoicism and dignity appeared in the work was tricky for some, but many candidates were able to discuss how movement was demonstrated through bodily actions. Higher achieving students discussed this figure within the development of classical Greek architectural sculpture, although few made specific comparisons to other examples in Greek art, to situate their discussion.

In Topic 2, candidates listed subject matter seen in the paintings, but did find it challenging to explain how they reflected Roman society. Knowledge of fresco painting technique and materials were briefly explained, although there were few direct references to the cubiculum painting. Best responses discussed characteristics of Pompeian Styles (1 and 2), trompe l'oeil illusionism and spatial perspective and drew comparison with other paintings from the period. Several candidates were able to cite art historical references in their arguments.

Topic 3 (Entry into Jerusalem) was chosen by more candidates than in recent years. Some were challenged in their discussion of colour, and naturalism in the composition. A fair number of candidates cited examples of symbolism but often their analysis lacked evidence and was weak. Some candidates appeared to struggle with stylistic influences on Duccio's work, although others were able to discuss influences of Cimabue, Giotto and Byzantine art and noted Duccio's influence on the later Early Renaissance style.

Very few candidates answered Topic 4 and 5 questions. Of those who addressed Topic 4 (South Asia and South-East Asian art), few were able to explain the symbolic importance in the work or discuss its function as a temple for Buddhist worship. There was limited awareness, knowledge and understanding shown of the importance of this work on other cultures in East Asia and the influence of religious ideals and beliefs in its construction.

In Topic 5 (Art of the Americas) the Life-Death Figure was poorly identified, with only a little understanding of its function or symbolic value in Mexica culture. It was tricky for candidates to compare this figure with artworks in other cultures of the Americas and subsequently contextual knowledge was limited.

The Art of China and Japan, (Topic 6) drew a reasonable response, although candidates struggled in their analysis of the armor (as an artwork) and its significance to its wearer. More understanding of the relationship between this artwork, shoguns, and their role within the development of the arts was required. A handful of candidates engaged well with religious or cultural beliefs of Zen Buddhism but most

found it difficult to evaluate the significance of the artwork, especially in relation to the development of Japanese culture (during the Muromachi period).

In Topic 7 (Islamic Art), the choice of artwork was popular with a good number of candidates able to describe the narrative scene unfolding. There was a strong understanding of the moral nature of the work and how this was depicted.

Candidates found some questions challenging such as describing the 'composition' or analysing stylistic features and influences. Some successful students were able to show their knowledge of the development of illuminated manuscript painting, in the Islamic world but the majority found it difficult to discuss the importance of the artwork on the development of culture, during the Ikhanid dynasty as they seemed to lack reference points.

Topic 8 and Topic 10 were very popular choices, with the highest number of responses. In Sluter's Well of Moses , successful students were able to discuss realism, and analyse volume as shown in the sculpture. Many candidates showed knowledge of the artwork; its form and function. While some struggled to find sculptors or works to compare with Sluter's Well, others discussed works by Donatello's David, Ghiberti's Sacrifice of Isaac and della Querica. Several candidates used external references, for eg. Zucker, Smarthistory and Panofsky's theory of independent axiality, in their responses.

Topic 9 (Rembrandt's Three Crosses), saw more candidates use art historical terminology in their discussions of tenebrism and chiaroscuro, as they compared this print to works by Caravaggio. The majority of candidates struggled with the term 'state' and many demonstrated a limited knowledge of print work, materials and techniques especially with reference to this artwork. Higher level responses included strong contextual knowledge (for eg. the Council of Trent, 17th c. Dutch art and the demands of the rising, wealthy middle classes.

Topic 10 (Courbet's Burial at Ornans) was a popular choice for many candidates. Unfortunately, there seemed to be some misunderstanding of Romanticism, as a counter to Courbet's realism and some candidates wrote about pastel colours and aristocratic themes, conflating art of the Rococo period with Romanticism. In several cases, the two- and four-mark questions were answered without great depth in the description of events, public criticism, composition or analysis of colour. Successful students examined Courbet's move towards realism and his criticism of art, politics, society, and lifestyles, as demonstrated by the art of the Rococo and Romanticism periods.

Topics 11 and 12 were popular choices of topic and generally well addressed, particularly in the 8-mark essay questions. Topic 11 (Boccioni's Unique Forms) gave candidates a good opportunity to analyse the work in relation to early 20th century beliefs and ideals and candidates drew some very good comparisons with other artists. Topic 12 saw some excellent discussions focused on contextual issues surrounding Sunflower Seeds and very good comparisons were made with other contemporary artists engaged with political and social ideas. But surprisingly, analysis of this work in relation to the medium of 'installation', was not well handled by many candidates.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Overall, it appears that non-western topics such as the Art of South Asia, South-East Asia and of the Americas were less popular choices for candidates and their base of knowledge and understanding of these topic areas, as well as Art of the Islamic World, appears to be quite limited.

A recommendation, at this time, would be for more attention to be given to the teaching of non-western topics, to bring them to a par with other topic areas.

Standard level paper two

General comments

Overall, while the pool of submissions this year reflects a performance below-standard, the small percentage of students who were able to provide quality, insightful responses speaks to the continued efforts that are alive and well among candidates to vigorously investigate selected works in response to an essay prompt. In addition, it was promising to see students tackling an increasingly diverse array of artistic examples, as such a global perspective makes space for new and exciting assessments in relation to these essay prompts. It is a sincere hope that this success can be expanded in next year's pool provided the notes and recommendations provided in this report are integrated accordingly.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Taking in sum the M23 Paper 2 responses, it would seem that two main issues arose. The first of these challenges for this years' students was the overall lack of depth in terms of their presentation and analysis of selected works. For some students, this issue emerged in a weak or general assessment of works of art or architecture selected for discussion. For example, some students presented works but did little to contextualize them or analyse their components, two factors essential to demonstrating mastery of the demands of the selected question alongside a thorough knowledge of the art itself. Students also seemed to sidestep a careful consideration of scope or scale of works, which further limited their capacity to effectively dissect the work.

Similarly, some students struggled to fully identify works of art to be discussed. This generally vague presentation not only implied a lack of depth of knowledge on the students' behalf but also presented challenges in further assessing the student's writing given the preponderance of generalities references. Very few students were able to situate outside scholarship effectively in their responses, which limited their overall success as a result.

The second main issue emerging in the M23 pool was the lack of attention to the defined parameters for each response. For instance, despite the stipulate in the prompt question to reference "works" of art or architecture, some students discussed only one work in each essay that resulted in a rather brief analysis and thus resulting reduced marks. Others neglected to note the requirement that each essay can incorporate examples from one topic area only. In these cases, students incorporated two topic areas - for example, comparing Manet's Olympia (1863) with Titian's Venus of Urbino (1532-1534) - in one response, which again resulted in reduced marks as there was not an additional effective consideration of two works from the same topic area. Still others students missed the parameter that each essay must cover a different topic area. This was perhaps the most pervasive issue this year, as numerous students chose to use the same topic area for both essays. Again, is this is not permitted in the Paper 2 guidelines, these students could only receive marks for one of the two responses (that which achieved a higher markband overall).

These issues suggest that students need greater preparation, perhaps through increased exposure to example papers, that can illuminate both the necessary essay components and demonstrate how to effectively structure an essay that responds to demands of this task.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Though rare in this year's pool, some students did offer rich analyses of selected works that directly and insightfully responded to their selected question. Several students provided very insightful observations that linked interpretations and context to the analysis of a given work to support a well-developed thesis in response to the selected essay prompt. Also appreciated was the breadth of works that students attempted to incorporate into their responses both in terms of a variety of media/making and for a wider global distribution of examples.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1: Artistic/architectural challenge to contemporary style

This was a relatively popular essay among the pool of submissions, and several students were able to respond well to the demands of this question. Challenging for some, though, was the ability to clearly articulate the context of a given artist's work so that this challenge could be clearly explained.

Question 2: Light/dark contrast to create mood

A fair number of students selected this prompt, and some were able to express cogent responses, however, this prompt also demanded a rather robust contextual grounding in order to allow the essay to evolve beyond a simple discussion of light and dark in a given work.

Question 3: "Public art usually has a political agenda"

This was a relatively popular essay among the pool of submissions, and several students were able to respond well to the demands of this question. Challenging for some, though, was the ability to clearly demonstrate the political underpinnings of selected works of art/architecture.

Question 4: Space to enhance meaning

This question was not very popular among responses, suggesting that the premise was perhaps hard for students to grasp. Particularly challenging in this question was that it reads as if the students should be assessing space, but it would appear in the markscheme that iconography and symbolism is also to be addressed.

Question 5: "Representations of nature in art are often an historical construct of the time in which they are produced"

This question was not very popular among responses, suggesting that the premise was perhaps hard for students to grasp. Some nice responses, particularly those that juxtaposed Chinese literati hanging scrolls, were effective, but it would seem that students struggled to frame an effective response to this question prompt for other landscape elements that could be discussed.

Question 6: Art/architecture that records conflict

This was a relatively popular essay among the pool of submissions, and several students were able to respond well to the demands of this question. Challenging for some, though, was the ability to delineate the contrast between "recording" and reflecting/prefiguring conflict.

Question 7: Art/architecture as reflective of contemporary tastes

This was a relatively popular essay among the pool of submissions, and several students were able to respond well to the demands of this question. Challenging for some, though, was the ability to provide a convincing and in-depth contextualization for the selected works as is demanded in the prompt's framing.

Question 8: Comparison/contrast of works in a public/private space

A fair number of students selected this prompt, and several students were able to respond well to the demands of this question. Challenging for some, though, was the ability to delineate clearly or express a clear knowledge of "public" versus "private" spaces in the analysis they provided.

Question 9: "Techniques and materials for making art/architecture can hold cultural significance"

This was not a popular prompt in this year's submissions, suggesting that the premise was perhaps hard for students to grasp. Those who did attempt this question seemed to struggle to demonstrate how specific techniques or materials could be connected to a given culture, and it was perhaps an issue that #9 and #10 were strikingly similar in structure.

Question 10: "Precious materials have been used to create meaning in art or architecture"

This was a relatively popular essay among the pool of submissions. Those who did attempt this question, though, seemed to struggle to demonstrate how specific techniques or materials could be connected to such meaning. A prime example was the popular use of the ivory pyxis of al-Mughira, where often the material was described but was not really situated satisfying in a discussion of the significance or meaning of the ivory itself.

Question 11: Comparison/contrast of individual versus group identified

This was not a popular prompt in this year's submissions, suggesting that the premise was perhaps hard for students to grasp. Those who did attempt this question seemed to struggle to demonstrate via a selection of works and effective contrast between individual versus group presentation.

Question 12: Human figure as stereotype in art/architecture

This was a relatively popular essay among the pool of submissions, and several students were able to respond well to the demands of this question. Challenging for some, though, was the ability to outline a stereotypical representation of the body beyond the realm of pure symbolism.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

In response to the performance of this year's submission pool, which in general seemed to trend toward a lower-than-average mark, it would seem that the strongest recommendation for teaching future candidates is to more carefully guide them as to the expected parameters for these responses. This begins with the simple clarity of the exam expectations and a careful reading of the rubrics for assessment to avoid straightforward problems (e.g., sticking to one topic area in each essay but exploring two different topic areas between the first and second essay) that result in an immediate deduction in marks.

Going further, future candidates would most likely benefit from a heightened scrutiny of sample essays that showcase how to effectively build a response that meets the demands of the question. Specifically valuable in such a sample would be one that offered an incisive look into the works discussed such that students could see (and thus model) how in-depth analysis helps to showcase knowledge even in the

space of a brief essay. This could encourage students to build support for their response's premise through carefully digested example of art/architecture that support their claims. Also fostered could be the pursuit of scholarly assessment to support their claims that could result in greater success in providing a thoughtful interpretation.