

# Visual arts higher and standard level

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## Higher and standard level exhibition

### Range and suitability of submissions

The May 2020 submissions showed a wide variety of responses to the exhibition component, ranging from examples of excellent and successful work in all criteria to work that may indicate a misunderstanding of some of the criteria.

In terms of media, 2D work was again predominant, with relatively few 3D artworks presented.

**As with previous sessions, moderators noted that many candidates referred to a ‘theme’ for their exhibition.** Unfortunately, some teachers appear to consistently misunderstand the course requirements with reference to the need for candidates to work on a theme.

To be clear, the success of the theme depends on achievement in the assessment criteria, and these criteria do not make any reference to the need for a theme. A theme is acceptable but is not required. Many candidates still start their Curatorial Rationale by announcing that they have a theme. One problem with the theme is its potential to become a constraint to creativity.

However, in a few cases the theme was creatively explored and, in these cases, led to exciting, diverse, and meaningful work. The issue is of course more to do with how creatively the candidate approaches the theme than just whether or not to have a theme: with or without a theme, what counts is whether the exhibition matches the assessment criteria.

Candidates should be encouraged to select the artworks to include in their exhibition considering the assessment criteria carefully.

Once again, generous marking by many teachers was an issue. Unfortunately, this frequently resulted in significant reduction of marks in the moderation process. It seems that some teachers do not understand the IB Diploma Programme standards in relation to the visual arts assessment criteria: some teachers vastly overestimated **their students’ performance and awarded high marks for work that did not merit this.**

Apart from the implications of generous marks for the IA sample for the rest of the cohort, candidates need teachers to provide an accurate appraisal, so that they know what they need to do to improve. It is unfair **and unhelpful if candidates are told that they have high grades when they don’t.**

In terms of technical competence, as in previous sessions, some centres seemed to have devoted very little time to developing the **candidates’ fundamental technical skills, whilst others have ensured that candidates have a solid foundation upon which to build their work.** A lack of work from observation (or **the candidate’s choice to base their artwork on non-original images or objects**) often reflects weak technical skills.

Some exhibitions were weaker because there was too much variety in media/processes. For some candidates, a better approach may have been to focus on their strengths rather than showcasing their explorations with a variety of media and no accomplished mastery. There is no compulsion to exhibit works using a variety of media, thus candidates should focus on exhibiting their stronger artworks.

Photography continues to be submitted but only rarely seemed to have been taught or explored in **adequate depth.** Many **‘snapshots’ were submitted, demonstrating only very basic digital photography skills** with arbitrary use of software filters; evidence of preparation, editing and refinement was lacking in **many candidates’ photography pieces.** Also, little or no exploration of other photographers or lens-based artists in their curatorial rationale and exhibition texts was evident.

Videos with sound continue to be submitted. Please remember that sound is not considered when assessing the exhibition. As outlined in the Visual arts guide, examiners cannot consider any soundtracks **and will concentrate only on the visual elements of the candidates' artwork.**

Conceptually the best work demonstrated interesting and original concepts combined with the use of thoughtful and thought-provoking imagery, frequently reflecting subtle and sophisticated ideas. Issues such as the environment, pollution, feminism, identity and body image were seen again as the focal point of many **candidates' artwork**, but often with little evidence of conceptual sophistication.

Some candidates seem to think that lengthy justifications and explanations in the exhibition text and/or curatorial rationale are enough to achieve high marks for Conceptual Qualities. Some exhibitions presented obvious, banal and predictable ideas and imagery.

For what concerns the quality of the e-Coursework submissions, candidates and teachers are required to note the following points:

Exhibition photographs and photographs of individual artworks: there was more diversity than usual in exhibition photographs this session, with of course many digital/virtual exhibitions. The most useful digital exhibitions replicated the arrangement of a real exhibition with particular attention to the relative sizes and arrangement of works, ideally reflecting the information provided in the Curatorial Rationale. In some cases, photographs of submitted artworks were simply inserted into a Word document with no attention to the relative size of works. Although better than nothing, this was not very helpful to the **moderator's understanding of how the exhibition was intended to look.**

Candidates must be reassured that the space where their exhibition is presented does not influence the marking nor constitute any bias: no reference to the quality of the exhibition space itself is made in the Visual arts guide.

In some cases, the exhibition photographs showed people in the exhibition space and obscuring views of the artworks, or sometimes depicted the candidate standing in front of their display. In some cases, low resolution or pixelated images, or photographs submitted with an incorrect orientation were submitted. None of this is helpful to the moderation process.

Exhibition text: even if short, the information provided is a crucial support for the examiner moderating the internal assessment component, especially to evaluate concepts, intentions, or references in each art piece. The information provided varied a lot: candidates must be aware that this with the exhibition text they have an opportunity to offer crucial information to the examiner moderating their work.

**The "medium" section should be completed with sufficient detail for the examiner to fully appreciate each piece.** It was often not possible to detect the media employed, and the information provided was too **generic: candidates should be advised that the caption "mixed media" is not supporting the assessment** precisely enough.

In the case of digital photography details about editing programs/effects should also be included.

**'Found objects' used in the artworks must be acknowledged as such in the "medium" section.**

Optional additional supporting photographs: the file slots dedicated to the two optional supporting photographs were sometimes used unnecessarily. These photographs can be helpful, for example for viewing a 3D piece from different angles or to show details that reveal technical mastery but are not a requirement. Using these slots to submit almost identical views of an artwork is a waste of time both for candidates and examiners.

**Teacher’s supporting comments:** some teachers still do not enter supporting comments, and in this way they miss to inform the examiner conducting the moderation about the rationale behind their application of the assessment criteria and about the awarding of marks to their students. This can impact the final marks awarded and teachers should make sure to enter and complete their supporting comments in the most accurate and appropriate way.

**The teacher’s supporting comments are not intended to persuade the moderator that the work is excellent, but to explain why they have awarded the marks for each criterion.** Teachers should be objective in their comments and reference the assessment criteria. However, just copying and pasting the descriptors that match the marks awarded is not useful. The IB requires teachers to provide relevant **information to support the IA moderation process: teachers’ comments must clearly refer to the evidence in the candidate’s work** used to award marks against each criterion.

**Some teacher comments simply state: ‘see 6VACAF’, or see ‘comments on form’, but examiners do not have access to this form. The 6VACAF form’s only purpose is to support the authentication of the candidate’s coursework.**

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Criterion A: coherent body of works

Many candidates stated that their work was based on a theme, but it is worth once more reminding teachers that Criterion A does not require a theme and for some candidates **“the theme”** might end up suppressing ideas, diversity and the use of creative imagery. In some cases, candidates became confined within the limitations of the generic or stereotypical concepts they had selected, when the same themes turned up with frequently simplistic, repetitive and obvious approaches.

**The assessment criteria state that it is thematic coherence “across individual pieces” which forms a coherent body of works; a theme is not mentioned.**

Issues-based work and work intended to raise awareness of, for example, pollution, the environment/planet, pressure to conform, body image, identity etc. continues to be a focus for many candidates; however, as with previous sessions, the degree of coherence - including relationships and/or dynamic links across pieces - varied enormously.

**Some of the most successful submissions showed both thematic and stylistic coherence. ‘Considered use of imagery’ is mentioned in the level descriptors at the higher levels, which includes careful consideration of formal choices as well as imagery.** In some cases, having a theme helped candidates develop ideas in a more broad and conceptual manner, but only when there was an understanding that variation and diversity – not repetition - is vital.

To achieve success in criterion A, among other things, candidates are required to present both relationships between pieces and evidence of diversity. If the exhibition contains artworks that show diversity, demonstrate links and also reflects a theme or idea that underpins the whole show, in this case, there is nothing wrong with having a theme.

As in previous sessions, some candidates seemed to be unaware of the importance of media selection and **choice of imagery in this criterion. The candidate’s intentions should be fulfilled through the selection and application of media and techniques and the considered use of imagery.** In some cases, the application of techniques was inconsistent, and/or the imagery did not appear to have been considered. This affects coherence because it can limit the extent to which stated intentions are fulfilled.

## Criterion B: technical competence

Moderators reported seeing some outstanding examples of technical competence this session. These **artworks were clearly the result of many hours' work and contrasted sharply with other exhibition artworks** that showed evidence of minimal skill. Just spending a long time on an individual piece is not of course a guarantee of success, but if time, thought and care are involved it might make success more likely.

As with previous sessions, some exhibitions contained ten or eleven artworks showing work in ten or eleven different techniques/processes. While exploring with a variety of media is important, including evidence of this in the exhibition is not a requirement nor always a good strategy. A wide variety of media and art making forms may lead to a lack of sustained development in any single process.

There are no requirements relating to how many art-making forms should appear in the exhibition: the **artworks selected represent the candidate's most successful accomplishment against the assessment criteria**.

Some candidates may have included everything in their exhibition without considering quality. Remember that the exhibition is viewed as a whole, and a weak piece can have an impact on the final mark for the exhibition. Some candidates stated in their curatorial rationales that they were exploring techniques for the first time in artworks that they selected to submit, but technical competence is unlikely to be demonstrated in the very first experience with an art form.

Some candidates used found objects and this often reflected conceptual thinking, but candidates need to be aware that it may be difficult to be awarded top marks for technical competence if all artworks in the submitted exhibition are just found objects.

Photographic artwork sometimes lacked evidence of any purposeful exploration that would demonstrate technical competence in this medium. Candidates who presented most or all of their artwork through digital photography rarely showed an understanding of the potential of the medium. Much of the digital video and photographs submitted showed minimal manipulation of the formal qualities and very little consideration for the actual images captured.

## Criterion C: conceptual qualities

Conceptual qualities refer to the visual elaboration of ideas and the use of complex imagery to communicate stated artistic intentions, so the curatorial rationale and also the exhibition texts are considered when moderating the marks for this criterion.

As in previous sessions, achievement in conceptual qualities was variable. Many candidates, for example, stated their concerns about the environment in their curatorial rationales, but this concern was often not translated successfully in conceptual terms.

The descriptors for criterion C refer to the communication of stated artistic intentions, but sometime there was a gap between the complex and elaborate writing in the rationale and the exhibition itself. All too frequently the ambitious ideas and concepts explained in the rationale were not visually elaborated to any degree. It seemed that candidates (and possibly teachers) thought that just describing ideas in the rationale was enough. But however eloquent the writing, the moderator is still looking for evidence of conceptual qualities in the artwork itself (the top-level descriptor requires the work to demonstrate subtlety and complexity to effectively communicate the stated intentions in the artwork).

Some candidates undertook very ambitious projects with complicated ideas, and the time and thought that candidates put into these projects translated into conceptually stunning exhibitions of complex, clever and sometimes provocative artworks, that showed the subtle use of complex imagery required to

reach the top level of marks in this criterion. However, many candidates still submitted simplistic ideas and **did not appear to realize the importance or actual meaning of 'visual elaboration'**. In some cases effectiveness was hindered by the inclusion of obvious or predictable imagery that did not demonstrate **an understanding of the requirements of the "conceptual qualities" criterion.**

### Criterion D: curatorial practice

To match the requirements of criterion D, candidates were able to explain the selection process, the arrangement, and the relationship with the viewer, whether their exhibition was set up in a space or virtual.

Many candidates described their selection and arrangement as shown in their virtual exhibition, and many submitted excellent curatorial rationales. However, a number of candidates did not appear to be familiar with the level descriptors for this criterion and submitted curatorials that were vague statements and tended not to address the specific descriptor strands. Quite a few of these candidates could not be awarded any marks for their Curatorial Rationale.

Teachers and candidates must remember that **he curatorial rationale is not a general "artist statement"**.

There are required elements, which include justifying the selection of artworks for the exhibition, the arrangement and, at Higher Level, the relationship between the artworks and the viewer.

Many rationales stated global issues – such as pollution, environmental waste, global warming, sexual politics, gender stereotyping, etc - but failed to make clear links between the issue discussed and the selection of specific artworks.

Candidates also often offered information about problems they had encountered with art-making processes and techniques, **but this often didn't have anything to do with the way they curated their exhibition.**

Some candidates just analysed their feelings, experiences and emotions, or stated concerns about politics, the environment and other global issues, and/or discussed their family, background or artistic influences and development. **This may reflect the teacher's or the candidate's misunderstanding of the requirements of the rationale.**

As in previous sessions, many candidates started their curatorial rationale by describing their theme (having a theme is acceptable but is not necessary) and their intentions. Outlining intentions is important, but a few candidates seemed to be under the impression that this was all they had to write about.

Few candidates explained and discussed the relationship between their artworks and the viewer within the space made available: many HL candidates focused on aims and intentions, rather than justifying clearly the selection of artworks and explaining the logic of their exhibition lay out in relation the viewer.

Eloquent and well written curatorial rationales helped the moderator to understand the context and intentions in the artworks presented. However, it is crucial that candidates remember that the concepts expressed in their curatorial rationale still need to be effectively communicated also in their artwork and in the way this is presented in their exhibition. A well-written rationale and supporting exhibition texts cannot make weak exhibitions successful. Some curatorial rationales were extremely ambitious, with bold claims about the creative and imaginative nature of the artwork and the impact it would have on the audience, but, unfortunately the poorly-made and predictable artwork presented did not live up to expectations.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Most of the previous Subject Reports recommendations to teachers remain relevant for this session.

### **The teaching of future candidates should include accurate assessment of candidates' work.**

Teachers must work with the assessment criteria and the Internal assessment clarification document to provide honest and objective feedback to candidates throughout the course. It is important that future candidates have a clear picture of their achievement against the assessment criteria. Teachers need to always share the assessment criteria with their students, print a copy of these and offer feedback to students which takes in account the personal artistic development of each candidate but also the course requirements.

Evidence of teacher misunderstanding of standards appears in marks submitted in all four assessment criteria and for some teachers it occurs repeatedly, session after session. It is hard to understand why some teachers submit extremely generous marks every year. All teachers should make sure that the standard of marking provided in the classroom and during the course matches the IB global standards.

Teachers must consult the IB visual arts subject specific material on the Programme Resource Centre (the Visual arts guide as well as the Assessment clarification documents and the Teacher support materials), use any IA feedback provided by moderators in previous sessions and always refer to the assessment criteria published in the Visual arts Guide. Marked example are very beneficial for students to see, especially in their understanding of what a coherent exhibition might look like, as well as the level of sophistication of conceptual qualities, and refinement of works expected to address the highest level of marks.

Teachers must remind candidates working on animation or video art that sound is not assessed in the current visual arts course and that examiners are instructed to turn the volume off when moderating the marking of exhibitions.

Teachers need to allow time for individual growth and exploration. Prescriptive and set projects can have value in the first year, but the resulting artworks should not fill the exhibition. Allow sufficient time for candidates to develop their own ideas. One route could be to engage in direct instructional teaching in the first year but encourage more independence in the second year.

Encourage candidates to consider and explore art from different periods and areas. Many candidates seem **to be familiar only with recent 'protest' art**: artworks from a variety of periods, styles, cultures and approaches were apparently ignored by many candidates and/or their teachers.

Provide workshops to provide candidates with the experience of working with a variety of media/techniques. Work from observation can improve candidates understanding of their work and the work of others.

For criterion A, explain to candidates that repetition and using similar images does not constitute coherence. Candidates can explore sub themes and different topics or ensure that the works produced **explore a range of ideas. For coherence, remember to also consider "selection and application of media, processes and techniques" and the use of imagery.**

Technical competence comes from continued practice. It is not a **good idea to include a 'one-off' artwork** or first-time experience with a technique as a resolved exhibition piece. Focusing on in-depth development of a few skills may lead to stronger final artworks than dabbling in a variety of media/techniques.



If the candidate wishes to explore digital photography, they need to understand the potential of the medium. Submitting ten simplistic/basic photographs will not provide evidence of this understanding. **Candidates should be encouraged to do more than just ‘point and click’.**

For conceptual qualities, avoid predictable, obvious or clichéd ideas and images. Teachers should ensure that candidates know that effective conceptual qualities require visual elaboration of ideas or concepts, **and “the subtle use of complex imagery”.**

It is crucial that candidates and teachers realize that the focus on concept in the rationale must translate into effective evidence and communication of stated intentions in the actual artwork. Eloquent rationales will not make weak work any stronger.

For the curatorial rationale, ensure that candidates address all strands of the rationale as appropriate to **the level (SL or HL), not just the candidate’s intentions and the selection process. Do not include any photographs in the curatorial rationale.** It is also very important to provide teacher feedback after reading the first draft, this is clearly indicated in the VA guide.

Visits to galleries and exhibitions can give candidates better understanding of curatorial practice (and writing) for their own exhibition.

Do not show people and/or the candidate posing in front of the exhibition photographs: the exhibition photographs must show clear and uninterrupted views of the exhibition. The purpose of these photographs is to show the scale **and arrangement of the artworks in the candidate’s exhibition giving the moderator the opportunity to get an idea of the whole display.**

Make sure that only the artworks that the candidate has included in their exhibition submission are included in the exhibition photographs and that no other artworks are visible in these images because this could cause confusion.

Ensure that all images and videos submitted are in focus and correctly oriented. Artworks, especially photographic work, should not be photographed behind glass where possible.

Encourage candidates to independently manage their own e-portfolio in order to become familiar with the process of digitally documenting their own artworks as early as possible. In this way they will acquire important skills and gain full ownership of the digital reproductions of their own artworks. It is the **teacher’s role to encourage candidates to review the digital documentation of their artwork and to advise them about the best ways to obtain an accurate and true representation of their work.**

### Academic Integrity

It is the role of the teacher to ensure that all candidates understand the basic meaning and significance of concepts that relate to academic integrity. Teachers must ensure that candidates acknowledge all sources used and reference them effectively and appropriately. In the work submitted there must always be a clear **distinction between what constitutes the candidate’s work and what are the ideas or the work of others.** The exhibition text and the curatorial rationale is where candidate must reference their sources and mention appropriations.

To understand the IB expectations in terms of academic integrity and referencing, teachers and candidates must refer to the Visual arts guide and to the IB publications on the Programme Resource Centre (PRC), in particular Effective citing and referencing and Academic integrity.

## Higher and standard level comparative Study

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

#### Higher level

Many candidates demonstrated the ability to answer this task appropriately and well. Frequently responses were thoroughly researched and showed focused use of evidence to analyse, compare and **make insightful links with the candidate's own art making. In the best responses the selection of art works** was clearly the result of informed teacher guidance and class work which had prepared the candidates to conduct meaningful comparative studies. These studies often developed an international perspective, made creative links across cultures and time periods and considered art works from a range of perspectives.

The cultural significance of the artworks is the subject of the comparative study, not the life and times of the artists. In this respect successful candidates linked their contextual research to specific artworks. This included consideration of the cultural, socio-political and historical significance of the pieces, their original audience and purpose as well as how they might be read by a contemporary audience.

Many candidates described art works rather than analysed them. Citing a fact, or paraphrasing content from a source is not analysis and this limited approach is the reason why many candidates did not achieve beyond the mid mark level.

There was a trend in some studies towards long prose passages. High word counts often resulted in repetitive text with little analysis. This was often combined with small font affecting legibility (please note that 12pt is the minimum font size permitted). In contrast, the best candidates presented ideas through both visual and written work: using focused annotation and short, well considered, paragraphs.

It is important to select artworks that will lead to meaningful comparisons. Poorly considered selections often lead to candidates struggling to make significant comments, resulting in simplistic bullet point lists, or scant Venn diagrams. Some candidates selected art works with a thematic link and this was in most cases a successful way to ensure thoughtful connections.

The ability to use evidence to support the interpretation and evaluation of art works is a feature of good responses. Evidence comes from accurate observation of the selected art works and from relevant contextual research. The better candidates demonstrated the ability to evaluate sources and to make an appropriate selection of knowledge to support their interpretations.

The guide asks for an introduction, and the best candidates use this to present the nature of their comparison and connections that they will be developing between the selected artworks.

HL candidates are required to present five screens where they analyse and evaluate the outcomes of their investigation: the best candidates understood that the task is to show how the comparative study and the ideas and/or techniques of studied artworks had influenced their creative work. Often connections to the **student's own artmaking** were superficial and appeared to have been written as an afterthought. Sometimes these were presented just as a simplistic comparison of similarities and differences.

#### Standard level

It was positive to see that more SL candidates correctly responded to the course requirements and did not include connections with their artwork in their comparative studies. However, some candidates chose all

three artists from same cultural context, whereas according to the assessment criteria the selected pieces should be from at least two cultural origins.

Many standard level candidates successfully engaged with research, analysis and comparison of the selected artworks presenting studies which were well planned, balanced and focused.

Some studies benefitted from including a clear introduction and some used a theme to select and link the studied artworks.

Candidates who understood the task well ensured that the content of their submission was analytical and based on well informed research, but other studies showed only little research or research from unreliable sources. The analysis of the selected artworks sometimes relied too heavily on general knowledge or personal opinion. What became apparent in this session, is that many selected artworks were by Instagram **“unknown and amateur artist”, with the consequence that** many comparative studies could not be 'consistently insightful and informed' and tended up being based entirely on personal opinion and conjecture, with no research conducted.

There were many studies where candidates presented just charts or content in bullet points and this approach often ended up limiting the depth of comparisons. Repetition of information was a frequent issue. The use of subject specific language is another aspect which seemed neglected in some of the submissions: the use of terminology was too often still very limited.

Many candidates submitted generalized biography in response to Criterion C, and sometimes for Criteria B & D, rather than focusing on the selected works. This remains the most common weakness; it has been flagged up several times, but it still persists.

Describing the subject of an artwork is not analyzing it: some candidates wrote detailed descriptions of **image content, or presented general information about the artists' lives, but this didn't access the higher** marks because it failed to analyze function, meaning, purpose or formal qualities of the artworks as required by the assessment criteria.

Whilst most candidates choose to compare 2D works, some choose to compare 3D work, sculptures or installations. Many of these candidates clearly had no experience of analyzing 3D works, and it seemed sometimes that they were describing/analyzing the photographic reproductions of the artworks rather than the works themselves.

For what concern the way candidates presented their work, most of the studies were visually appropriate and some studies showed creative presentations, but in other cases the studies appeared to be not even fully legible due to font size (less than 12 points); sometimes the background was very vibrant and colourful, with candidates missing to consider that the legibility of their study is a priority. The first screen of some comparative studies was filled just with illustrations and a title while a cover screen is not a requirement.

Appropriate referencing remains a problem, with still too many candidates not clearly indicating which ideas or words were their own and which were taken from sources they had researched. It was pleasing to see that more candidates are now using in-text citations, but sloppy referencing was quite frequent, and some cases of suspected misconduct were raised for further investigation.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

The best candidates develop their comparative studies by integrating formal analysis of the selected art works with contextual research to meet the assessment criteria throughout the study. Some structure their

studies by using the criteria headings, this is only effective if the student has a proper understanding of each; often it reveals that the nature of each criterion has not been properly explained by the teacher.

### Criterion A: identification and analysis of formal qualities

Overall, there was some improvement in this area with nearly all candidates able to identify at least a few formal qualities. In most studies there were some elements of analysis, sufficient to just achieve the 3-4 level descriptor.

The quality of responses for this criterion varied considerably, with some candidates providing sophisticated and insightful analysis of the formal qualities of the selected works, with excellent use of subject-specific terminology, whilst others did not understand what is meant by analysis of formal qualities. Candidates sometimes combine biographical information and descriptions of subject matter in a confused analysis of imagery that does not include the identification of formal qualities. Many studies describe formal qualities without clearly analyzing them.

The criterion requires the **'identification' and 'analysis'** of formal qualities. This requires the application of subject specific knowledge and vocabulary, rather than the simple description of artworks which predominated in weaker submissions. A framework of formal terms helped many candidates, however, when poorly understood, formulaic prompts can be meaningless, particularly when those devised for painting **are applied to other art forms. The rote application of the 'rule of thirds' is a common example of this.** Rather, candidates should make use of the rich technical vocabulary specific to each of the different art forms to identify and analyze the formal characteristics of their selected artworks.

Some candidates struggled with the formal qualities of conceptual works. Yet, conceptual art can be meaningfully analyzed through the identification of aspects of space, form and time etc. Weaker candidates provide generalized technical information, such as the characteristics of oil paint, without explaining their significance to their selected artworks.

It was pleasing to see candidates being able to conduct formal analysis through visual means, for example enhancing formal analysis through the juxtaposition of images, the highlighting of details or by deconstructing the composition of the artworks: the *Visual arts guide* states that **"students should articulate their understanding through both visual and written forms, depending on the most appropriate means of presenting and communicating their findings"**.

### Criterion B: analysis and understanding of function and purpose

The best studies were thoroughly researched resulting in a meaningful evaluation of function and purpose. Whereas the weakest relied on personal opinion and conjecture.

Candidates often interpret the artworks without supporting their understanding of function and purpose with evidence. This evidence can be gained from the formal analysis of the artwork and from other sources and wider research into the cultural significance of the artworks.

Many candidates presented information downloaded from sources, without independent critical analysis and some included numerous quotations with no attempt to explain their significance.

The majority of candidates address this criterion by focusing on symbolic meaning of elements within the **image, for example, Picasso's *Guernica* or Kahlo's self-portraits** without then considering the primary function and purpose of the work of art (religious, socio-political, commercial, personal exploration, provocation, etc.).

**Both criteria C and B require reference to ‘cultural context’ and candidates often forget this aspect when considering the function of an art work.** Candidates particularly struggled with this requirement if they had chosen an unknown contemporary artwork leading them to make superficial comments based on personal opinion.

### Criterion C: analysis and evaluation of cultural significance

This appears to be the most challenging criterion and this task seems still widely misunderstood, with candidates often submitting generalised research into the artists whose work they are analysing. The subject of the comparative study is the cultural significance of the selected artworks, not the life and times of the artists. Only the best candidates were able to use their research to convincingly contextualize the selected artworks and to develop a deeper understanding as to cultural meaning and significance.

Including contextual facts without explanation and justification does not meet this criterion. It is important to understand what an evaluation of cultural significance is. Cultural significance will probably include an art historical context, as well as the cultural, socio-political and historical significance of the works. It should consider the original audience and purpose, as well as the significance of the artwork to a contemporary audience and perhaps its influence on the development of other artworks. There are instances when **aspects of the artist’s life are significant to the production of the artwork, hence biographical events can be relevant to some selected artworks, but this does have to be made evident through explicit connections in the text.** The same applies to art historical and social background, where the significance of the research should always be linked by the candidate to the selected artwork. In this respect the Mc Fee contextual framework is seldom well understood, with candidates often placing irrelevant events into the grid. Projection of contemporary ideas (“challenging gender stereotypes” for example) on the art of past centuries was quite common, and these interpretations were often formulaic and cliched.

### Criterion D: making comparisons and connections

Most candidates understood that the comparison is **the essence of the study. ‘Compare and contrast’ is defined in the command term glossary as to “Give an account of similarities and differences between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (or all) of them throughout”.** The best candidates used the comparison screens to develop a discussion. Often candidates gave an overview of the comparison in their introduction and developed this throughout the study. Comparisons were most effective when the artworks selected made for meaningful contrasts; for example, a similar subject from different times and cultures.

Less successful responses, both in English and in Spanish, simply listed information from earlier pages with **no consideration of its significance. Some candidates’ analysis focused on the artists rather on than the chosen artworks.**

The simple juxtaposition of information from previous screens does not the requirements of this criterion. There was less reliance on the use of Venn diagrams than in previous sessions. It might be worth noting that while graphic tables and Venn diagrams can provide a useful summary of similarities and differences, they do not enable an evaluative comparison. Grids are only effective when the written content develops discussion and critical reflection. The inclusion of a Venn diagram is not a requirement.

### Criterion E: presentation and subject-specific language

Presentation was clear in most of the studies, and creative layouts enhancing the analysis and comparison of artworks were seen in the best submissions, with some excellent screens presenting contents effectively. There is, however, a trend towards long prose passages, sometimes repetitive in content and

often in small font, which hinders presentation. Distorted reproductions and coloured text against non-contrasting backgrounds are also still recurrent issues.

Many successful studies provided good quality reproductions of the artworks selected and sometimes included contextual imagery, such as useful reproductions of works of art related to the pieces under consideration. The use of sketches made by the candidate as well as the use of annotations of images offered in some studies a very balanced use of visual and written analysis, but the appropriate use of subject specific language was what most often made the difference in the achievement of candidates against this criterion.

It was pleasing to see far less studies at HL using existing keynote templates, but some submissions still showed an overuse of arrows and confused graphics: these were sometimes meaninglessly applied to the images of artworks analyzed.

The accurate use of subject-specific language is the key to developing critical understanding. It was pleasing to see that many responses used terminology very effectively. Others were limited in their range of subject specific language, relying instead on description of a general nature. In particular, there was a lack of subject terminology when analyzing installations, sculpture and photography. Similarly process specific terms are rarely detailed, especially for printmaking, which is often poorly understood. Sometimes **basic mistakes were evident, such as identifying a painting as a “photo,” or a drawing or woodcut print as a “painting” etc.**

Weaker candidates do not **accurately deploy terms such as ‘tone’ (they describe ‘brightness’ rather than ‘dark’ or ‘light’), ‘texture’ (they are unclear about whether they are describing the texture of the actual objects being depicted or the surface texture of the work itself) saturation/intensity of colours (again they write of bright colours or colours that ‘pop’) and so on. There is poor understanding of a host of terms such as: focal point value, tone, hue saturation, intensity opacity, texture, rule of thirds.**

#### Criterion F: making connections to own art-making practice (HL only)

**The best responses made insightful links between the studied artworks and the candidate’s own creative work, whether conceptual, stylistic or technical and sometimes a combination of all three. These candidates outlined the outcomes of their investigation clearly and it was evident that the selection of artworks was appropriate to the candidates’ work in the other components.**

Some candidates still misunderstand this criterion. The task is not to compare their own art making with **the selected artworks, it is to consider how the comparative study has influenced the candidate’s own development** by identifying connections between one or more of the selected works. The most successful responses were able to reflect on the developmental aspect of these connections. However, others fill these final screens with descriptions of process and idea development that are unconnected to the selected art works. Sometimes there were clear visual links between art works, but the candidate failed to make these explicit in their text as required by the guide; for example, by using annotation to show that they had understood the nature of the relationships.

Common mistakes amongst higher-level candidates are that they:

- do not consider the outcome of the investigation as an opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt from the investigation or as a way to make links with their art making.
- describe their own art work without making connections with the selected artworks.
- describe the practical process of their art making, rather than consider how the creative process connects to the artworks studied.

- do not situate artists in the context of their own artistic development.
- struggle to find any association with their own art making and hence make superficial comments
- are unable to translate conceptual aspects into their practice as artists because their understanding of function and meaning is weak.
- list similarities and differences in a simplistic manner.
- introduce new works not considered in the comparative study.

### Academic Integrity

Many candidates are using effective academic referencing both in their *List of Sources* and at the point of use. However, too many candidates still fail to include all references and do not cite sources at the point of use as required by the *Visual arts guide* and as outlined in the IB document *Effective citing and referencing*. The number of suspected cases of malpractice that had to be investigated for comparative studies was higher this session.

Some candidates still believe that if they have included a source in the 'List of Sources' document then they can use content without citing its provenance at the point of use: this is not the case. It is not acceptable to lift short phrases or paraphrase from references without citing the source of ideas and knowledge. Too many candidates still do not acknowledge that they are including words copied verbatim and are not using quotation marks when required. Citation of sources for all supporting images, such as contextualizing photographs is also a requirement. . Failure to acknowledge a source will be treated as potential academic misconduct.

### Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

All work submitted for assessment must be authenticated by a teacher and must not include any academic misconduct. It is evident from the amount of plagiarism, sloppy or incomplete referencing reported by examiners that many teachers do not check **candidates' work** before submitting the e-Coursework authentication statement. Candidates must reference all of the sources from which they have accessed words, ideas and images which are not their own original.

Teachers should:

- ensure that their students are fully aware of the formal requirements of the task and of the assessment criteria before they start their comparative study;
- discuss with each candidate their choice of selected artworks in order to ensure that it will lead to a meaningful comparison;
- explain the command terms (final page of the Visual arts guide), especially the difference between description and analysis, but also the meaning of: compare and contrast, discuss, evaluate and identify;
- explain how to conduct effective research and how to use this as evidence to support an evaluation of an artwork;
- demonstrate how the cultural significance of historical/social/religious events impact both the form and content of art works;
- introduce subject specific language. This should include terminology appropriate to the media of the selected works ie photography, sculpture, textiles, installation etc.;
- read and give advice to candidates on one draft of the comparative study - **it is the teacher's** role to provide oral or written advice, but the teacher must not edit the draft

- demonstrate presentation skills, such as good layout and an awareness of image quality and legible text size;
- check that no personal details about the candidate and the school are included in the e-Coursework submissions;
- check that SL candidates do not submit their own artistic practice.

Candidates should be reminded that:

- all sources must be cited at point of use;
- they are comparing artworks, rather than comparing artists. The students should practice critical comparison on all three levels: formal qualities, function and purpose, cultural significance.
- They should write an introduction.

Candidates should be cautioned against:

- choosing relatively unknown artists from the internet, where little or no information about the work is available;
- excessive use of paraphrasing and quotation – **the majority of text should be the candidate's own words**. Candidates should respond to and explain the significance of quotations;
- the differences and connections between analyzing and understanding the function and purpose of artworks (criterion B) and the analysis and evaluation of their cultural significance (criterion C);
- comparing and connecting (criteria D) only with bullet lists in tables or Venn diagrams, since this hinders critical analysis and discussion.
- including too many repetitions in their studies and teachers should encourage candidates to give an account that refers to both or all of the selected works throughout.

Candidates should not:

- use existing keynote templates;
- include biographical and historical information that does not relate to the cultural context for the selected artworks;
- waste a screen with a cover sheet at the front of the study;
- include a bibliography at the end.

HL candidates should provide an evaluation of outcomes on their additional screens. They should explain how the selected artworks have influenced their own art making rather than compare and contrast with their artworks. These links must be explicit in the text.



## Higher and standard level process portfolio

### The range and suitability of the work submitted

In general, the range of work submitted remains broad and similar to previous examination sessions.

#### Higher level

In May 2020 there were still submissions which attracted the penalty in criterion A for failing to meet the minimum requirements about art-making forms. Increasingly, this is less the case of the candidate having not experienced the minimum required range of forms and media throughout the course, but more typically the issue is now that **the portfolio doesn't include enough evidence** about one or more art forms to allow the examiner to assess experimentation and manipulation across the minimum required number of media and forms. Please see more feedback about this issue in the section about performance against each criterion - criterion A.

The stronger submissions are highly considered and organized arrangements of visual and written **evidence which unpack candidates' art-making process and practices** in a coherent manner, rather than an assemblage of reproduced pages from the visual arts journal with few connections from one screen to the next.

**Stronger portfolios tend to focus on fewer works from the candidate's oeuvre (around four to five works most often)** and are thereby able to show more of the ideation, experimentation, processes, refinements and reflections in detail and with thoroughness. Critical investigations are sometimes used as an **opportunity to explore another's technical or conceptual practice and add greater refinement to technique or sophistication to representation within the candidate's own art-making practice**, rather than an exercise in mimicry.

It is noteworthy that some of the portfolios achieving at higher levels were at times direct scans from the journal with very little digital post production. There were also several excellent examples of submissions in which students assembled and laid out their portfolios digitally. In both cases there was always a great amount of evidence of informed application of knowledge gained throughout the investigation and of work done and collected during the creative process and stored by the candidate in a personal journal.

At the highest levels of achievement, candidates are well-versed in their awareness of both the assessment criteria and the course requirements and they present in their portfolios a clear, well-documented and coherent range of evidence that supports their art-making practices across at least the minimum number of forms.

Often **mid-range submissions tended to attempt to cover too many of the candidates' artmaking undertakings** shallowly rather than focusing on the works that met the minimum number of forms in greater depth. This strategy often results in candidates failing to address all the assessment criteria with the same attention. This was most noticeable for criterion B, where candidates struggled to provide evidence of critical investigation into the works of other artists that relate in meaningful and significant ways to their own art-making practices. Also, portfolios which presented too many of the **candidate's art-making projects** often ended up only partly addressing the assessment criteria C and/or D, thus achieving only mid-range total marks.

In other cases, mid-range submissions were the result of the candidates not fulfilling all strands of the mark level descriptors for each criterion. When a criterion considers two or more aspects of the **candidate's**

artwork, addressing both partially or addressing one aspect only does obviously limit the overall achievement.

The weaker submissions appear to show that some candidates are leaving the creation of the Process Portfolio very late. A worryingly large number of candidates fail to document the processes effectively and consistently as they are undertaken. Some Process Portfolios felt more like an afterthought that they completed in a rush within the last month before the deadline to submit it. Excessive use of written expression was observed; describing what had been done but without documenting analytical development of processes and without visual support to justify what was described in writing. Many times, the evidence is dispersed in lengthy personal depictions that offer narrow insight about the artistic investigation that has occurred during the two years of the course.

The least successful portfolios included mostly constructed, text-based descriptive narratives of the making of some finished pieces instead of actual evidence of experimentations, research and development of ideas to inform refinement and realization of intentions in their art practice.

### Standard level

In general, the range of work submitted remains broad and similar to previous examination sessions, with a slight improvement in the overall performance of candidates from May 2019.

Some **improvement in this session's candidates'** performance was evident through a better understanding of the assessment task, with especially portfolios in English presenting more evidence directly addressing specific elements of the low to middle levels assessment criteria. Candidates achieving low to middle range marks generally presented in their portfolios less projects, each with more visual evidence. It was more common this session to see several images of works in progress, as opposed to only images of resolved work. This type of evidence does not fully address the assessment task, but did offer examiners more and better assessable evidence.

A large overview of the cohort reflects at the lower and lower-mid levels a predominance of three artmaking forms. Students worked mostly in drawing and painting with photography utilized to address the second column of the art making forms. This was followed in the mid-level portfolios by clay and linocut. There was a consistent approach to the presentation of these art making forms that demonstrated a partial understanding of the task and assessment criteria.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Criterion A: skills, techniques and processes

Schools that taught both digital and traditional art and constantly endeavoured to keep up with contemporary art practice through books and field trips were often more successful. Class activities were often important starting points for these candidates and an important source for gathering information. Field trips, artists in residence, gallery visits, on-site drawing, photography expeditions and research projects played a significant role in these candidates and often initiated informed process portfolios. Candidates that genuinely explored a variety of materials and techniques, before settling on the most appropriate form to realise their intentions and were then able to focus on it, to attain greater technical accomplishment, were most successful. Some outstanding digital work was presented.

In otherwise strong process portfolio submissions, some candidates continue to fail to meet the minimum requirement of media and forms. In ensuring that the process portfolio addresses a sufficient range of artforms and media, it is important that teachers and candidates are familiar with the most recent version

of the forms and media table published in the Visual arts guide (2017). It is critical to realise that the forms are denoted by the bold text (thus oil painting and **acrylic painting come under the same form “painting”**). Higher level candidates must work across at least two of the columns in three different artforms, and standard level candidates must work across at least two of the columns in two different artforms. For examiners to recognise that candidates have explored a sufficient range of forms, candidates need to show evidence of exploration and experimentation; and informed application of formal and expressive qualities, as well as sensitive selection of media adequate to intention. Not just outcomes.

In general, it might be worth highlighting what are the most recurrent shortcomings in weaker submissions. Firstly, uneven documentation of processes: a significant number of candidates submitted portfolios that did not properly document their engagement with processes and techniques. This negatively affected candidates' achievement against criterion A in that examiners were prevented from awarding marks from the higher levels because there was insufficient evidence to determine a purposeful engagement with the task. Candidates should be diligent in recording and making visible all stages of making, even if they may seem insignificant, as these processual steps are the key to the assessment of the process portfolio.

To achieve higher marks the documentation needs to be consistent across the portfolio: in three-dimensional forms and in lens-based, electronic and screen-based forms the visual evidence submitted was often lacking in comparison to the evidence about work in 2D forms.

For three-dimensional forms, examiners cannot reward candidates just on the basis of some investigation into a few sculptors and a few drawings of a proposed sculpture. While sketches are useful in planning, evidence of maquettes, experimentation with different materials and finishes and some form of photographic log of progress and an outcome accompanied by critical reflections are means by which a sculptural practice can be successfully documented.

Similarly, the documentation of lens-based forms still remains too often underdeveloped. Examiners expect to see evidence of 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 studio or improvised lighting set-ups. There was an increase in the presentation of lens-based work done with mobile devices and fit-to-order filters: these projects presented little assessable content as they engaged with neither lens-based or digital post production processes.

However, there was significant improvement, particularly with students utilizing screen-based art as their primary making tool. These portfolios emphasized the appropriate documentation of process through the use of screenshots, close up on tools, stages of development. The possibility of generating process portfolio screens electronically gives candidates working in electronic or screen-based forms greater access to accomplish this. It is worth noting that for the most part those students had access to and were utilizing professional software.

The second most frequent shortcoming in weaker portfolios was that candidates failed to demonstrate that the media or form they had chosen was appropriate to their stated intentions: to show this, it is critical to document that they have considered a range of forms and media and evaluated the properties of each in terms of how these will allow their artistic intentions to be realised. Thorough documentation of experimenting with media, reflection on the outcomes and the evaluation of the suitability of the materials for the work to be undertaken is required here.

It is important to remember that from May 2017, the *Visual Arts Guide* does not restrict candidates from submitting images of resolved work that are also included in the exhibition submission. Candidates are

required to identify such works with a suitable citation such as “this is the final version of my work as included in the exhibition” or similar. However, it is important to emphasize, that while images of resolved work are not prohibited, they should not be used in lieu of the documentation of process. The inclusion of resolved work can be useful for purposes of reflection, but those images and descriptive text cannot replace evidence of process.

It must be remembered that the process portfolio must focus on the process. As such, examiners are less concerned with the final product that may or may not be included in the exhibition and are primarily **concerned with the processes undertaken in a candidate’s art-making practice**. An examiner needs to be able to uncover from the visual evidence in the process portfolio the intentions or the ideas that a candidate has explored through their art-making. They want to understand the reasoning behind the **candidate’s choices** of forms, of media and of techniques, as well as why certain imagery was chosen and arranged, what alternatives were considered.

As good practice, candidates should label images of their own work included in the portfolio to provide technical details including materials/media used and the dimensions of the work. This will ensure that there is no confusion about which form and medium a candidate has used.

At Standard Level, there still remains a big gap in the understanding of the experimental nature of a process portfolio and the ways in which this can be evidenced. The weaker portfolios simply do not evidence experimentation as a component of learning in the visual arts, while the stronger candidates present an approach that favours materiality and a search for how materials can communicate intended meaning.

**This session’s cohort demonstrated a greater strength in the presentation of progress of works** through images of works in various stages of completion. While this does not fully meet the assessment criteria, it does provide examiners with much needed evidence of the development of skills and techniques and the manipulation of media. The stronger candidates often worked with a thematic starting point, providing them with a freedom with parameters to experiment and push themselves in the development and manipulation of skills and techniques and also in more intentional material choices. Another strength in these portfolios was the at times unconventional selection of media. Working with non-traditional materials naturally forced students to experiment and this led to better documentation in the portfolios.

Across the SL cohort there was a predominance of a few art making forms. Students worked mostly in drawing and painting with photography utilized to address the second column of the art making forms. This was followed in the mid-level portfolios by clay and linocut. There was a consistent approach to the presentation of these art making forms that demonstrated a partial understanding of the task and assessment criteria.

Drawing and painting: The understanding of these art forms was presented through colour wheels, colour palettes, brushwork techniques, shading exercises, iterative drawings of human features. While these are useful learning exercises, they do not demonstrate candidate intentionality.

Photography: Mostly using mobile devices, single photographs were presented several times using different telephone filters. While minimally meeting the form requirement, this does not demonstrate an understanding of the art making form.

Linocut prints: This two-dimensional art form is inherently iterative and as a result candidates working with printmaking often received higher marks when they presented and reflected on trials, made adjustments and printed several iterations.

Candidates understand that part of the task is the progression in the development of skills and demonstrate this mostly through the documentation of steps in the development of the final outcome. This (limited) understanding of the task has resulted in better performing SL candidates, but lacking evidence of experimentation, most portfolios still do not reach the higher mark levels.

### Criterion B: critical investigation

Examiners cited critical investigation as one of the most difficult areas for candidates in the May 2020 session. A significant number of submissions presented little or no critical research, but presented an abundance of basic biographical data extracted from Wikipedia, Artsy or The Art Story, and in many instances failing to document investigation based on critical appreciation and evaluation of the work of others which inevitably results in descriptive and superficial evaluations that lack coherence and understanding.

What constitutes critical investigation in the process portfolio is undefined and consequently very broad, but this allows for a range of approaches where critical investigation of the work of other artists can be **integrated into the candidates' studio practices authentically**.

For candidates to achieve higher results against criterion B, it is critical that the works that are explored **are relevant to the candidates' art-making**. This can be in terms of the medium, the style or the technique with which the medium is applied, the concepts or subject matter explored through the work. It would seem redundant to state that a critical investigation should be critical, rather than biographical or historical, but often in weaker submission **informed summaries of an artist's life are the only evidence of** any investigation undertaken by candidates into the work of other artists. The work of other artists, if included at all to address criterion B, appears too often to have limited or no connection whatsoever with the developing body of work the candidate is engaged in. Teacher-directed projects or tasks dominate the weaker submissions: these projects rarely progress beyond technical exercises and too often prevent candidates from demonstrating their own individual artistic intentions, their independent thinking processes and their personal art-making practice.

Candidates at the middle and higher mark levels demonstrated an increased understanding of the relationship between artworks studied and own work and this has resulted in more meaningful selections of artwork for investigation and more emphasis on the connections with own art making.

Examiners expect that candidates apply some form of critical methodology to deconstruct the investigated artworks of others, analysing how the pieces have been created, interpreting how meaning was created and reflecting and demonstrating how these practices could inform their own practice.

It is important to note that the **means of deconstructing an artist's work can be experimental and practical** in nature, for example, examining closely the painting technique of Francis Bacon and experimenting with such techniques and reflecting upon them.

Increasingly, in this digital age, candidates are turning to artists who represent themselves and their art-making practices online, through social media or other web-based platforms. While using such artists and **their artworks to inform the candidate's own art-making** is perfectly valid and relevant, teachers should encourage candidates to balance such investigations with more well-known artists for whom a larger body of critical review is available.

Finally, even if the same artworks can be included as part of each of the three visual arts components submissions, candidates must understand that each task has different specific requirements and assessment criteria, which will have to be matched. Candidates must not try to address criterion B in the portfolio by reusing whole screens from their comparative study component or work from their extended

essay because they will not score high and this could also amount to duplication of assessment material which is a form of academic misconduct.

### Criterion C: communication of ideas and intention

During the May 2020 session examiners reported that this area still proves to be challenging for many candidates, as they often continue to fail to demonstrate evidence of how the work has been developed either conceptually, or in terms of material/technical practice.

Portfolios are varied in form and presentation with some well-designed screens and legible comments for the most part, but examiners often report that they are still seeing many portfolios consisting mostly of final works with limited documentation of the process. Mind maps and diagrams explaining intent were very helpful as a starting point but need to be expanded upon or revisited as the work develops. The weaker candidates needed to extend their ideas and critical thinking rather than relying on found images from the internet and pop culture.

To thoroughly address criterion C, candidates need to include evidence of the ideation stage of their art-making. That is, how they arrived at the ideas and intentions for their art-making projects, and document how these ideas are formed and developed. They need to show how in trying to realise their intentions, they have been deliberate and considered in their selection of imagery, forms, media and techniques in order to work towards resolving the artwork.

Many successful candidates explored contemporary ideas and issues that were pertinent to them, and thoughtfully considered how to convey these ideas and issues meaningfully with sensitivity and sophistication. However, excessive documentation of factual content on these ideas and issues does not **add value to a candidate's submission until the candidate** begins to address and document the development of strategies to represent these ideas and issues in their artmaking.

The weakest submissions seem to be a result of some schools continuing to present candidates with overly prescriptive projects with limited scope for them to come up with their own ideas and concepts to pursue. This is often denoted by candidates' **annotations such as "For my still-life project....". Where starting points, genres or themes are prescriptive, with overly didactic instruction, candidates' achievement in this criterion can be limited.** While teacher-led projects might be an appropriate at the beginning of the two years course, not supporting candidates in developing their individual artistic practice means that they will not have enough evidence to include in their submission.

Often, candidates seem to start documentation once the processes towards realising the artwork as a physical object has commenced. In weaker works, there continues to be an over reliance on found images from the internet and pop culture being reworked in order to communicate the same or similar ideas. This resulted in superficial idea development and basic use of imagery and symbolism.

Evidence of ideation is critical for success in Criterion C. Evidence of initial brainstorming using any form of strategy such as concept webs, mind mapping or lists can be useful for examiners to see and understand the starting points for work covered in the process portfolio, but candidates should not assume that a mind-map is all they need to satisfy the criteria. Examiners expect to see ideas and intentions develop as well. Candidates may need to revisit earlier brainstorming as their ideas develop and change. Where candidates are given sufficient scope to approach their art-making with some creative autonomy, evidence of ideation and inception should be able to be reproduced from the visual art journal where this has been used in an authentic and sustained manner through the art-making process.

Ideation only addresses part of the Criterion C. The criterion also considers how candidates communicate their ideas through their artmaking assimilating their concepts with media and technique. Presenting evidence of an awareness of how a work might be perceived by an audience through the employment of various imagery and use of symbols and the deliberate application of media to communicate ideas is equally important. Candidates are encouraged to employ a range of creative strategies to push and extend ideas further and document these interventions in their process portfolio submissions.

The assessment of the process portfolio relies on the presentation of visual evidence. No amount of written description or explanation can take the place of evidenced process. Mind maps, studies, sketches, thumbnails, material experiments, technical trials, developmental stages, discarded works, revised works, annotated images, annotated studies; these form the heart of an evidenced artistic process. In order to properly present them in the process portfolio, candidates need to consciously document the stages of their work as they are engaged in it. It is nearly impossible to produce a text-based descriptive narrative and do well in this component.

### Criterion D: reviewing, refining and reflecting

In the strongest May 2020 submissions, there was a clear relationship between the clarity of the reflection upon the artistic process and the way that they reviewed and refined what they were producing, resulting in greater conceptual clarity as well as a stronger resolution at a technical, formal and/or compositional level. Candidates identified challenges and issues in their artmaking and articulated their reasons for the range of artistic interventions taken to address these. Candidates that received regular feedback and provided commentary on their process and product in the form of peer critiques and teacher feedback were most successful. The reflective process utilised throughout the process, allowed students to be able to continually modify, adapt, and reflect.

In the weaker submissions, there is little evidence of an ongoing process of reviewing, refining and reflecting. Their artmaking practice is made up of small, disconnected projects that only offer some review upon completion. Among these, it was observed that the reflections, in many cases, are limited to a **subjective appreciation along the lines of: "I like", "I did not like", "made me happy", "it was fun", "I'm very proud of"**, not digging more deeply into the artistic development.

Criterion D requires candidates to present evidence of an artmaking process that includes reviewing, refining or improving of their artwork, and also reflection or evaluation of the development and outcomes.

Examiners need to see a visual documentation of the manipulation and experimentation with the chosen media, as well as the evidence of any artistic interventions that have been made through the process to improve and refine the work. They expect students to engage with the work of other artists in meaningful ways that they allow to inform their own art-making and realistic evaluations and reflections upon their art-making practice that considers how they are developing as artists and what they have learned through the process. This is best accomplished through sustained use of the visual arts journal.

The second part of the level descriptor continues to be the weakest area of the criterion where a significant number of candidates fail to consider and reflect upon their development as an artist. In weak submissions, candidates are unrealistic in their evaluations, justifying poor work with elaborate intentions, or otherwise are very superficial. In stronger submissions candidates are often able to identify qualities they have learned about themselves, even when they consider a work unsuccessful.

When students reflect on their processes at various stages, it is important that they realise that their purpose is not to convince the examiner that an interesting failure is a brilliant piece of work. Rather,

examiners are interested in seeing how well candidates are able to discern successful experimentation from less successful experiments, and then identify new ways to move forward with their work.

In more direct artmaking processes, self-critique at different stages is useful, with candidates evaluating and documenting progress to date and identifying areas for improvement and potential strategies to make such improvements. These reflections, however, tended to be more on the concepts explored through the work and less on the material outcomes and how these relate to intentions. Reflections were often conclusive and did not open up to next steps in a process or to new projects.

As in criterion C, teacher-led projects did not allow for the natural revision of ideas and refinement of techniques that comes out of independent artistic research, investigation and artistic interventions throughout an art-making process. Teachers must note that overly didactic instruction can severely limit candidate achievement.

### Criterion E: presentation and subject-specific language

The process portfolio is about curation and selection as much as the exhibition is. In the exhibition component the curatorial task is assessed by one criterion but informs the marking of all other criteria, and the same can be said for criterion E in the portfolio. Here the candidate is not curator, but designer and it is the task of candidates to select and arrange information in a way that best addresses the assessment criteria. This sometimes means not showing everything or too much, and other times it means showing sufficient evidence.

**The process portfolio is about presenting the candidate's path that they travelled over the course, and not concocting a post-production false narrative.** The visual arts journal is the best resource that candidates have towards curating their process portfolio. When used in a sustained and ongoing manner throughout the course, a candidate should have an abundance of visual evidence to draw upon for their Process Portfolio. Pages from the visual arts journal are not often used to the advantage of showing art-making practices, but merely as illustrations or sometimes the pages are rewritten on the screen without evidence of manipulation and experimentation with materials. When reproducing pages from the visual arts journal for inclusion in the Process Portfolio, they need to ensure that handwriting is clear and is reproduced at a scale that is comparable to 12 points in a digital format. The number of visual arts journal pages should not exceed a single or double-page spread. Students are permitted to use extracts from multiple pages, rather than including the whole page. Often the pages that best addressed the assessment criteria were those pages that were genuinely documenting exploration and did not purposefully attempt to match one of the assessment criteria.

Stronger submissions are coherent from the first screen to the last: candidates carefully select the content of the screens and the order in which they are presented to provide a cohesive exposition of their art-making practice.

Good screens are often dense without being overcrowded. Screens are correctly oriented, and text direction is mostly consistent. Where samples rely on reproductions from visual arts journals, the reproductions are sharp and legible. The stronger digitally produced samples often included a large **quantity of evidence of the candidate's work taken** from their hand-written visual journal, sometimes using extracts that were pertinent to what the candidate was trying to communicate instead of reproducing whole journal pages.

**The process portfolio, with the use of the "screen" nomenclature compels candidates to be cognizant of the notion that their final outcome will be viewed electronically on screen.** This is not a prescription for



candidates to generate each screen electronically. Excellent process portfolios had been assembled consisting almost entirely from reproduced handwritten pages from the visual arts journal.

**In weaker samples, the candidate's artmaking practice has often** been considered as an afterthought. Writing was often illegible in poor samples, through poor handwriting, or poorly selected fonts entered over excessively busy backgrounds, or poor contrast between text and page. No consideration was made for the examiner, with pages shifting in orientation. Where examples were drawn from a visual arts journal, these were sometimes included as illustrations or thumbnails, preventing close inspection. On occasion, submissions were uploaded in such a low resolution that pages were illegible. Please encourage students to review their submissions, particularly after compressing the size of a file to ensure the quality is not compromised.

The IB does not prescribe a format for the process portfolio, but candidates should be encouraged to develop screens that can be easily read when viewed on a standard laptop screen without zooming in and out. Some examples of submissions used formats that, in an attempt to squeeze more content into each screen, were difficult to read and to assess.

It must be noted that the entire document **informs the examiner's judgement and** it is not critical that all, or even most, criteria are addressed on each screen.

Proper use of subject specific vocabulary was still an issue this session. In some weak portfolios candidates would sprinkle the text with keywords without evidence of having understood or properly applied them. Often the only evidence of subject specific vocabulary was in the completion of teacher directed tasks such as colour wheels, tonal values, or compositional studies. The independent use of selected subject specific language was a feature of more successful portfolios.

### Academic integrity

While examiners noted an improvement in the standard of referencing and reference lists, acknowledging sources appropriately continues to be an issue and a significant number of candidates presented work that required reporting for potential breaches.

Non-referenced images continue to be abundant and some only serve the purpose of embellishing the screens. A frequent example is a small photographic portrait of an artist whose work is being considered. This represents a lapse in academic integrity.

Examiners must **always be able to distinguish the candidate's work from the work of other artists.** Candidates must therefore label images of their own work to offer clear information.

**In order to maintain anonymity in their submissions, phrases such as "my own work" or "candidate's work"** rather than their own name must be used.

While working collaboratively in the VA is encouraged, if collaborative work is included as evidence in the PP, candidates should clearly identify their role and personal contributions.

The *Visual arts guide* (2017) as well as the IB document *Effective citing and referencing* along with the more recent IB publication *Academic Integrity* (all available online on the Programme Resource Centre) should be consulted and used to support candidates in following best practice and meeting the requirements.

Teachers and candidates must be aware that the current *Visual Arts Guide* (2017) explicitly requires candidates to acknowledge sources thoroughly, citing at point-of-use and compiling a list of sources (see page 46 of the guide). If the list of sources uses a whole screen, this will not be included in the screen-count when assessing the process portfolio component.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should provide on-going assistance to ensure that candidates understand the experimental nature of the task and have opportunities to adopt an independent, experimental artmaking practice.

While the process portfolio should be revised and edited before submission, the core of the document must begin early on during the course to make sure that there are ample opportunities for candidates to document thoroughly the progress and development of their investigations at the time that the work was completed. This is where the role of, and the sustained use of a visual art journal becomes so critical to the **candidate's success**.

There must be ample discussion about candidate achievements compared against the assessment descriptors so that candidates can choose the most effective evidence that they have produced to include in their Process Portfolio submissions. Likewise, a thorough revision that includes effective referencing throughout the portfolio—**with a clear differentiation between candidates' work, and any work of other artists that have been used to develop and inform the candidate's practice**—and a thorough reference list or bibliography will also contribute to demonstrating the qualities represented in the different descriptors.

Many pertinent opportunities for teaching/learning experiences rise from the revision of the material to be included in the final examination portfolio. Opportunities for self and group critiques are valuable learning experiences that may also secure the final evidence for the PP screens.

Teachers are encouraged to emphasise building skills in drawing, and drawing from observation in the early stages of the course. Students struggle to communicate ideas and plan work without being overly reliant on text to explain and describe. The practice of using thumbnail sketches with annotations can be helpful.

Encourage students to avoid using the assessment criteria headings as a structure to organise their work in the process portfolio. Instead, encourage them to curate their work that best conveys to the examiner the journey that their artmaking process has taken. If the ideas for artmaking came from the investigation of other artists work, students should start with that. If it came from mind-mapping a range of concepts, show that. The assessment criteria are not presented as a creative cycle or process. Sub-headings can be **helpful, but encourage specific headings such as "A shift in direction, thanks to Ai Weiwei" rather than; "Criterion B: Critical Investigation"**.

Limit teacher-directed activities and common workshops to the first year of the course and discourage **including these in the final submission unless they have had a significant impact on the candidate's development as an artist**. This allows students to develop their own, independent artmaking practice that will facilitate them being able to access the higher levels of the criteria marking descriptions.

Make sure each student understands the difference between appropriation as an artmaking strategy, derivative work and plagiarism. Be aware of your school's **academic integrity policy and referencing style** and teach students how to apply it to the Process Portfolio component.

Photographic media continues to be a form where the documentation of the process is inconsistent. More research and exploration need to be included with photography if it is to be included in the folio.

Teachers need to ensure that process portfolio screens are submitted in sufficiently high resolution so that text and images are not rendered illegible. Candidates are also strongly discouraged from trying to squeeze too many reproduced visual arts journal pages onto one screen. Most often, a double page spread is the limit for such approaches providing that it does not exceed a standard widescreen 16:9 ratio.

Teachers must check that personal details such as the candidate name or the name of the school are not included on the work submitted. All academic integrity requirements must be fulfilled in process portfolio submitted for assessment.