

External assessment

The method used to assess students in visual arts is detailed assessment criteria specific to each assessment task. The assessment criteria are published in this guide and are related to the assessment objectives established for the visual arts course and the arts grade descriptors.

External assessment tasks—SL and HL

Part 1: Comparative study

Weighting: 20%

Students are required to analyse and compare artworks, objects or artifacts by different artists. This independent critical and contextual investigation should explore artworks, objects and artifacts from differing cultural contexts.

Throughout the course, students will have investigated a range of artists, styles, images and objects from a range of cultural contexts, through an integrated approach to exploring the three syllabus areas: visual arts in context, visual arts methods and communicating visual arts. Students select artworks, objects and artifacts for comparison from differing cultural contexts that may have been produced across any of the art-making forms, and that hold individual resonance for the student and have relevance to their own art-making practice. This is of particular importance to HL students.

Students at both SL and HL must examine and compare at least three pieces, at least two of which should be by different artists. It is valuable for students to have experienced at least one of the works in real time and space, such as a painting at a gallery, a sculpture in a park or an artifact from the local community that is brought into the school, although this is not essential. Good quality reproductions can be referred to when a student's location limits their access to such works first hand. The works selected for comparison and analysis should come from contrasting cultural contexts.

Students use research and inquiry skills to investigate and interpret the selected pieces, applying aspects of critical theory and methodologies to the works examined and presenting their findings as a personal and critically reflective analysis, using both visual and written forms of notation. Students must support their interpretation with references to sound and reliable sources. A recognized system of academic referencing must be used in line with the school's academic honesty policy. A candidate's failure to acknowledge a source will be investigated by the IB as a potential breach of regulations that may result in a penalty imposed by the IB final award committee.

Preparation process

In preparation for this task, within the core syllabus students at SL and HL must have had experience of the following.

	Visual arts in context	Visual arts methods	Communicating visual arts
Theoretical practice	Examining and comparing the work of artists from different cultural contexts using a range of critical methodologies. Considering the contexts influencing their own work and the work of others.	Looking at different techniques for making art. Investigating and comparing how and why different techniques have evolved and the processes involved.	Exploring ways of communicating through visual and written means. Making artistic choices about how to most effectively communicate knowledge and understanding.
Visual arts journal	Recording their experiences and learning, together with impressions, reflections and any relevant research, in the visual arts journal.		

Students then undertake the process outlined below for assessment.

Task details

Students at both SL and HL must select at least three artworks, objects or artifacts, at least two of which should be by different artists. For each of the selected pieces, students should:

- carry out research from a range of different sources
- analyse the cultural contexts in which the selected pieces were created
- identify the formal qualities of the selected pieces
- interpret the function and purpose of the selected pieces
- evaluate the material, conceptual and cultural significance of the selected pieces to the cultural contexts within which they were created.

Students at both SL and HL should then:

- compare the selected pieces, identifying links in cultural context, formal qualities, function, purpose, material, conceptual and cultural significance
- present a list of sources used during the study.

Students at HL should also reflect on the investigation outcomes and the extent to which their own art-making practices and pieces have subsequently been influenced by artworks, objects or artifacts examined in the comparative study.

Using the visual arts journal in this task

Students should use their visual arts journal to specifically document their investigation and responses to the selected pieces. This includes their detailed interpretations, evaluations and comparisons. Students will select, adapt and present what they have recorded in their journal as the basis for the comparative study task.



The role of the teacher

Teachers must ensure that their students are appropriately prepared for the demands of this task through the careful planning and delivery of the core syllabus activities outlined above. This assessment task must not be teacher led and students should be made fully aware of the assessment criteria against which their work will be judged.

The teacher should discuss the choice of selected artworks, objects and artifacts with each student. It is important that the selected pieces are the student's own choice. Teachers should also ensure that the students are acknowledging all sources used and referencing them appropriately.

Teachers should read and give advice to students on one draft of the comparative study. The teacher should provide oral or written advice on how the comparative study could be improved, but should not edit the draft. The next version handed to the teacher must be the final version for submission.

Structuring the comparative study

Students should articulate their understanding through both visual and written forms, depending on the most appropriate means of presenting and communicating their findings. While the comparative study may include text-based analysis, it may also include diagrammatic and graphic elements such as annotated sketches and diagrams, annotations on copies of artworks as well as other visual organizing techniques (such as flowcharts, relative importance graphs, concept webs and Mind Maps®). An introduction to the study should summarize the scope of the investigation from which the focus artworks, objects and artifacts have been selected. Students should aim for a balance of visual and written content, and use an appropriate means of acknowledging sources. Students must ensure that their work makes effective use of subject-specific language where appropriate.

For each of the selected artworks, objects or artifacts, students at both SL and HL are encouraged to focus their analysis and interpretation of works through consideration of the role of the artist, the artwork, the audience and the cultural context. The scope and scale of the comparative study task will depend largely on the materials selected for investigation. Students may wish, however, to adapt the following structure to suit their needs. This structure is for guidance only and is neither prescriptive nor restrictive.

Introduction

Students summarize the scope of the investigation from which the focus artworks, objects and artifacts have been selected, and any thematic or conceptual framework used to draw the investigation together.

The artworks, objects or artifacts and their contexts

Students summarize their research from a range of different sources and present their inquiry into the identification and interpretation of selected artworks, objects and artifacts. They also explain how they have applied a range and combination of critical theories and methodologies to the works. Areas of investigation might include:

- analysis of the cultural contexts of the selected pieces
- identification of the formal qualities of the selected pieces (elements such as shape/form, space, tone, colour, line, texture and principles such as balance, rhythm, proportion, emphasis, pattern, variety)
- interpretation of the function and purpose of the selected pieces (such as the meanings of motifs, signs and symbols used in the work)
- evaluation of the material, conceptual and cultural significance of the pieces and the cultural contexts in which they were created.

Making connections

Students present their comparisons of the different pieces, clearly identifying links between them.

These comparisons might include:

- comparing the cultural contexts of the selected pieces
- comparing the formal qualities of the selected pieces
- comparing the function and purpose of the selected pieces
- comparing the material, conceptual and cultural significance of the pieces.

Connecting to own art-making practice (HL only)

Students reflect on their research outcomes and the extent to which their own art-making practices and pieces have subsequently been influenced by artworks, objects, artifacts and their creators examined in the comparative study. These influences and personal connections, which should be evidenced in both visual and written forms, might include:

- cultural context
- formal qualities
- function and purpose
- materials, conceptual and cultural significance.

When referring to their own artwork and practices, HL students must be sure to identify and acknowledge their own artworks with the same rigorous attention to detail as with images from other sources.

Sources

Students include a list of sources used during the study.

Academic honesty

Every image used within the comparative study must be appropriately referenced to acknowledge the title, artist, date (where this information is known) and the source, following the protocol of the referencing style chosen by the school. When HL students include any images of their own original work, these must also be identified and acknowledged in the same way.



Formal requirements of the task—SL

- SL students submit 10–15 screens which examine and compare at least three artworks, objects or artifacts, at least two of which need to be by different artists. The works selected for comparison and analysis should come from differing cultural contexts.
- SL students submit a list of sources used.

Formal requirements of the task—HL

- HL students submit 10–15 screens which examine and compare at least three artworks, objects or artifacts, at least two of which need to be by different artists. The works selected for comparison and analysis should come from differing cultural contexts.
- HL students submit 3–5 screens which analyse the extent to which their work and practices have been influenced by the art and artists examined.
- HL students submit a list of sources used.

Submitting assessment work

The size and format of screens submitted for assessment is not prescribed. Submitted materials are assessed on screen and students must ensure that their work is clear and legible when presented in a digital, on-screen format. Students should not scan multiple pages of work from their journals and submit them as a single screen, for example, as overcrowded or illegible materials may result in examiners being unable to interpret and understand the intentions of the work.

The procedure for submitting work for assessment can be found in the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*. Students are required to indicate the number of screens included when the materials are submitted. Where submitted materials exceed the prescribed screen limits examiners are instructed to base their assessment solely on the materials that appear within the limits.

External assessment criteria—SL and HL

Part 1: Comparative study**Summary**

Part 1: Comparative study		Marks	Total
A	Analysis of formal qualities	6	30
B	Interpretation of function and purpose	6	
C	Evaluation of cultural significance	6	
D	Making comparisons and connections	6	
E	Presentation and subject-specific language	6	
F	(HL only) Making connections to own art-making practice	12	42

Criteria

A. Analysis of formal qualities

To what extent does the work demonstrate:

- effective identification and analysis of the formal qualities of the selected artworks, objects and artifacts?

Candidates who do not examine and compare at least 3 artworks by at least 2 different artists will not be awarded a mark higher than 3 in this criteria.

Mark	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard identified by the descriptors below
1–2	The work identifies some formal qualities of the selected pieces from at least two cultural origins. There is little or no attempt at analysis.
3–4	The work identifies and describes the formal qualities of the selected pieces from at least two cultural origins. The analysis of these formal qualities is inconsistent.
5–6	The work identifies and analyses the formal qualities of the selected pieces from at least two cultural origins. The analysis of these formal qualities is consistently informed and effective.

B. Interpretation of function and purpose

To what extent does the work demonstrate:

- informed and appropriate interpretation of the function and purpose of the selected artworks, objects and artifacts within the cultural context in which they were created?

Candidates who do not examine and compare at least 3 artworks by at least 2 different artists will not be awarded a mark higher than 3 in this criterion.

Mark	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard identified by the descriptors below
1–2	The work demonstrates an interpretation of the function and purpose of the selected pieces within the cultural context in which they were created, but this is largely undeveloped, superficial or relies heavily on personal opinion.
3–4	The work demonstrates an interpretation of the function and purpose of the selected pieces within the cultural context in which they were created, although this is not always consistently informed or developed.
5–6	The work demonstrates a consistently informed and appropriate interpretation of the function and purpose of the selected pieces within the cultural context in which they were created.

C. Evaluation of cultural significance

To what extent does the work demonstrate:

- informed understanding of the cultural significance of the selected artworks, objects and artifacts within the specific context in which they were created?

Candidates who do not examine and compare at least 3 artworks by at least 2 different artists will not be awarded a mark higher than 3 in this criterion.

Mark	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard identified by the descriptors below
1–2	The work demonstrates an evaluation of the material, conceptual and cultural significance of the selected pieces within the specific context in which they were created, but this is largely undeveloped, superficial or relies heavily on personal opinion.
3–4	The work demonstrates an evaluation of the material, conceptual and cultural significance of the selected pieces within the specific context in which they were created, although this is not always consistently informed or developed.
5–6	The work demonstrates consistently informed and appropriate evaluation of the material, conceptual and cultural significance of the selected pieces within the specific context in which they were created.

D. Making comparisons and connections

To what extent does the work demonstrate:

- effective identification and critical analysis of the connections, similarities and differences between the selected artworks, objects and artifacts?

Candidates who do not examine and compare at least 3 artworks by at least 2 different artists will not be awarded a mark higher than 3 in this criterion.

Mark	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard identified by the descriptors below
1–2	The work outlines connections, similarities and differences between the selected pieces, with little critical analysis. These connections are largely superficial or inappropriate and demonstrate a basic understanding of how the pieces compare.
3–4	The work describes the connections, similarities and differences between the selected pieces, with some underdeveloped critical analysis. The connections are logical and coherent and demonstrate a sound understanding of how the pieces compare.
5–6	The work critically analyses the connections, similarities and differences between the selected pieces. These connections are logical and coherent, showing a thorough understanding of how the pieces compare.

E. Presentation and subject-specific language

To what extent does the work:

- ensure that information is conveyed clearly and coherently in a visually appropriate and legible manner, supported by the consistent use of appropriate subject-specific language?

Mark	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard identified by the descriptors below
1–2	The work makes some attempt to convey information clearly or in a visually appropriate manner; however this may be inconsistent or not always appropriate. There is some attempt to use subject-specific language but this may be infrequent or with inaccuracies.
3–4	The work clearly and coherently conveys information, in a visually appropriate and legible manner, with some consistent use of appropriate subject-specific language.
5–6	The work clearly and coherently conveys information which results in a visually appropriate, legible and engaging study. Subject-specific language is used accurately and appropriately throughout.

At HL only**F. Making connections to own art-making practice**

To what extent does the work:

- analyse and reflect on the outcomes of the comparative study investigation and on how this has influenced the student's own development as an artist, identifying connections between one or more of the selected works and the student's own art-making processes and practices?

Mark	Descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard identified by the descriptors below
1–3	The work outlines the outcomes of the investigation making few or only superficial connections to their own art-making practice.
4–6	The work describes the outcomes of the investigation but without considering the implications on their own development. The student makes attempts to make connections to their own art-making practice, but these are inconsistent or superficial.
7–9	The work reflects upon the outcomes of the investigation consistently with some attempts at analysis and consideration of their own development, however this lacks depth. The student makes some meaningful connections to their own art-making practice, but these are underdeveloped.
10–12	The work analyses and reflects upon the outcomes of the investigation consistently and appropriately. The student effectively considers their own development, making informed and meaningful connections to their own art-making practice.